Boysko dueling with incumbent Rust in Virginia’s 86th District

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The 86th District, comprised mostly of Fairfax County, has belonged to Rust since 2002. Demographically, the makeup has shifted to lean Democrat, with 60 percent of voters pulling for President Barack Obama in 2012.

After more than a decade in the Virginia House of Delegates, Tom Rust says his experience and capacity to compromise are key reasons voters in the 86th District should vote him in for a seventh term.

His challenger on the left, Democrat Jennifer Boysko, says the fact she’s never held elected office is a plus.

“I’m not a politician,” Boysko said in a Sept. 20 interview. “I bring something that's fresh and new ... I think if there is a time for a change, this is the year.”

The 86th District, comprised mostly of Fairfax County and sections of Sterling, has belonged to Rust since 2002. Demographically, the makeup has shifted to lean Democrat, with 60 percent of voters pulling for President Barack Obama in 2012.

A former mayor of Herndon, Rust has been less of a hyper-partisan brand than some of his Republican colleagues in the statehouse, something expected to help him nab a share of the Northern Virginia moderate vote.

Rust voted for and helped craft this year’s bipartisan transportation bill that raises hundreds of millions in new funding for roads and rail projects. Additionally, he’s campaigning on his support for legislation to increase the number of slots at Virginia’s state universities, to raise Virginia Tuition Assistance Grants from $2,800 to $3,100 and to add an additional $30 million to make college degrees more affordable.

“I think I’ve been a leader in the transportation area,” Rust told the Times-Mirror Sept. 23. “I think I’ve been a leader in higher education ... thirdly, my record on job creation and helping the
economy by making sure Virginia stays strong by protecting our right-to-work laws.”

Rust said experience in the House of Delegates is going to be critical now more than ever, given five committee chairs won’t be returning to the legislature in 2014.

Boysko, who’s making her first bid for public office, grew up in Alabama and Arkansas and is a former legislative aide to Fairfax County Supervisor John Foust. A graduate of Hollins College in Roanoke, she’s lived in Herndon since 1996.

The Boysko campaign has focused much of its attention highlighting Republican-led social and women’s health legislation introduced in the General Assembly in recent years.

Rust voted in favor of so-called TRAP regulations that could force some health clinics, including abortion providers, to shut its doors. On so-called ‘personhood’ legislation, which could limit females’ access to contraception, Rust first voted for the latest bill before changing his views and opposing it after an amendment from Gov. Bob McDonnell.

On these topics, Boysko stressed, “I’m a mother. I have two daughters. These are personal issues to me and my family. I have a stake in this like other women do in a way that a bunch of gentlemen will never be able to claim.”

Rust, speaking on some of the women’s health legislation in the General Assembly, said, “I hold that there is a better use of our time in jobs, the economy, education, making sure the transportation bill is implemented the way we intended it to be implemented.”

Both Rust and Boysko favor expanding Medicaid in Virginia, though Rust said his support is contingent on the federal government following through with its funding promises.

Boysko, a member of the parent teacher association at Herndon High School, echoed the views of gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe on education. She said the state must reform Standards of Learning tests and put more emphasis on critical thinking, as well as improve teacher pay.

“If Virginia is going to stay competitive in the global market, we need to make sure our kids are learning critical thinking and problem solving, and that our teachers are teaching substantive curricula, not just test-taking strategies,” Boysko said.

The Democrat has secured the endorsements of the Fairfax County Federation of Teachers, Planned Parenthood and LGBT Democrats of Virginia.

Rust, meanwhile, is being endorsed by the Virginia Education Association, which supports both Republicans and Democrats in this year’s races. The Republican has also been endorsed by the Northern Virginia Technology Council’s TechPAC, the Virginia Police Benevolent Association and the Virginia Credit Union League.

Rust last saw opposition in 2009 with Democrat Stevens Miller serving as his challenger. This year, the incumbent has raised nearly twice the campaign cash (nearly $440,000) as Boysko (more than $220,000).

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