

Rossi says he won't submit to Tea Party favorite's 'demands'

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By George Tibbits of the Associated Press

Clint Didier says GOP candidate Rossi needs support to win Senate race against Patty Murray  
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SEATTLE - Tea Party favorite Clint Didier said Friday he won't endorse fellow Republican Dino Rossi in the Senate race against Patty Murray until Rossi agrees to take strong positions against abortion, taxes and government spending.

Rossi's campaign promptly replied that he won't submit to "demands made by anyone, even people with whom he agrees."

Didier, who was endorsed by former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin and Rep. Ron Paul, said that while he dearly wants "to send Patty Murray home with her pink slip in her hand," he couldn't make a halfhearted endorsement of Rossi and still remain true to supporters who gave him 12.5 percent of the vote in Tuesday's primary.

Didier told a Seattle news conference that he spoke with Rossi Thursday evening, and that Rossi wanted to think about the requirements to take an unequivocal anti-abortion stand, make a no-new-taxes pledge and promise not to increase federal spending.

"I don't think these are much of a reach for Dino Rossi - in fact, they are part of our party's platform," Didier said, adding that, "The ball is in Rossi's court, and I'm anxious to begin campaigning for him."

In a statement after Didier's news conference, Rossi's campaign said: "Dino will keep working to earn the support of anyone who will work to reduce spending, get the economy back on track, and put Washingtonians back to work.

"He knows Washingtonians are principled and independent and expect their public servants to run on what they believe. In that spirit, Dino will continue to campaign on the things he believes, and will not submit to a list of demands made by anyone, even people with whom he agrees, in Washington State or Washington, D.C."

"We don't see this as a 'list of demands,' " Didier responded in an e-mail. People want to hear specifics from Rossi, "rather than more generalities like 'reduce spending,' " he said.

"We are trying to bring him votes, not back him in a corner."

Didier finished in third place in Tuesday's primary, in which the top two candidates advance. Rossi had 33.4 percent of the vote in partial returns updated Friday while Murray had 46.4 percent in her attempt for a fourth Senate term.

Didier, a Pasco-area farmer and former tight end for the Washington Redskins, said he understood that withholding his endorsement could weaken Rossi's chances, but also that Rossi needs Didier's supporters to win.

"He doesn't have a chance of winning right now. I'm trying to give him a chance," Didier said.

During an interview with The Associated Press prior to the primary, Rossi said he's never run on the abortion issue but as a Roman Catholic, he is morally opposed to it and if he ever has to take a vote on the issue "I will vote my conscience."

He sidestepped the abortion issue during his two unsuccessful races for governor by conceding that abortion rights were well established in Washington.

Didier said he has received hundreds of messages from his supporters begging him to continue his fight.

Under Washington law, a candidate who loses in a primary cannot launch a write-in bid. However, Didier said he and his supporters plan to form a new organization called Take Back Washington, about which he would share more information in the coming weeks.

On Friday, Rossi challenged Murray to a series of six televised debates starting in early September. Murray's campaign staff said they will look at the possibility, but the debates would have to fit into her senatorial duties.