

**“I came here as a refugee. The first job I held was flipping burgers. I started with nothing — not a penny when I came to the United States, but I went to night school and eventually became a lawyer. Anyone can realize his dream if he is willing to work.”**

— PETER LUMAJ, CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR

# Barkhamsted GOP backs Lumaj for governor

BY KATHRYN BOUGHTON  
REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

**BARKHAMSTED** — The Republican Town Committee has thrown its support behind gubernatorial candidate Peter Lumaj.

Lumaj, who ran for secretary of state in 2014 and U.S. Senate in 2012, appeared before the committee on Monday night to explain his campaign positions.

Barkhamsted Town Committee Chairwoman Juliana Simone, who is Lumaj’s director of communications, said the local committee has strongly supported the candidate for years.

“I have always admired his deep love for this country and the individual freedoms it offers to its citizens,” she wrote on the committee’s website.

In his presentation, Lumaj encouraged Republicans to be proud and to own their allegiance to President Donald Trump.

“We have no reason to be ashamed of being Republicans,” he said. “I think it’s the reason we lost in 2014 — gubernatorial candidate Tom Foley was ashamed to be a rich, white guy. Isn’t that the entire reason to live in a free country — to do better? We had the same problem with Mitt Romney. If we do it again, the Democrats will smell weakness.”

He said Republicans have “done a poor job in defining ourselves. We have been defined by the media. We cower in the corner and defend ourselves. We’re not bad at all. If we were a racist party, I wouldn’t be here tonight.”

He contends that President Trump won because, despite his wealth, he connected with the common people.

“The Trump base in our state, a large percentage didn’t vote Republican before. He identified with them,” Lumaj said. “His character is to fight for what he believes in. I stick by those principals of Trump voters. There is no reason to run away from that.”

**RTC MEMBER DAVID MOULTON** asked how Lumaj, an attorney from the Bronx, N.Y., with a home in Fairfield, would connect with voters.

“I work with a lot of blue-collar guys and hardly any



KATHRYN BOUGHTON REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN  
**Gubernatorial candidate Peter Lumaj addresses the Barkhamsted Republican Town Committee on Monday night.**

voted for Foley or Romney,” Moulton said. “They said, ‘He’s the rich guy; he doesn’t care about me.’ How do you convince those guys on the shop floor to vote for you?”

Lumaj referred to his own history, which includes escaping from Communist Albania nearly 30 years ago and making his way to the U.S. He worked as a porter and doorman to help support his family, and to pay for his education at the City University of New York, where he earned a degree in political science.

“I came here as a refugee,” he said. “The first job I held was flipping burgers. I started with nothing — not a penny when I came to the United States, but I went to night school and eventually became a lawyer. Anyone can realize his dream if he is willing to work.”

Lumaj said he can identify with the middle class.

“Most Republicans can identify with the middle class if properly approached,” he added. “Wealth doesn’t define you.”

Lumaj’s platform is decidedly aligned with Trump. He pronounces himself a “Second Amendment guy,” opposes amnesty for illegal

employment rate. ... Republicans should point out that everything (Democrats) touched is broken. We are the party of solutions.”

Lumaj said he believes tax relief is the key to kick-starting the state’s recovery.

“I think we have to start with tax relief so people have more money,” he said, adding “you could feel the economy change right away” after Congress passed its tax reform.

“How do you defend against the charge that it is making the deficit worse?” Moulton asked.

“First thing you have to accept is that the Democrats will blame us,” Lumaj replied. “But we have to say, ‘We tried your methods and it got worse. Let’s try ours.’ As Republicans, we have to say we will uphold our agreements with the voters. We should be very forceful about these things.”

Lumaj said his greatest weakness — a lack of governmental experience — also can be seen as a strength.

“Professional politicians are thinking of getting elected and using that as a steppingstone,” he said. “I am not looking for a promotion. I could practice law and be happy with it.”

He said he has enjoyed a positive reception as he tours the state. Lumaj noted that three of the 10 Republican candidates — Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton, former Trumbull First Selectman Timothy Herbst and himself — are polling in double digits.

“This election is ours to lose,” he said.

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