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Pennsylvania Republican candidate for governor, Sen. Doug Mastriano, speaks at a campaign rally at the Star Barn in Elizabethtown, Pa., on Aug. 24, 2022. (Beth Brelje/The Epoch Times)

2022 MIDTERM ELECTIONS

Rabbi Endorses Mastriano as Shapiro Calls Him Antisemitic in Pennsylvania Governor Race

By [Beth Brelje](#)

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Religion has clouded the conversation in the Pennsylvania gubernatorial race.

While voters are interested in the usual issues such as economy, voter integrity, and public safety; forces swirling around the race have now also made it about faith.

Over the last six weeks, Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro, who is Jewish and the Democratic candidate for governor, has consistently asserted that Republican candidate, Sen. Doug Mastriano, is antisemitic.



Following the Supreme decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, Attorney General Josh Shapiro spoke about his office's continued commitment to protect abortion access for women in Pittsburgh on July 14, 2022. (Commonwealth Media Services)

Shapiro's campaign has sent countless press releases to media promoting the claim. Shapiro has appeared on MSNBC discussing how worried he is about Mastriano and his supporters, with his campaign orchestrating high profile press conferences with politically-engaged Jewish leaders, including far-left Democrat and state Rep. Dan Frankel.

“I reject antisemitism in any form,” Mastriano, an unashamed Christian, said in a recent statement.

He has opened campaign stops with a Christian prayer and often a Jewish prayer from an attending rabbi.

Now, Mastriano has been endorsed by Rabbi Joseph Kolakowski, who leads a Hasidic Jewish ministry, Congregation Havvoth Jair of Koblenz, in northeast Pennsylvania.

“I have been taught my entire religious life to vote for the right person, not merely for those identifying with the same religion. We are not electing a religious leader, but a leader for the executive branch of the State Government,” Kolakowski said in a written statement.

“I am concerned about the blatant hypocrisy of espousing beliefs that contradict the basics of one’s professed faith. Judaism is the original pro-life religion. The fact that Shapiro has the backing of one of the most dangerous eugenicist organizations, Planned Parenthood, should be sufficient for any God-fearing individual to detest his candidacy, no matter what religion one professes.”

Behind the Claim

Shapiro bases his claim about Mastriano on the fact that Mastriano’s campaign, which is advertising on many social media platforms, reported spending \$5,000 on Gab, a platform that describes itself as “Freedom of Speech Software.” Mastriano closed his Gab account in July.

And, four years before Mastriano bought advertising on Gab, Robert Bowers, the accused shooter in the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, used Gab to post antisemitic content. He is accused of killing 11 people. His case has not yet gone to trial.

In July, The Epoch Times asked Shapiro's campaign for specific examples of Mastriano himself being antisemitic. It offered regular, unrelated social media campaign posts from Mastriano with antisemitic comments written by members of the public underneath. But some of Shapiro's own social media posts also have unsavory public comments underneath.

By Shapiro's logic, because the Boston Marathon bomber posted on Twitter before his 2013 crime, anyone using Twitter, including Shapiro, supports murder and terrorism.

Shapiro is currently running a heavy schedule of television advertisements showing antisemitic comments posted by users on Gab, which the ad calls "a white supremacist website," and suggests that anyone using Gab is antisemitic. The ad cuts to video of the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, where Bowers is accused of the shootings, and ends with ominous music, a photo of Mastriano, and a warning that he cannot be allowed to become governor.

Shapiro sent a video of the advertisement out in a press release. The move netted free advertising for well-funded Shapiro, who had more than \$20 million total funds available as of the most recent campaign finance report, compared to Mastriano's \$950,000.

Shapiro's press release promoting his new television commercial was picked up as a news story by several news outlets including Politico, Philadelphia Inquirer, and The Washington Post.

Both Judaism and Christianity have been used as tools to steer voters in this race.

Many news stories have described Mastriano and his followers as Christian nationalists, but not in a nice way. While Christian nationalist means "patriot" and has nothing to do with race in conservative circles, to leftist progressives, it is code for "white supremacist."

“While the Democrats have the chutzpah to claim that those of us from the Party of Lincoln are somehow racist, they do not look at the racist tenants of their own party, including abortion and gun control, both of which cause undue and disproportionate harm to people of color, and are historically rooted in openly racist ideologies,” Kolakowski said.

“Shapiro once said that Dr. Mastriano’s victory would fulfill everything President Trump wants. To me, that is the best endorsement possible. As a nation, we were blessed with four years of prosperity and happiness when President Trump was in the White House.”

The Epoch Times asked Shapiro’s campaign for comment for this story. It did not respond.