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Moscow-Born Republican Runs for U.S. Congress Seat

By Jennifer Monaghan

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A former Muscovite is hoping to become the first person born in the Soviet Union to win election to the U.S. Congress.

Republican candidate Igor Birman, 32, is battling for a seat in California's 7th congressional district, in eastern Sacramento, having moved to the U.S. with his family almost 20 years ago.

"Because my parents risked their lives to get me to America, I could pursue any dream I set my mind to. I learned English and embraced my new country founded on freedom," Birman said in a statement posted on his personal website.

"If I am elected, I will continue to be a champion of legal immigration and assimilation and will advocate for policies that draw talent to our shores and provide refuge from tyranny for families like mine," Birman said of his stance on immigration.

Birman's parents, who took the decision to uproot Igor and brother Eugene in 1994 — just several years after the collapse of the Soviet Union — have been helping out on their son's campaign trail by stuffing and stamping envelopes, Fox News reported Thursday.

"I told him whenever you decide to run for Congress or to be a public servant, people will trust you because you speak from your heart." said Birman's mother.

Birman's election campaign comes at a tense time in U.S.-Russia relations, though he has the backing of eight current members of Congress.

Nevertheless, Birman, who worked on Capitol Hill until last year, will face stiff competition in June's primary elections, not least from incumbent congressman and Democratic Party candidate Ami Bera and fellow Republicans Doug Ouse and Elizabeth Emken.

Candidates finishing in the top two spots in June's primary elections will go head to head in a general election scheduled for November, with the winner taking up a seat in the U.S. Congress.

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