

# 2nd Dist. hopefuls face off

**GOP's Peter King  
debates Dems'  
Grechen Shirley**

BY **SCOTT EIDLER**  
scott.eidler@newsday.com

Tensions on the national and local stage boiled over Saturday at a Brightwaters town hall as Republican Rep. Peter King defended his record against Democrat Liuba Grechen Shirley, a progressive activist trying to deny King a 14th term.

A moderator at the forum, sponsored by the Islip Town NAACP branch, urged them to treat the event as a “job interview” and avoid “cheap shots” and attacks. About 200 people attended at the Bay Shore-Brightwaters Public Library.

The two still managed to spar on a range of issues in their first matchup before the Nov. 6 election to represent New York's 2nd Congressional District, which spans from eastern Nassau County to central and western Suffolk County, including Fire Island communities.

Grechen Shirley, 37, an Amityville activist who has worked with nonprofits, launched her campaign last fall and in June won the primary against the presiding officer of the Suffolk County Legislature. On Saturday, she hit several touchstones of her campaign: “Medicare-for-all,” reversing educational inequities and affordable, quality child care. She recalled learning that the waitlist for one day care provider had reached three years and said the lack of paid family leave for parents was a “public health crisis.”

King, 74, of Seaford, highlighted his bipartisan record and role as a powerful advocate for New York's interests in Congress. He mentioned the praise of Democrats over the years, from Sen. Chuck Schumer and Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo in New York to House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi in California. King also defended his record on border security and support for law enforcement officers and gun control measures. Referring to the MS-13 gang, he described some Long Island communities as “killing fields,” the same phrase that President Donald Trump used during his visit last year to Brentwood.

The candidates staked sides on other divisive social issues. King condemned the protests of NFL players who kneel during the national anthem, saying, “I will not watch NFL games.” He also said he “will not support a

Black Lives Matter movement.” Grechen Shirley had, earlier in the forum, referenced King's May tweet that asked if the Jets owner would “support all player protests? Would he pay fines of players giving Nazi salutes or spew racism?”

She chided King on the Nazi remark and said people who take a knee “are Americans” and are “protesting the racial discrimination that we have seen in this country.”

King disputed that characterization, saying the kneeling “originated as an attack upon what they said was police abuse and violence, and it's untrue. It's a lie. And I will never support a lie.”

King attacked Democratic lawmakers and candidates who called for abolishing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. “When we have people out there, because somebody wins a



Challenger Liuba Grechen Shirley debates incumbent Rep. Peter King in Brightwaters Saturday.



JOHNNY MILANO

primary in the Bronx, and she says abolish ICE, the people just follow like lemmings along. I will not do that,” he said, referencing Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a progressive who defeated Queens Rep. Joseph Crowley in a June primary.

“There are two parts of ICE,” Grechen Shirley said, explaining “we need to support” the part that aggressively targets gang violence and human and drug traffickers. “There is the other part of ICE that goes after undocumented immigrants and is ripping breast-feeding babies away from their mothers. That part of ICE needs to be reformed.”

Early in the forum, moderator William Moss, president of the NAACP's Islip branch, threatened to call out candidates directly for attacking an opponent, leading to a brief exchange about what was appropriate.

## Ronkonkoma arena funding is questioned

ARENA from A7

“If they're trying to say a

county, state or other entities to

him Jones Lang LaSalle has al-

“I have significant concerns