



LAWLER — CONLEY DEBATE 1 — WHO WON?

BY: Keith S. Shikowitz, Editor in Chief/Investigative Reporter



On Sept. 28, 2026, Republican Congressman Mike Lawler and Democrat challenger Cait Conley had the first of their two debates to see who will be going to Washington D.C. in January 2027 as the Congressperson for the 17th Congressional District.

The question that always is asked after one of these is, "Who won?" Of all of the people I spoke with after the debate was over, 80% said that Lawler was the clear winner. The general consensus was that he had plans for the future and a record of producing positive results for the District. They also pointed to the fact that Conley lied about a number of things including Lawler's voting record in support of President Trump's agenda and policies. She said a number of times that he voted 100% of the time with Trump. He showed that he has not.

Conley won the coin toss and got to give her opening statement first.

<https://youtu.be/axHD4Tx8k74>

Conley did not have any plans to solve the problems facing the country. She constantly fell back on her military service, which Lawler thanked her for a number of times for undertaking. She was staring at the camera with a blank look on her face. During the debate, most of her statements included attacks on the Trump Administration, Lawler and his voting record. She called the Big Beautiful Bill, (BBB) which gave us the biggest tax cuts in history the Big Ugly Bill. She falsely claimed that it cut Medicaid for American citizens who rely on it. Lawler said that there were cuts to Medicaid. But those cuts were getting people off of it who were not eligible for it the first place and that American citizens who were eligible were not losing their Medicaid.

One person I spoke with said "Lawler had a look of confidence and determination on his face. Whereas Conley showed no emotion and seemed to have a non-caring lack of emotional attachment to the district."

In most debates, the questions usually come from the moderators. In this one the questions came from constituents from the district who were at a watch party. The people asking them ranged from college students to retirees who had a number of very good questions for the candidates.

The first question was from Heidi Winslow from Yorktown Heights. She asked the candidates,

"Beyond blaming the other party, what are three things you will do in Congress to lower the cost of living and how quickly do you think we'll be able to see results?"

Lawler was the first to answer. He laid out what has already been done in the BBB regarding no tax on tips, overtime and Social Security. He also reminded the people that he got the SALT (State and Local Tax) deduction raised by 400% from \$10,000 to \$40,000 enabling 90% of the residents in the district to completely deduct those taxes. He also explained that the electricity costs being as high as they are, are the fault of Kathy Hochul's policies and the shutting down of Indian Point and not allowing natural gas extraction. He spoke of rebuilding and reopening it and restarting the natural gas extraction. He also spoke of housing bills he is working on in Congress

What is the first thing Conley does? She goes against what Winslow requested and blames the housing crisis on the Trump Administration. She explained what needs to be done but did not give any solid plan to meet those needs and solve the problem. This was the way she went through the entire debate.

<https://youtu.be/LOGPakgtRN0>

The second question dealt with electricity costs and again Conley attacked Lawler and the administration without showing any clear plan as to what she is going to do on the federal level to help the residents of the district.

Lawler pointed this out and reiterated that the rate hikes that have been affecting New Yorkers come from Kathy Hochul and the PSC (Public Service Commission) she appointed, NOT from Washington. Lawler also laid out clear plans of what he is doing in DC to try to help with this situation. He said they are fighting for permitting reform. He also pointed out that most of the utility bill comes from delivery charges because we are importing our energy from other states. He explained about Hochul's hypocrisy on reopening Indian Point by telling about the nuclear power plant she wants to open on the Canadian border.

John Ravitz from Westchester asked about Social Security. Conley lied claiming that there were cuts to Social Security.

Social Security cannot be legally touched.

Lawler said that there were no cuts to Social Security in the BBB. If anything, taxes on Social Security were the only things that were cut when dealing with that money. Conley also never said which of the two plans Ravitz mentioned she would support.

A number of other issues were discussed, tariffs, aid to Israel, dealing with antisemitism, illegal immigration and sanctuary policies as well as dealing with the "threats" of AI.

When it came to sanctuary policies, all Conley could do is attack the administration again and added ICE into her vitriol. She again did not answer the question that was asked.

When it came to the AI Lawler pointed out that Conley has supported data centers and Conley tried to refute that and blamed Lawler for some that Lawler said were built before he was in Congress.

<https://youtu.be/0EQ7U18wFn0>

People are grateful for those who put their lives on the line for this country by joining the armed forces. Those I spoke with said that she mentioned that in practically all of her answers as if that alone qualified her to be the representative of this district. She had no grasp of the issues. She constantly said what she saw as the problem and that they needed to be solved but laid out no clear plan to do so. They also said she lied about a lot of the "facts" she said she was presenting and Lawler called her out on them citing examples disproving those lies.

Conley opened the closing statements but again made no clear plans for being in congress

<https://youtu.be/-b2bcCJs5I>

The overall sentiment was that Lawler won the debate hands down. He cited examples, whereas Conley did not and could not. He exuded confidence. Conley did not. All she could fall back on was hatred of Trump. She gave no real examples of what she would do to help the residents of the district.