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# Independent Shiva Ayyadurai challenges Elizabeth Warren

By Steve Urbon

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NEW BEDFORD — V.A. Shiva Ayyadurai doesn't have much use for the two-party political system in Massachusetts.

He's running an energetic campaign as an independent for U.S. Senate to topple incumbent Democrat Elizabeth Warren, complete with a campaign bus bearing the slogan "Only a real Indian can beat a fake Indian."

Ayyadurai, 54, was born in Bombay, India, (now Mumbai) into the bottom rung of that county's caste system. His parents, he says, overcame that stigma by getting an education and moving to the United States — Paterson, New Jersey.

Ayyadurai's family climbed the ladder of public education by moving from one school district to another every 18 months or so, seeking ever more affluent communities with better schools. Ayyadurai has made his own success, earning four degrees from MIT and starting seven companies.

He stakes a claim as the "inventor of email," based on a system of electronic documents he designed as a 14-year-old after being challenged to convert a paper-based memo system into a digital one that he dubbed EMAIL.

The claim has been controversial, but Ayyadurai stands by it.

Ayyadurai, who attended the inauguration of President Donald Trump by invitation, calls the 2016 election a "historic one that saw the old two-party system and the traditional media being challenged. There is disruption taking place," he recently told The Standard-Times.

But, there has been push back; Ayyadurai was denied a seat on the stage in a recent debate despite having collected 20,000 signatures to get on the ballot.

“I believe we live in extraordinary times,” he said. “People, particularly in Massachusetts, are tired of the old Republican-Democrat two-party system. They’re looking for independents who think differently. They’re tired basically of the corrupt model.”

He is unabashed about the swipe at Warren he takes with his campaign bus, mocking her claim of being of Cherokee descent.

“The Democratic Party exploits racism and the Republican Party ignores racism,” he said. “They don’t want you to talk about racism.”

As far as Indians are concerned, “it’s not about race, it’s about integrity. ... What we’re talking about is an invitation to discuss race, which has been the No. 2 issue in the Gallup Poll for the past 36 months.”

“I’m a brown-skinned Indian guy who some people call too brown and other people have called me a white supremacist. So I’ve experienced both.”

“Racism is fundamentally using race for one’s political and economic advancement,” he said. “(Liberals) want you to address ceremonial things, but they sweep the fundamental things under the rug. The fact is that Elizabeth Warren took advantage of a significant gain of the Civil Rights movement called affirmative action.”

Ayyadurai sides with those who believe that Massachusetts outside the Interstate 495 beltway is routinely shortchanged by the existing power structure.

Meanwhile, infrastructure projects like commuter rail are left to languish.

Ayyadurai says he will seek to tax the endowments of such institutions as Harvard and the big hospitals, which he says are run like hedge funds. Anyone else who tried this could be forced to pay a 20 percent tax, too.

The proceeds of taxes on the institutions would form the basis of a fund for repairing roads, rail and bridges that today rank as among the worst in the country.

He also said he believes that the system of Group Purchasing Organizations, GPOs, which is supposed to save hospitals money, is working in the other direction. Take them out of the picture, he said, and health care costs can be

reduced to \$2,500 per year per person rather than the \$10,000 that people pay now.

Ayyadurai says that while these things go unreformed, the state's smaller cities are disregarded.

"People down here are frankly devastated. These people are the forgotten people and neither party cares about them," he said.

Ayyadurai will compete Nov. 6 for votes against Warren and Republican Geoff Diehl in the race for U.S. Senate.

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