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## ON WASHINGTON

BY PAMELA NEWKIRK

# DioGuardi sets his sights on larger audience

WASHINGTON — For 3½ years Rep. Joseph DioGuardi, R-New Rochelle, has ranted and raved about the nation's shoddy accounting practices.

He admits the eyes of some of his colleagues glaze over when he speaks of his 22 years as an accountant and what needs to be done to clean up the nation's fiscal act.

But after 3½ years lecturing Congress, he's changing tactics.

In recent weeks, DioGuardi has met with journalists from Fortune and Time magazines, Vice President George Bush's presidential platform committee representatives, and plans to meet with business groups and Gov. Michael Dukakis campaign staffers to discuss a report issued by a task force he chairs.

The report, "Financial Management in the Federal Government: A System in Crisis and Options for Reform," released by the partisan congressional Task Force on Federal Budgeting and Financial Management, in 12 pages, reiterates what DioGuardi has said for years.

Only this time, he's aiming at a larger audience.

"I'm beginning the process of cultivating support in the press and business community. I want a groundswell of support," said DioGuardi.

He's also gone beyond the partisan task force he chairs and is speaking to House Democrats. By some accounts, a growing number are listening.

DioGuardi readily admits that Congress is not clamoring to implement his task force's proposed reforms. As he puts it, "It's not high on the agenda."

Why? "There are some powerful members of Congress who might see this as a threat. It would tend to create an environment where their (spending) options are limited."

What DioGuardi, and those on his 22-member task force, are proposing is a truthful appraisal of the nation's fiscal status, which could be achieved in part by adopting generally accepted accounting principles as seen in the private sector and some state governments, including New York's.

He said such a reform would show the long-term cost of major expenditures and the true breadth of the nation's debt, which he said is worse than it now appears.

DioGuardi also wants the president to appoint a chief financial officer who would oversee the fiscal reports prepared annually by financial officers assigned to each agency. The chief officer would, each year, issue a report to the nation on its financial state.

Under DioGuardi's plan, all agencies would adopt uniform accounting principles to replace some 200 accounting systems currently in place.

The task force also proposes uniform auditing standards and independent audits.

DioGuardi said he knows such reforms will not happen overnight, but he is encouraged.

Across the aisle, Democrats, like Rep. Charles Stenholm, of Texas, and Doug Barnard Jr., of Texas, are listening to DioGuardi with great interest.

Stenholm says the time is ripe for DioGuardi's ideas.

"We have postponed so much for the new administration and the new Congress. We're going to catch it next year. At that point in time, people like Joe who have been spending a lot of time on proposals are going to be in demand," said Stenholm.

Added Barnard, a House Banking Committee member: "I think the task force came up with some excellent ideas. I really do think (DioGuardi) is on the right track. It's catching on."

U.S. Social Security Administration Commissioner Dorcas R. Hardy this year, for example, issued an annual financial report to Congress. The congressman said she personally called him to tell him she took his advice.

To prepare the slick "SSA/88" report, outside actuaries were brought in to look at the books and did so by generally accepted government auditing standards — music to DioGuardi's ears.

But she is in a minority. The wheels of bureaucracy are slow. In the meantime, DioGuardi will stay on course.

"I'm not going to give up," he said. "No one's going to shut me off."

*Pamela Newkirk covers Washington for Gannett News Service.*