

# Editorial Page

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## DioGuardi vows to battle deficit as civilian

A highlight of Joseph DioGuardi's four-year career in Congress came early in his first term when President Reagan summoned him to the White House to try to persuade him to support the MX missile.

"It made me feel very bad to tell the guy I respected and whose vision and agenda virtually convinced me to run for Congress that I couldn't be with him on my very first major vote," DioGuardi recalled. Despite DioGuardi's unwavering position, the president made him feel at ease during their 20-minute chat. "I couldn't wait for the next vote to come up so I could show him I was really on his side."

DioGuardi and Reagan won't be on the official list at the capital this year. But even though DioGuardi lost his Westchester congressional seat to Nita Lowey, don't be surprised to see him taking the shuttle to Washington almost every Tuesday.



Joseph DioGuardi

The New Rochelle Republican plans to campaign for his agenda as a civilian. Now that he's helped find positions for many staff members, he is setting up an office in Washington to become a consultant and continue as a lecturer. All this is occurring while he determines whether he will seek to return to government service.

"I'm disappointed I'm not going back to Congress because I'm not going to be there officially when they're dealing with the greatest issue facing the country which is the budget deficit," he declared last weekend as he left office. But, he said, he plans to crusade and raise public awareness of the deficit issue as a civilian.

"To me, being a congressman was an extension of being president of my homeowners association, on the board of Phoenix House or the Boy Scouts, serving the public through a private position. I'm going to continue serving as I did before I became a congressman."

With about 20 speaking engagements between last election day and next June, DioGuardi said, he'll have plenty to keep him busy in places like Detroit and Rochester. His topic usually is the dangers of the growing federal deficit. At those events, he often holds up his congressional voting card and calls it the most expensive credit card, or he displays his invention — a personal credit card statement show-



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ing each taxpayer owing \$18,569.10 for the deficit.

Now, he'll no longer be restricted to the \$2,000 fee that congressmen may charge. DioGuardi believes he can earn a living also as a paid representative (not a lobbyist) in Washington for businesses and will explore the possibility of joining company boards of directors. He contends those boards need people with financial expertise who also know the government process.

A certified public accountant, he said he decided against becoming a full-time employee because it wouldn't be fair to a firm if he had to quit in a year or so to seek a government post.

But before he even considers another government post, he said, he wants his name cleared of any wrongdoing in the Crabtree matter. Crabtree Automotive in New Rochelle is suspected of illegally funneling \$57,000 in campaign funds to DioGuardi's campaign through the firm's employees.

DioGuardi revealed he was returning all \$57,000 to the employees whether they asked for the money or not. He said he will not make a decision about a public career until the Crabtree matter is put to rest. "I'm putting all my efforts into making sure the whole issue of the Crabtree affair is cleared up in such a way that everybody knows Joe DioGuardi did nothing wrong. There is nobody more disappointed than me that the issue was raised in my campaign because I was one of the people trying to reform the ethics of Congress."

Even if he doesn't return to elected office, DioGuardi still believes he has fulfilled the American dream. That dream, he said, began when his father, Joseph Sr., arrived here from Italy in 1929 as a 15-year-old who could speak no English, and lived to stand beside his son as he took the oath of office on the floor of the House of Representatives.

During his term, the Congressman often made reference to his own start as the son of a

grocer, pinning on himself the sobriquet of "Joey the Waiter" to recall working his way through college as a waiter at Elmwood Country Club.

DioGuardi was an unknown in politics until December 1983 when he confirmed his interest in running against an almost invincible Democrat, Congressman Richard Ottinger, when no establishment Republicans dared challenge Ottinger. That gave him the jump on others when Ottinger announced in early 1984 that he would not seek re-election. He defeated Democrat Oren Teicher on the tax issue in 1984 and received a break when Democrats picked ex-Congresswoman Bella Abzug to oppose him in 1986. But, he said, he lost to Lowey last year because he underestimated "the power of two weeks of negative campaigning against me."

Still, DioGuardi said he had no regrets, considering his accomplishments as a junior congressman from the minority side of the House. He lumps them into four broad categories and, ever the accountant, he outlined them in a final report of his record he's mailing to the 20th district this week. "The new congresswoman will have to look at this record as a benchmark to how she's going to fulfill her fiduciary responsibilities," he said.

First there is the environment, particularly Long Island Sound where he said he had a hand in initial efforts to save that "dying body of water" by doubling federal aid for it and for getting it named as one of six estuaries to be dealt with by the Clean Waters Act.

Second was his action against drugs, amendments to increase penalties for possession of crack and for federal testing of prisoners before they are let on probation.

The third category was housing and amendments to provide security for public housing projects, to unlink Westchester from New York City to raise the number and amount of housing subsidies here and to resist federal efforts not to pay a share of motel rents for the homeless.

Finally, his pet issue, the deficit. His one parting message for ex-constituents and countrymen is to get spending under control. "We've got to take stock and say to ourselves: 'Are we in this generation planning for the strong America that our parents planned for?'"

Milton Hoffman is senior editor and politics writer for Gannett Westchester Newspapers.