

# DioGuardi wins round in accountability quest

**By Richard Wolf**

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WASHINGTON — The federal government has gained a chief financial officer, and Rep. Joseph DioGuardi has lost a soapbox.

Or has he?

For DioGuardi, the appointment Thursday of a chief financial officer within the Office of Management and Budget represented the biggest step forward in his three-year crusade to improve the government's accounting procedures.

Since coming to Congress in 1985, the New Rochelle Republican and certified public accountant has pushed legislation, lobbied White House officials, appeared on magazine covers and generally tried every gimmick in the book to draw attention to his effort.

It appeared to be a long road ahead. Even with more than 50 co-sponsors on his bill, DioGuardi had been unable even to win a hearing from the chairman of the Government Operations Committee, on which DioGuardi sits.

Then Thursday, the government capitulated. Just like that. James Miller III, the director of OMB, announced at a Senate Governmental Affairs Committee hearing that Gerald Riso, his associate director for management, would become the first chief financial officer of the United States of America.

In making the announcement, Miller paid homage to DioGuardi, noting he had "championed" the concept on Capitol Hill.

"Now we have given the concept of a chief financial officer credibility, dignity, and we're beginning to give it the attention it deserves," DioGuardi said. The appointment, he said, proves "that there was something missing."

Now, however, what may be missing is DioGuardi's high visibility in promoting the idea. With a chief financial officer at OMB, who needs his legislation?

According to DioGuardi, the United States does.

"The chief financial officer should be at a higher level," he said, noting his bill would make the occupant accountable directly to the president. He agreed with Senate critics John Glenn, D-Ohio, and William Roth, R-Del., that Riso — who continues to answer to Miller — will have trouble getting Cabinet secretaries to jump at his command.

With the administration and the Senate now on board, DioGuardi plans to re-introduce his legislation in broader form. Rather than merely calling for the establishment of the office and a mini-bureaucracy beneath it, the measure will address the need to adopt generally accepted accounting principles used by most businesses and many governments.

And if DioGuardi can't get the bill passed, he can always pay a courtesy call on Riso — who lives full-time in the Washington area but still maintains his former home in Scarsdale, in DioGuardi's district.