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DioGuardi's old idea looking new again

Former lawmaker visits Congress to promote creation of chief financial officer's post for U.S.

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Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON — Former Rep. Joseph DioGuardi was back in Congress yesterday to champion his old idea of creating a chief financial officer post for the federal government.



Joseph DioGuardi

This time, the Republican from New Rochelle didn't have to do a hard sell. The House Government Operations subcommittee on which he served until his defeat in 1988 wanted him to evaluate two House proposals for a financial officer. Sen. John Glenn, D-Ohio, also thinks the idea is a good one and has introduced a bill in the Senate.

Before he testified, DioGuardi got to hear Rep. Leon Panetta, D-Calif., chairman of the House Budget Committee, praise the concept.

"I think the thrust of both (House) bills is to reduce waste, fraud and abuse in government programs. We need it to improve

the reporting, projection and control of spending," Panetta said. "I think it is important to the American people that they know their dollars are being spent wisely."

DioGuardi smiled at the difference a few years, the S&L bailout and reports of other troubled government-insured programs have made.

"When we talked about it several years ago, it wasn't popular," DioGuardi said before testifying.

During his two-year absence, however, the committee has found hundreds of poorly managed federal agency accounting systems.

"Everyone agrees we need a chief financial officer. The question is where do we put him and what is his scope," said DioGuardi, a certified public accountant.

DioGuardi, a conservative, differed with the legislation proposed by Glenn, Rep. Frank Horton, R-N.Y., and Rep. John Conyers Jr., D-Mich., chairman of the House Government Operations Committee.

Each of their three bills would put the financial officer in the Office of Management and Budget. DioGuardi said the position must be independent of the OMB and directly responsible to the president.