



Congressman Tim Bishop

FIRST DISTRICT -- NEW YORK

NEWS RELEASE

FEBRUARY 27, 2003

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: JON SCHNEIDER

PHONE: (202) 225-3826

BISHOP ACCEPTS CALL TO SERVE ON EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Will Work to Improve College Affordability and Fund Education Mandates

Washington—Congressman Tim Bishop (D-Southampton) has answered the call to improve college affordability and fully fund federal education mandates. Bishop was asked by party leadership to accept a vacancy on the House Education and the Workforce Committee because of his lifetime of experience as an educator. Prior to serving in Congress, Bishop was Provost of Southampton College for 16 years and worked at the college a total of 29 years.

“I am honored that my colleagues have called on me to serve and expand educational opportunity,” Bishop said. “I have dedicated my entire life to working for Long Island’s students and their families. Now, this new assignment will make me an even more effective education advocate in Congress.”

With a background in higher education, Bishop will make college affordability one of his top priorities. Recent years have seen funding cuts that have made college more expensive. One result is that in just the past eight years, average student loan debt has doubled to \$16,928. Currently, 39 percent of students have ‘unmanagable debt’ which means that their debt payments are more than eight percent of their monthly income.

“It saddens me to look at our students and think about the kind of financial burden we’re putting on them and their families, just for trying to get ahead,” Bishop said.

Another top priority for Bishop on the committee will be to seek property tax relief by fully funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which ensures that over 6.2 million children with disabilities receive special education. As enacted, the federal government promised to fund 40% of the cost of the bill, however, that figure amounts to 16.5% for the last fiscal year. Nationally, the funding deficit is \$11.5 billion. For just schools in the 1st Congressional District, this represents over \$125 million in lost funding over the next six years.

“If the Federal government met its commitment to fully fund IDEA, it will not only provide quality education to our neediest students, it will also serve as property tax relief for Long Island taxpayers,” Bishop said.

In addition to education, this committee also governs workforce issues, such as workers’ rights, protection and compensation rates, job re-training and computer-related educational programs, family leave, and training for the disadvantaged. Bishop pledged to be a strong advocate for safeguarding retirement security, especially in the wake of recent corporate scandals.

#