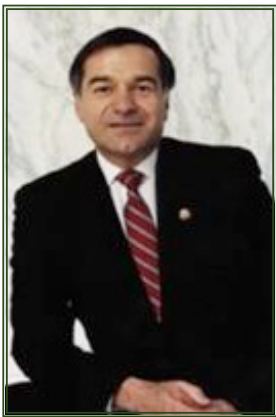


# JOSEPH DIOGUARDI

Congressman '85-'89, 20th District, New York



Accountability has been the hallmark of Joe DioGuardi's distinguished career in accounting, public service, advocacy, education and corporate governance. The son of immigrants from Italy whose industriousness and entrepreneurial spirit enabled them to live the American Dream, Joe is no stranger to hard work or unflagging persistence. He has tackled serious problems in his community, the business arena and Congress. He obtains solutions, frequently overcoming obstacles with the issue at hand.

To understand the leader and the man requires tracing the DioGuardi family roots and story, which illustrates the promise of America.

## Roots

Giuseppe DioGuardi, Joe's father, was born in Greci, an Albanian-speaking village in Italy. The town traces its roots to the 15th century, when the Ottoman Turks overran Albania and tens of thousands of Albanians fled for their lives across the Adriatic Sea to the kingdom of Naples. Giuseppe DioGuardi's family immigrated to the United States in 1929, escaping their harsh agricultural life in southern Italy, where severe unemployment further dimmed economic prospects.

Giuseppe was 15 years old when he arrived on Ellis Island. He worked from the bottom rung of the economic ladder in low-level jobs to owning a vegetable stand in Harlem, and later, established a grocery and vegetable store in the East Bronx. Through hard work, personal savings, and strong support from his family in the business, Joe's father grew the business and moved the family to Westchester County, New York in 1957.



## Early Life and Career

Joe, born September 20, 1940, is the oldest of the three DioGuardi children. His introduction to money management started early: behind the cash register at the family grocery store in the Bronx. He worked regularly, before and after school. A careful observer, Joe learned the value of character, family and sound financial management. After the family's move to Westchester, Joe attended Fordham Preparatory School, which encouraged high aspirations grounded in faith, ability, hard work and integrity. He continued to work in the family business until homework demands at Fordham grew to several hours a night. In 1957, he landed a summer bus-boy job at Elmwood Country Club in Westchester County and rapidly climbed to a waiter position, which he continued during the summer and on weekends after he was admitted to Fordham University.

Joe graduated with honors from Fordham University in 1962 and was hired at Arthur Andersen & Co., one of the first advocates of government fiscal responsibility. Adopting the family work and success ethic, he completed a rigorous three-year apprenticeship to become a Certified Public Accountant, and achieved partner status at age 31 after only 10 years. Joe specialized in federal and state taxation and had firm-wide responsibility for non-profit organizations and the tax economics of charitable giving. While at Arthur Andersen, he lectured and published widely on his areas of specialty.

## Meet Joe



**Born:** September 20, 1940

**Hometown:** Westchester County, NY

**Family:** Wife - Shirley Cloyes; Carol (deceased); Daughter - Kara DioGuardi; Son - John Dioguardi

**College:** Fordham University

**Admired Leader:** Winston Churchill

**Favorite Book:** *The Immense Journey* by Loren Eiseley

**Community/ Volunteer Involvement:** Albanian American Civic League

**Favorite Hobbies:** Golf, Fishing, Traveling

**Little-known Fact:** Father was from an Albanian-speaking village in Italy

**Best Advice:** "Think big, work hard, and envision for yourself and others what you can achieve."





## Political Career

Primed with his experience and insight into accounting, financial management and sound business practices, and strengthened by his courage to confront fierce opposition, Joe was persuaded by the Westchester business community to run for Congress in 1984. His campaign pulled off a surprise upset in a very close race: He ran as a Republican in a

Congressional district that was overwhelmingly Democratic with a sizeable minority population in Mount Vernon, Yonkers and New Rochelle. In his second Congressional race, Joe defeated the renowned Bella Abzug, who had relocated from Greenwich Village in Manhattan to Mount Vernon just to challenge Joe in a comeback bid for the House of Representatives. Abzug had served in the House with future New York Mayor Ed Koch and current chair of the House Ways and Means Committee from Harlem, Charles Rangel.

The first practicing CPA ever elected to Congress, Joe arrived on Capitol Hill in 1985 with this agenda: Reveal and fix the gimmicky financial practices of Congress, and restore fiscal responsibility and public accountability to the taxpayers. Despite a lukewarm reception to his accountability agenda, Joe succeeded in introducing legislation to shore up the financial weaknesses in government accounting, budgeting, financial management and reporting.

He was the original author of the Chief Financial Officer and Federal Financial Reform Act (“the CFO Act”), signed ultimately by President George H. W. Bush in 1990. The act mandated the assignment of a CFO to each major department and agency of the U.S. government. Former Comptroller General Charles Bowsher later said in testimony before the U.S. Senate that since the enactment of the bill, “We have seen important progress in directly confronting serious financial management weaknesses.”

From the beginning, Joe distinguished himself by finding bipartisan solutions to tough problems. On issues of local concern, he founded and co-chaired the Congressional Long Island Sound and Hudson River Caucuses, which secured substantial increases in federal support. He co-founded with Congressman Jerrold Nadler the New York Task Force for Port, Rail and Industrial Development in order to restore lost jobs to New York’s manufacturing and transportation sectors and preserve a portion of the Port of New York on the New York side of the harbor.

Joe sought to correct an historic racial injustice: Having discovered that not one of 1,550,000 Black American military servicemen had received the nation’s highest military honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor, he joined with Democratic Congressman Mickey Leland to initiate legislation to confer the honor on Black World War I and World War II military heroes who had been recommended for, but had not received, the medal.

Joe was an active member of the Executive Committee of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus (CHRC), and worked closely with Caucus founder Tom Lantos (D-CA) on apartheid in South Africa, as well as the repression of Jews in the Soviet Union and the Tibetan people and monks in China.

Joe’s two terms in the House of Representatives gave him insight into Congressional budgeting, spending and reporting practices. He became impressed by the implications of these practices for potentially catastrophic federal deficits and debt, as well as the willingness of Congress to mask the magnitude of the debt.

“Unless they are informed, unless they get motivated, the American people will not stop the upcoming financial tsunami that only increases in likelihood each day.”

– Joseph DioGuardi

## Continuing the Accountability Mission

The DioGuardi mission has not diminished, even after Joe left the House in 1989 following a loss in a hotly contested race with the current representative. Joe determined that much work remained to be done in order to bring about fiscal responsibility and financial accountability in Congress. He remains committed to correcting the problem of inadequate public information on Congressional spending and borrowing.

In 1989 Joe established the non-profit organization Truth In Government to educate the public on the problem of rising, underreported national debt from Congress’ unchecked deficit spending. Through Joe’s efforts, Truth In Government informs citizens about the necessity of proper accounting and the devastating consequences of current government practices. Joe uses his knowledge, experience and forceful personality to motivate citizens to take responsible action for their own sake. He travels extensively to speak to concerned business and civic groups about the United States’ increasing financial dependence on countries that do not share American values.

A key element in fulfilling the Truth In Government mission, Joe’s book, *Unaccountable Congress – It Doesn’t Add Up* (Regnery, 1992) is distributed widely to business and civic groups. In order to present the facts in an unbiased way, Joe filled the book with statistics and explanations about the budgeting process and national debt. Joe’s recent articles in national publications include “Time for Budgetary Truth” in *The Washington Times* (August 24, 2009), “Federal Accounting Reform Urgency” in *The Washington Times* (November 2, 2003) and “Cooking the Nation’s Books,” in *The National Law Journal* (June 23, 2003).



## Memberships and Associations

- New York State Society of CPAs (‘65- Present)
- American Institute of CPAs (‘65- Present)
- Association of Government Accountants (‘89- Present)
- Institute of Management Accountants (‘96- Present)
- Member, U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress (‘89- Present)

In February 2009 he addressed the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board on “Reporting Comprehensive Long-Term Fiscal Projections for the U. S. Government and Accounting for Social Insurance,” and in June 2009 the Association of Government Accountants’ conference on the topic of “Intergovernmental Financial Dependency by State and Local Governments.”

Joe explains that, “The American people trust a roomful of lawyers to do the work of a CPA; they don’t have the qualifications to do it and they certainly lack the will to do it. Citizens would benefit from electing more CPAs to work on the inside of the legislative process. This would help control spending before, not after, taxpayer funds are committed.”

## Continuing Human Rights Activism

Since leaving public office, Joe has dedicated nearly two decades to human rights activism for oppressed people, driving the issue of independence for 1.8 million Albanians in Kosova, a country bordering Albania. Joe formed the American Albanian Civic League, the American Albanian Foundation, and the American Albanian Public Affairs Committee (PAC) to continue his Congressional work to free Kosovo from the occupation in March 1989 by Communist Serbia led by war criminal and Party dictator Slobodan Milosevic. Joe and his wife, Shirley Cloyes DioGuardi, have co-directed the Civic League, American Albanian Foundation, and PAC for the past fifteen years. In 2002, they testified in The Hague against Milosevic for war crimes and genocide. Joe and Congressman Tom Lantos were the first officials in 50 years to travel to Albania when they visited in May 1990 to promote democracy in the midst of the continuing Communist dictatorship.

In addition, Joe continues the work he initiated on behalf of Black American World War I and World War II war heroes, which has thus far resulted in the awarding of nine Congressional Medals.

## Personal Life

Joe currently resides in Ossining, New York, with his wife Shirley Cloyes DioGuardi, a writer, foreign policy analyst, human rights activist and former book publisher. The family business, traditionally the DioGuardi focal point for family activity and commitment, has evolved from groceries and vegetables to politics and activism. Joe’s brother, Dick, and sister, Angel, continue to devote significant support to Joe’s efforts. Son John is a counselor at the Phoenix House, a national nonprofit drug treatment organization on whose board Joe has served since 1972. Daughter Kara, now a nationally acclaimed songwriter, artist and TV celebrity, has been a very positive and potent supporter of her father.

When introducing Joe at the 2009 Westchester GOP Annual Dinner, Kara said, “My father taught me so much about facing adversity, standing tall and being committed. Most people want to bail at the first sign of commitment. Most people want to bail when things get tough. One thing I can tell you about my father: He does not bail.”



## In Summary

In a personal letter that he wrote to Joe after signing the CFO Act into law, former President George H.W. Bush captured the spirit of Joe DioGuardi throughout his years as a professional accountant, an active citizen in this home and business community, as a Congressman in the mid- to late-1980s, as a human rights activist for the oppressed and as a citizen activist for fiscal responsibility and public accountability in all levels of government.

“Everyone who has worked on the issue of Federal financial management improvement recalls how hard you worked, starting back in 1986, to persuade Congress that the steps authorized by H.R. 5687 [the Chief Financial Officer’s Act of 1990] were badly needed. As a Certified Public Accountant you understood the need to strengthen the systems that provide the President, the Congress, and the American people with the information necessary to make informed decisions on how public funds are spent.”

– George H.W. Bush, President

## Favorite Quotes

“If there is injustice anywhere, justice is threatened everywhere.”

—Martin Luther King

“Everything I’ve ever gotten in life is largely due to the fact that I was born in this country, America, at this time, with these opportunities for its citizens. It is the primary obligation of our generation to turn over a similar America to our kids.”—Warren Buffet

“Information is the currency of democracy.”—Thomas Jefferson

“If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put foundations under them.”

—Henry David Thoreau

“The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of men and women. Tyranny, like hell is not easily conquered, yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly... Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods, and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated.”—Thomas Paine