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**COY: Diehl shares memories of campaign trail**

BY MEAGHAN GLASSETT  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2011 04:29 PM



Newly-elected State Representative Geoff Diehl has been selected as the Whitman Express 2010 Citizen of the Year.

During 2009 and 2010, Diehl began campaigning and reaching out to the residents of Whitman. While on the campaign trail, he also continued to serve the town of Whitman on the Finance Committee, and was also the Whitman Finance Committee liaison to the Whitman-Hanson Regional School Committee.

"I think Geoff has presented himself very well, serving on the Finance Committee, and before that, serving on the Bylaw Study Committee," Whitman Town Administrator Frank Lynam said. "He certainly has an interest in serving the community of Whitman, and I believe he will continue to do so as the new state representative."

Selectman Dan Salvucci, a supporter of Diehl, said he hasn't seen any candidate work as hard.

"Diehl was probably the hardest working candidate that I have seen in a long time, and I was on the campaign committee for Andy Burbine and Ned Kirby," Salvucci said. "I was both Burbine's and Kirby's treasurer and I know how hard they worked. I have seen the strategies they have used and what Diehl has done differently."

Salvucci said, in addition to knocking on doors and introducing himself to the community, Diehl also networked with other candidates and state officials such as Scott Brown and Charlie Baker.

"He networked with them to become part of the entire family, so that when he won, he would walk into the Statehouse with a lot of knowledge," Salvucci said. "He took nothing for granted and worked harder than anyone has worked before him."

Salvucci credited Diehl for continuing his responsibility as a member of the Whitman Finance Committee even though he had a hectic schedule.

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"I hope what he learned as a member of the Finance Committee will roll over when he makes his votes on Beacon Hill," Salvucci added.

Diehl was sworn into office on Wednesday, Jan. 5. His wife KathyJo Boss and daughters Kaylee, 9, and Emily, 4, were able to sit by his desk in the Chambers during the ceremony. He also had 15 members of his campaign staff in attendance.

Following the ceremony, Diehl and his supporters gathered at the Abington Ale House to celebrate.

"When I looked around the room, with more than 70 folks in attendance, every face told a story from the campaign trail," Diehl said.

He added that he spent 21 months working on his campaign.

"In 21 months my emotions have run the gamut from excited to exhausted and then to thankful and elated," Diehl said. "What has given me the greatest pleasure is to feel like the people of Abington, Whitman and East Bridgewater have had their voices heard and will continue to have their voices heard through the 187th session of the General Court.

From the campaign trail, Diehl spoke about making local aid a mandatory part of the state budget and not just "discretionary spending."

Express Editor Meaghan Glassett visited the Statehouse on Monday and was able to hear about Diehl's first week on the job.

During his first week, he has been in contact with Minority Leader Bradley Jones and the rest of the leadership team. The leadership team is responsible for committee assignments and also for administrative work. They are also involved in legislation and are the voice of the caucus.

Jones said the state representatives were asked to come up with a wish list for committee assignments and they began submitting them as of last week. He said he has begun to conduct a second round of meetings with some of the state representatives to ask follow-up questions. Jones expects the assignments to be completed by the end of next week.

"I was not surprised to hear that Geoff was named Citizen of the Year by the Whitman Express. I made several visits to Geoff's district during the campaign and I found him to not only be a tenacious campaigner, but a truly committed member of his community. Even prior to being elected to public office, he was working to make his district a better place, and that is a truly admirable quality," Minority Leader Bradley Jones said. "I congratulate Geoff and wish him the very best during his first term and look forward to working alongside him to make his district and the Commonwealth as a whole a better place to live, work and raise a family."

On Diehl's wish list for committee assignments are Ways and Means and the Education Committee.

Diehl said Ways and Means is on the top of his list because it would allow him to have the opportunity to review every bill that may become law.

"Ways and Means is the most powerful committee because it touches on every bill. It is a great pulse on what is happening here," Diehl said. "It would allow me to have more of a voice as a part of the minority party."

**Obits**

- Shirley R. (Robinson) O'Connor, 93, former employee of GTE
- Corey A. Hatch, 52, former Whitman resident
- Augustine T. Walackas, 92, NASCAR driver
- Michael Pecoraro, 96, former Shaw's employee
- Elizabeth C. LeFort, 23, WHRHS graduate
- Patricia (Horton) Sites, 58
- Joseph E. Brotherton, 82, World War II veteran
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Second on his list is the Education Committee. Diehl said this is an important committee because two of the towns in his district (Abington and East Bridgewater) will be working with the Massachusetts School Building Authority for new construction.

"It is very important to my district, and as a former liaison to the Whitman-Hanson Regional School Committee, it is near and dear to my heart," Diehl said.

A majority of Diehl's time is spent in a hearing room in the basement of the Statehouse where he works with his aide Lynnel Cox of East Bridgewater. Diehl said Cox was not only someone who was dedicated to working for his campaign, but was also someone who understands what is important to the people of the district.

Diehl said he and Cox have been contacted by a number of organizations that want to schedule meetings with the new state representative.

"I feel it is my obligation to take every meeting, so I am aware of all services requested for this district," he said. "It will give me an idea about what is on the horizon for issues statewide, such as the re-filing of the casino bill."

Diehl is currently working on co-sponsoring a bill called the Homeowners Mortgage Protection Act. The bill would provide protection for people who have had radical changes in their financial status and are unable to refinance. The bill would allow for a mortgage to be switched to a lower interest mortgage, which would help protect the bank with the original loan and give homeowners the chance to stay afloat.

Diehl said one of the good signs he sees in terms of the economy is that the Mass. Taxpayers Association has reported that the receipts for the state are up close to five million.

"It's a positive sign for the future, but it won't counteract the \$1.5 to \$2 billion deficit the state is facing in the current budget," Diehl said. "Typically, the government's receipts are lagging on consumer spending, but at least you can see a light at the end of the tunnel."

Diehl said he believes reducing the tax rate to five percent will be critical to increasing small business growth and yielding more jobs.

"I had a vision before the election that I would have a chance to influence the state government by making it more responsible to the towns, but also learning about issues that are very important to the state as a whole and it's been very eye opening," he said. "It's important for us to look at issues that shape the overall economy and not the district."

Diehl said he feels his chief role is to be the leading "cheerleader" for business and industry to locate in the district's towns.

"My priority is to keep or create as many jobs as I can for my constituents," Diehl said.

"Being named Citizen of the Year is great, but I felt I was honored enough when I was elected," Diehl said. "This is icing on the cake."

He added, "When I think of past recipients like June O'Leary, Christine May-Stafford and Quentin Yanuss, who are truly dedicated to the town of Whitman, I'm glad people recognize I have the same passion and desire to do the best I can for a town that has been so great to me and my family."

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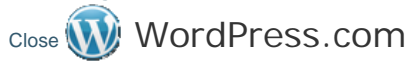
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