

Bishop earns accolades from conservative business advocate

Right-leaning U.S. Chamber honors only 18 House Dems

By Joe Darrow

March 27, 2009

During his fall 2008 campaign, Rep. Tim Bishop (D-Southampton) drew flack from Republicans for allegedly casting "liberal" votes 99 percent of the time. But the right-leaning U.S Chamber of Commerce seems to have a different take on Bishop's record last year, as they have awarded him the 2008 Spirit of Enterprise Award.

Most of the policies advocated by the Chamber are generally associated with a Republican platform, such as reduction of taxes on businesses, offshore drilling and decreased environmental regulations on industry. So, unsurprisingly, only 18 of the 235 Democratic members of the House of Representatives in 2008 — the second session of the 110th Congress — received the U.S. Chamber award.

Of them, Bishop is the sole representative from New York.

"In the face of unprecedented economic challenges and in the midst of an election cycle, the 110th Congress made some historic and courageous decisions that impacted the lives of every American," Thomas Donohue, Chamber president and CEO, stated in a release from Bishop's office. "The Spirit of Enterprise Award identifies those lawmakers that truly stepped up to the plate and demonstrated real leadership in making this country a place where businesses can continue to grow and create jobs."

The award is made based on Congressional voting record for business and economic issues.

The largest contributing factor to the Chamber's show of approval for Bishop was the congressman's ongoing effort to expand the H2B visa program, according to Bishop spokesman Will Jenkins. H2B visas grant foreigners temporary residency to perform seasonal or one-time nonagricultural work. On Long Island, H2B workers play a role in the construction, health care, landscaping, restaurant and hotel industries, among others.

As in the past, Bishop plans to push legislation that would increase the number of H2B visas available, his spokesman said. The current national cap is 66,000 annually.

"He's tried to do what he thinks is right for Long Island businesses," Jenkins said.

"Our nation's economy is driven by the entrepreneurial spirit, and I am glad that Long Island businesses know I am a staunch ally," Bishop stated in the release. "I will continue to support pro-growth policies that get our economy back on track in a responsible manner."

On the whole, Jenkins said, Bishop is more concerned with voting to benefit his constituents than toeing an ideological line. "His biggest thing is representing folks in constituent services and what he hears from folks in the population," the spokesman said.