

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lee Zeldin Officially Announces Candidacy for Congress

As Prepared

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Thank you Bill, for that warm introduction and for your hospitality in hosting us today in the wonderful Town of East Hampton. As a military veteran, I can think of no better place to make today's announcement than an American Legion hall. I would also like to thank the Legionnaires of Amagansett for allowing me to use their venue.

Good Afternoon, Suffolk County. As Bill just told you, I am Lee Zeldin, and I am humbled and honored to stand before you today and officially announce my candidacy for the United States House of Representatives from New York's First Congressional District.

I make this announcement as a proud Shirley homeowner, where I am living the decades-old American dream. With my family, I have returned from military service to buy a house and start my career in the suburbs of Long Island.

After finishing my Army commitment, where I was entrusted to serve my nation as a paratrooper, military magistrate and federal prosecutor, there was no better place to bring my wife Diana and our twin, year-old daughters, Mikayla and Arianna.

Our young family has been tested early and often. Our girls, born in their twenty-fifth week at less than a pound and a half were counted out by their doctors and beat the odds. They have fought hard to be in the audience with us today (PAUSE APPLAUSE).

We are poised to take the next major step. Because of my love for my family, my pride in my nation and a call to service, I am compelled to make this run for Congress.

On a daily basis, New Yorkers represent America's best. With a proud history that stems from building and supporting the greatest city in the world, we have a steely edge that sets us apart. We deserve a government that works. We need leaders committed to protecting us from unnecessary obstacles and keep our interests at the forefront of their collective agenda.

On Long Island, we are a proud group of independent thinkers with specific needs. History has shown that when we vote, regardless of party we vote for the best candidate. Because of this, we have every right to expect strong elected officials throughout our state.

No Congressional leader from another district somewhere else in the country will ever represent the issues affecting us on Eastern Long Island one hundred percent of the time. This is important because now more than ever, the hardworking men and women of New York's First Congressional District need an advocate.

We need a champion, a bulldog that is going to fight for us and not a lapdog for Nancy Pelosi's misguided agenda (PAUSE).

I am that bulldog. I moved from the portable classrooms of William Floyd School District to Law School graduation from Albany at 23 to military service that took me to the far reaches of the war on terror, at the tip of our nation's diplomatic spear.

And I'm back and I'm here to serve.

But as any tried and true New Yorker knows, talk is cheap.

We're sick and tired of hearing empty promises about tomorrow. More so than anywhere else, New Yorkers have trouble facing our unfair costs of living and inefficient government. Because of this, tomorrow must begin today.

We need people of action that take action. We need leaders unafraid to step out front to lead. We need public servants that are committed to serving the public.

We don't elect people to office to turn themselves and their families into millionaires. The soul of our campaign is built upon a foundation of public integrity and selfless leadership. Together, we share the challenges of owning homes and raising families on Long Island.

Fellow citizens of the First Congressional District, I am ready for this challenge. I am prepared to continue serving my country. I will represent our great communities and attack our common challenges.

My plan of action focuses primarily on five key areas.

Reducing our high cost of living.

Support our senior citizens.

Protecting our military veterans.

Enhancing our national security.

And finally, securing our nation's borders.

Just as the generation of my grandparents —the greatest generation—returned victorious from World War Two and moved to the suburbs of Long Island, my peers are positioned to become our nation's next greatest generation.

Unfortunately, Long Island holds the dubious distinction of boasting America's highest tax rates. People my age are heading South and West in record numbers, creating a brain drain that amounts to a slow suicide of our communities.

It's about time we had a leader with a voice on Capitol Hill that will stand up and shout when he realizes he's being used as a puppet for his party. This leadership vacuum is directly responsible for driving young families from the Island. We're tired of our concerns regarding issues like aircraft noise complaints entering a bureaucratic abyss seemingly never finding resolution—when the simple answers are often readily apparent. My generation is tired of being disenfranchised and seeing their most basic needs ignored.

Raising a family is expensive enough and taxes only add to the challenges that already face us. Of all the things Mikayla and Arianna have taught me, I must say I've learned the most when they doubled my exposure to the joys of diapers, bottles and late-night feedings (PAUSE LAUGH).

To facilitate this transformation we need smart, effective governance. In Congress we must avoid tax increases in virtually all situations. Instead of funding catfish research at Auburn and ferries to nowhere in Alaska, we need to keep hard-earned tax dollars here from Mastic to Mattituck.

Efficient governance would also find relief for the Alternative Minimum Tax. It is unconscionable that the AMT is not indexed to inflation and recent tax cuts. This lack of foresight adds an extra burden that was never intended to impact the middle class. Enough with plugging this plan's holes on a yearly basis—we need to change the law accordingly and permanently.

I also recognize the need for creative leadership to stimulate the economy. In order to keep and attract young talent, we also need to create jobs. With tremendous federal assets like Brookhaven National Laboratory and Plum Island in our backyard, we're already at a distinct advantage. My vision for attracting bright young minds would begin by providing housing for talented young scientists and engineers on BNL property.

For many of the same reasons driving young families away, our seniors also face an uphill battle in trying to stay on Long Island. They deserve to spend their retired years on our beautiful beaches if they so desire.

First and foremost, we need to address the outlandish costs of prescription drugs. Our founding fathers promised life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Access to good health care is the foundation to these inalienable rights.

My focus is three-fold

- We need to give the Secretary of Health and Human Services the ability to negotiate the cost of prescription drugs.
- We need to limit which drugs we approve for federally funded dispersal.
- Finally, I would allow FDA-approve drugs from outside the country to give everyone better access to the coverage that they deserve.

Many of our senior citizens are military veterans. As we have a new generations of veterans returning from their own service in Iraq and Afghanistan, an age-old set of problems continue to plague them.

We must ensure that the mistakes of Walter Reed are never repeated. We must take an active approach to healing our returning warriors with both physical and mental wounds. Nothing bothers me more then when our leaders in Congress engage in Monday morning quarterbacking, focused solely on placing blame.

If their energy was directed at this issue earlier, and closer attention was paid to military healthcare, our wounded heroes once they returned to America would never had to face the injustices of this fiasco.

Likewise, we need to heal the invisible wounds of war.

Tonight, nearly two hundred thousand veterans will go to sleep cold, hungry and alone. While eleven percent of our country has worn the uniform, a disproportionate one in four homeless are military veterans.

This problem is almost invariably tied to mental illness. Our heroes deserve better, and we must attack this travesty. Nearly one third of our armed forces will return from Iraq and Afghanistan with some form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. We must remove the stigma of mental illness and confront the symptoms of P.T.S.D. with extreme vigor.

When they're still serving us in the field, our warriors need the best equipment and best protection possible. Most important, when our troops return from Iraq they absolutely must have the support to do so with their heads victoriously held high rather than defeated, hung low under the white flag of defeat. It all begins with attitude.

Unfortunately, there are too many people in Congress who have politically aligned themselves to win if we lose in Iraq. This is un-American as it undermines the hard work of our troops in the field.

I stand on this soapbox today knowing first-hand what goes on in THAT sandbox.

I can think of no better symbol of Long Island than the 106<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing a few miles west of here at Gabreski Field. This unit executes our nation's most important mission, as they're dedicated to the moral obligation of rescuing our downed aircrews and operators behind enemy lines.

And when they're not rescuing servicemembers, they're out patrolling the Atlantic for rescues in extreme weather conditions.

Part of our efforts on behalf of the military will begin with providing the 106<sup>th</sup> with our uncompromised support for their mission and manpower. We will ensure that they have the best equipment possible to execute their crucial duties.

Supporting our national security also requires securing our borders. In these uncertain times, keeping accountability of those who come into our country is paramount to national security. Too often, terrorists with intent to harm have used government-issued identification to carry out their attacks. We cannot afford to make these mistakes again, and by providing criminals with this tried and true tool, we make ourselves vulnerable.

Because of the very composition of our nation, we are all the sons and daughters of immigrants. And as I stand here before you this afternoon talking about restoring the Suffolk Country dream, it is only fair that the American dream remains viable for citizens from around the world interested in coming to America.

However, we will not support a free-for-all.

The most disrespectful thing we can ever do to those who immigrate to our country and follow the honest path towards obtaining citizenship according to our stated rules is to allow those who break our laws to skip the line.

Rewarding criminal activity only serves to undermine the rule of law. As a lawyer, anyone who accepts anything less shocks me. As a leader, I will not let this happen. As

Rhoda\_\_\_\_\_ so eloquently and accurately put it: when you have a flood, the first thing you do is shut off the water, you don't first start to bale it out.

We must seal our borders, and deport the worst illegal aliens that continue committing crimes. We must punish employers who hire illegal aliens and fail to pay the required taxes. We should celebrate the hardworking businessmen and women of our community like Leo O'Toole, who obey the law.

If these needs are not readily apparent to a Congressman, then they have no business holding office. And if a Congressman must wait for party approval before making decisions, then they has no right to call himself a leader.

Public service is a vocation. It is not a nine-to-five job or a means to a paycheck. And as your Congressman, the people of Eastern Long island will never question what they're getting from their Congressman.

We cannot continue to ignore the inherent injustice that this Congress has failed our families and continues to fail our great nation. It is clear that Washington is too far removed and disengaged from the boiler-plate issues that impact our daily lives here on Long Island.

At the end of each day, when I tuck my twin daughters into bed, I am reminded of the higher calling we all must answer to. The simple fact that they're watching me speak to you today is the single greatest motivation in my life.

They're a pair of fighters, a pair of true New Yorkers who already know how to tackle any challenge and deserve only the best.

Because of my girls...all three of my girls... I will not ignore the leadership vacuum that my country now needs me to fill.

After serving in uniform, I am now ready, willing and able to storm Capitol Hill.

Fellow Americans, fellow New Yorkers, fellow Suffolk County residents, help is on the way.

From this day forward, the voices of those ignored and disenfranchised will be heard from Montauk Point to Blue Point.

From Greenport to Moriches, change is imminent.

And from Plum Island to Middle Island, make no mistake—things will never be the same.

Ladies and Gentlemen you have been duly warned: Lee Zeldin is here and Long Island's future begins now.