

# Board of Regents rep may be re-elected

## Islander has served since 1991

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ADVANCE ALBANY BUREAU

ALBANY — Dr. Diane O'Neill McGivern of Dongan Hills stands a good chance to be re-elected as the Staten Island-Brooklyn representative to the state Board of Regents, lawmakers said yesterday.

The Board of Regents is the state's highest education policy board. The 16-member board oversees education from kindergarten through graduate and professional schools. Its members are selected by the state Legislature.

Mrs. McGivern, 55, who heads New York University's nursing division, was first elected to the board in March 1991, replacing the late Dr. Gerald Lustig of Todt Hill, who passed away before his seven-year term expired.

Mrs. McGivern was one of numerous candidates interviewed for the seat by members of the Assembly Committees on Education and Higher Education. Another Staten Islander interviewed for the spot yesterday was Community School Board member Jerry Cammarata.

"I am impressed with Diane McGivern. One would have to consider her the leading candidate based on how she has performed as a regent and the interview. I think she has a good perspective on what needs to be done," said Assembly Education Committee Chairman Steven Saunders, a Manhattan Democrat who conducted the interviews and has major sway in the selection process.

The Staten Island legislative delegation is also strongly behind Mrs. McGivern's re-election. Saunders said he has also received favorable reviews about Mrs. McGivern from Brooklyn lawmakers.

But Mrs. McGivern's support is not unanimous. The New York State School Boards Association did not recommend her re-election.

Four of the 16 Board of Regents seats are up this year. Saunders said a vote on the recommended candidates is planned for March 14.

Regarding the state of education, Mrs. McGivern said there have been successes the last several years, including a reduction in the dropout rate.

Saunders questioned whether the Regents' activities were too wide-ranging. Aside from overseeing public and private schools, the board licenses, disciplines and sets standards for 36 different professions, such as accounting, engineering, nursing and psychology.

Mrs. McGivern said the broad authority was appropriate to understand how to educate and prepare students for the workforce. "We think of children in a much broader way. What are they going to do in the world of work," she said of New York's youth.

Elsewhere, Mrs. McGivern said more needs to be done to prepare non-English-speaking immigrants, to improve health conditions and to overhaul a "seriously flawed" system of special education.

In addition, she said the state has to address the disparity of resources in various schools. Even on Staten Island, some schools lack even basic materials and supplies. The Board of Regents has proposed ways to provide more equitable funding to needy school districts, she said.

Cammarata, 48, of Rosebank, said the Board of Regents has to be more "user-friendly". He suggested that some of the monthly meetings be held in different parts of the state instead of in Albany.

Alluding to past battles over social issues — such as teaching students about tolerance toward gays and lesbians — Cammarata said curricula should be set at the school district level instead of by the city Board of Education. Any curriculum would have to be approved by the Board of Regents, he added.