



Regent Alum Scott Rigell Elected to Congress

By Mindy Hughes

Scott Rigell '90 (Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship) needed to know with certainty that he was willing to serve his nation in Congress. Arriving at that knowledge was a critical and distinct process from actually deciding to campaign for public office. Rigell, a successful businessman in southeastern Virginia, won decisively over his Democratic opponent in the November 2010 midterm election and now represents Virginia's 2nd District in the House of Representatives.

Two days after the election, Rigell still exhibited the energy and enthusiasm he displayed on election night as he addressed hundreds of delighted supporters at the Westin Hotel in Virginia Beach. To some degree, however, that excitement was tempered by a serious tone as he discussed the deliberations that led to his first political campaign.

Seated in the same chair where he held meetings with trusted advisors, Rigell appeared relaxed and comfortable. Yet, his voice and mannerisms—leaning forward and slowing his words to underscore a point—exemplified a man who has accepted the mantle of leadership and has resolved in his heart and mind to work in Congress to put the United States on what he and other conservatives believe is a more successful path.

"I was deeply moved by something Governor Mike Huckabee once said about the need for each of us to fight for America and for our values," he explained. "I thought, what if everyone has the mind-set of 'No, not me.' I didn't come to the conclusion at that

moment to run, but I needed to know that I was willing to run."

In the fall of 2008, Rigell had been asked to run for Congress by a friend in politics. The request stunned him, so much so that he changed the subject. Although he and his wife, Teri, talked and prayed about the request for a week, they agreed Rigell should not run because of business and family obligations. These were the same reasons

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he had declined when he was approached on other occasions to run for local office in Virginia Beach.

"I've always known it's important to have good leadership in government, and for many years, I've tried to help the right people—and I didn't ask for anything in return," he emphasized. "I just believe it's important to elevate good leadership."

After telling Teri about the "overwhelming emotion" he experienced upon hearing Huckabee speak, they didn't talk about it for three weeks, until Teri finally said she believed it was her job "to slow you down." Rigell emphasized to her that he wasn't trying to decide if he should run for Congress, but rather if he was willing to run.

For the next nine weeks, they quietly and prayerfully sought counsel. After making his decision, Rigell called the friend to whom he had earlier declined the challenge to run for Congress, who said she was just about to ask him to reconsider. Rigell then contacted a number of key people in the district and received unanimous affirmation for his decision.

A visit to Washington to meet Republican leaders, under the auspices of the National Republican Congressional Committee, sealed the deal. "Driving home from Washington, I got on the phone and started getting endorsements and raising money," he laughed.

Conducting the campaign was serious business though. "I was running with only one acceptable outcome. Once we flipped the switch, I never, ever doubted that we did the right thing," he said. "We were going to run with every resource we had. We were all in, spiritually and emotionally."

As he prepared to begin serving his term, Rigell reflected on the challenges facing the 112th Congress.

"Washington is broken; it's corrupt. But we must believe we can push back against this culture. We must believe we can control spending in a responsible way and turn the direction of this country. We need leaders who can make difficult decisions that may cost them the next election but are the right decisions for our country," he said.

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