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Getting Congress to read all about it

Q&A with Mark DiMassimo of Rye and Eric Yaverbaum of Larchmont

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Two Sound Shore men behind a movement to abandon bottled water are now on a mission to make members of Congress read every bill that comes across their desks. The colossal task has led Rye's Mark DiMassimo, 47, and Larchmont's Eric Yaverbaum, 48, to launch ReadtoVote.org. The Web site urges people to make their elected representatives pledge not to vote on a bill unless they have read every word of it.

Q&A

Q: What is ReadtoVote.org all about? Is it unrealistic to think that legislators can read every single page of every bill they vote on?

A: Yaverbaum: Mark and I think it is shocking that we no longer even read the history that we are making before we decide to make it. Our Web site has become a tool for discourse about an intolerable conflict. On one hand, our legislators are responsible for every word of the laws they pass. On the other hand, the length and complexity of legislation is so great that they do not even read the laws they pass; hence, how can

they communicate accurately to their constituents what's in those bills?

A: DiMassimo: Once Congress members and senators recommit to take their responsibilities seriously, the "status quo" would really have to change. Legislation would need to be shorter and clearer. This would be a good thing. The original U.S. Constitution is — without amendments — 12 pages. The health care bill is well over a thousand.

Q: Tell us about your plan to write the health care reform bill on the steps of Capitol Hill.

A: Yaverbaum: Well, that does not seem to be getting a great reception from the Cap-

itol Hill police. Our initial advertising launch campaign was a search to find 1,018 chalkers so that each one could chalk a page of the bill on the steps you walk up to the Capitol. While we have the chalkers enlisted and ready to go now, we don't have the official permission and we're certainly not going to do anything at the Capitol they don't want us doing.

A: DiMassimo: The point of chalking the steps was not simply just to enact a stunt. It really was intended to bring a greater visual attention and awareness to just how many words there are in a bill (165,425).

Q: ReadtoVote.org comes after your campaign to get rid



Submitted photo

Eric Yaverbaum and Mark DiMassimo recently launched ReadtoVote.org, a Web site that asks members of Congress not to vote for a bill unless they've read every page.

of bottled water. Are there similarities between the two?

A: Yaverbaum: Both initiatives really package education. We just felt that if people

knew more about the facts and the issues they would not only be more engaged, they would do something about it.