

Paul Tonko led the Fight to Protect Funding for People With Addictions

For Immediate Release

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[More information on the NAADAC Advocacy in Action conference](#) .

NAADAC is recognizing the work of [Paul D. Tonko](#) (D-N.Y.) at its Advocacy in Action conference this spring. Rep. Tonko, who serves as the Vice Co-Chair of the House Addiction, Treatment and Recovery Caucus, has been an prominent advocate for addiction and mental health issues.

The NAADAC Public Policy committee selected Rep. Tonko as its Legislator of the Year because of his outspoken support for the implementation of the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity & Addiction Equity Act and his resistance to cutting \$98 million from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA).

Congressman Tonko represents the 21st District of New York, which includes Albany, the state capital. Serving his second term in Congress, Rep. Tonko came to Washington, D.C., with over two decades of administrative, legislative and policy experience having served in the New York State Assembly from 1983 to 2007, and as President and CEO of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) from 2007-2008.

Tonko, a long-time advocate for accessible treatment, spoke out on the important role of the

Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equality Act to the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Weekly in May 2011.

“This should be a priority for the administration and I’m working to make sure the voices of my constituents are heard. The millions of Americans suffering from mental illness and substance abuse disorders deserve the opportunity to live happy, healthy and productive lives, that’s why we need the guidelines for enforcement.”

And he emphasized the importance of addiction issues when he joined the Addiction Treatment and Recovery caucus in January 2011.

“I am looking forward to working with my colleagues in the bipartisan Congressional Addiction, Treatment and Recovery Caucus. Mental health and addiction are issues that affect millions of Americans and I am sensitive to their unique needs. We can work together to ensure that people in need have access to health care and newly-available treatment options. I am happy to serve in the capacity as a vice co-chair and look forward to working with the caucus to advance sensitive public policy to help improve the lives of those with mental health conditions and addiction disorders.”

Building on his work in the New York State Assembly, where he fought for one of the nation's strongest mental health parity laws (known as "Timothy's Law"), Rep. Tonko has promoted fair and equitable health care policies that strengthen our communities and protect our most vulnerable citizens.

Rep. Tonko graduated from Clarkson University with a degree in mechanical and industrial engineering. He is a lifelong resident of the city of Amsterdam, New York.

The award will be presented to Rep. Tonko at the 2012 Advocacy Conference being held in Washington, D.C., on March 20, 2012. For full details on the conference, visit www.naadac.org/conferences/advocacy-conference

