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Engel will seek Olver's 1st Congressional District seat

By **CATHERINE BAUM**
Staff Writer

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SOUTHAMPTON - Southampton resident Michael Engel has announced his intention to run as an independent candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives in the 1st Congressional District next year.

Engel, 65, of 22 Pomeroy Meadow Road, said he wants to be a different kind of congressman. He is running for the seat held by 18-year incumbent U.S. Rep. John Olver, D-Amherst.

"There's a poison in the atmosphere now," Engel said. "I'm scared about the future of democracy in America. That's what brought me in. I don't want to see the American system go down the tubes."

He is professor emeritus of political science at Westfield State College and owner of Cherry Picked Books, a used bookstore in Easthampton. He is also a former selectman and School Committee member in Easthampton.

Engel said his focus would be an economy that benefits working people.

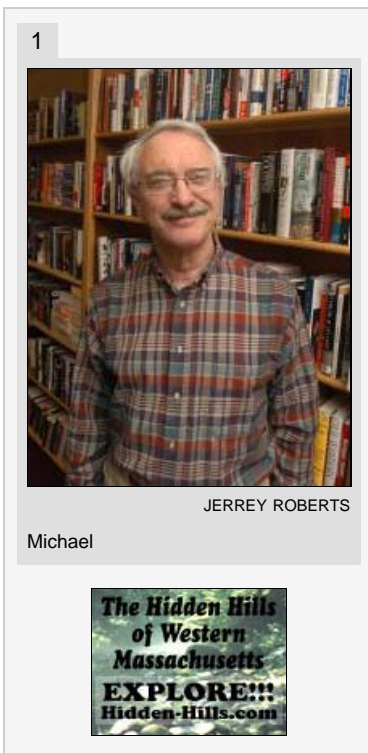
Unemployment is an important issue to Engel, who vowed to be an ally and a resource for local citizen groups including Western Massachusetts Jobs With Justice, Western Massachusetts Coalition for Immigrant and Worker Rights and Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture.

"Any change really has to come from the bottom up," Engel said.

Many Americans are losing their jobs, homes and savings. While Engel said he voted for President Barack Obama, he said he is upset about what the federal government is not doing. Infrastructure, "green" building and education are areas that need work, he believes. "Democrats are defensive for President Obama," he said. "They don't want to be critical and as an independent I don't have that restriction."

For the next five months, Engel will try to build a network of volunteers to collect at least the 2,000 signatures required to place his name on the ballot. He is using social networking Web sites like Facebook and Twitter to create an online presence and recruit volunteers. His Web site is www.EngelforCongress.org.

Easthampton Mayor Michael A. Tautznik, who served with Engel on the Easthampton Select Board, said Engel "certainly has a point of view that's not as well represented in Congress."



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"Michael is passionate about what he believes," Tautznik said.

Engel received his Ph.D. in political science at the City University of New York. He has published two books, "State and Local Government: Fundamentals and Perspectives" and "The Struggle for Control of Public Education: Market Ideology vs. Democratic Values."

He lives in Southampton with his wife, Jacqueline Haskins. They have two daughters, Sara, 29 and Emily, 25.

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