

Rep. Bilirakis Presents \$2 Million Civics Education Grant to Hillsborough County Public Schools

PALM HARBOR, Fla. (11 Dec.) -- Before a group of students and administrators from Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) on Monday, U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.) presented a check for more than \$2 million from the Department of Education to HCPS to assistance in improving civic education for students and the wider public.

Congressman Bilirakis, who personally contacted the Department of Education on behalf of HCPS, presented the check to Superintendent Mary Ellen Elia, Freedom High School Principal Richard Bartels and Liberty Middle School Principal James Ammirati.

"This award is very prestigious and I would like to personally congratulate everyone at Hillsborough County Public Schools for their hard work and dedication to making our community and students more responsible and informed participants in our nation's democracy," said Bilirakis. "Our system of government is driven by the engagement and participation of its citizens. By implementing a comprehensive civic education program like this in Hillsborough County, we are ensuring a better future for us all."

A comprehensive civics education program, Project ELECT - Educating Learners to Engage in Civics Today - will educate HCPS students, teachers, and community members about government and democracy. The grant will provide students with the opportunity to meet with local and national political leaders. Only three grants of this kind were presented by the Department of Education in fiscal year 2007, with HCPS being the largest at \$2,040,147 -- the other two were under \$500,000.