

As summer draws to a close, students throughout south Alabama are returning to the classroom. For high school juniors and seniors, this is the time to start exploring options for after graduation.

Many students will attend traditional four year colleges and universities, some will attend technical schools, some will enter the working world, and a select few will attend one of our nation's service academies.

As a member of Congress, I have the privilege of nominating qualified young men and women from Alabama's First District to our United States Service Academies. Each year, I am so pleased at the number of young men and women throughout south Alabama who are interested in attending a service academy.

To receive an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, the U.S. Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, or the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at King's Point, you must have a nomination; however, the application process for the U.S. Coast Guard Academy at New London is slightly different and does not require a nomination from my office.

For those south Alabama students interested in attending a service academy, it is never too

soon to begin the nomination process. In fact, I am currently accepting applications for the class of 2014, whose students will enter the academies in June 2010.

The deadline for all applications is December 1, 2009.

I also encourage students to apply with Alabama's two U.S. senators for a nomination, Senator Richard Shelby and Senator Jeff Sessions. Students who have a parent in active military who has served for at least eight years are also eligible to apply to the president's and vice president's offices for a nomination.

Students interested in receiving a nomination should contact my office to receive an application packet that includes details of the requirements for obtaining a nomination and general information about the academies. This information is also posted on my website at <http://bonner.house.gov>

By law, I am permitted to have up to five constituents from the First District at each academy at any given time. In late December, I will review all information in the completed files and select the candidates to nominate. I can nominate up to 10 nominees for each vacancy to each academy. Once nominations from my office are made, the selection process at each academy begins.

In addition to the basic age requirements, candidates for admission must also display significant degrees of academic achievement (displayed by high school transcripts as well as SAT and/or ACT scores); have demonstrated leadership in school, church, or community activities; be of good moral character; and successfully complete a medical review and physical aptitude examination.

Each of these factors is carefully considered by the academies when making their final evaluations to choose those candidates most qualified for the demands of military academies and service as military officers.

Nominees will receive notification of their selection for an appointment from January through May.

If you are not selected by a service academy, there is always next year. Anyone between the ages of 17 and 22 on the proposed date of entry may apply for a nomination as long as they are not married or supporting children.

It is important to note that academies view an extra year of maturity favorably.

Each of the military academies does an excellent job of preparing students for a challenging future by providing rigorous academic and athletic demands. It takes a special person to withstand the program, and if you think you qualify for admission, I encourage you to apply

early.

I invite all interested high school juniors and seniors to my annual Academy Night on Monday, October 12 from 7:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. in the auditorium of St. Paul's Episcopal School in Mobile.

Academy Night emphasizes the educational opportunities available at the distinguished United States Service Academies and provides information on the requirements and procedures for seeking a congressional nomination. Representatives from each of the academies will give a short presentation on their respective institutions.

Our office looks forward to working with any interested students and their families toward a nomination to one of the five academies. For more information, please contact Brooks Chew in my district office at 251-690-2811.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.