

State Rep. Angelo “Skip” Saviano, along with the House Republicans, has called for an investigation into the state’s top utility companies’ contracts with their electric suppliers.

ComEd raised the electric rate by 24 percent in January to make up for the increasing market price of electricity. ComEd has not increased its rates for 10 years.

Saviano believes the dilemma is not simply a ComEd or Ameren issue, passing the rate increases on to consumers, but rather an issue to be resolved with the suppliers. The investigation, called upon by Saviano and his fellow House Republicans, enlists the Illinois Commerce Commission and the Illinois Attorney General to look over the contracts.

On the Democratic end, Senator Debbie Halvorson says the consumer relief package from Commonwealth Edison has offered much needed utility assistance - \$60 million - for rate relief programs in order to help senior citizens and low income customers.

Halvorson notes that there are so many seniors on fixed incomes who struggle to for medication, but who also need reliable power to run air conditioning to help keep cool and minimize the health risks that come with summer heat.

Citing the need to use 21st century methods to keep parents updated with the most current location of sex offenders, State Rep. Franco Coladipietro sponsored legislation that would provide instant email alerts to parents with recent relocations of sex offenders.

Coladipietro contends that the email alerts will make it easier for parents to keep on top of who is living and working in their neighborhood. Under current law, any individual can access the state police website information based on zip code of where convicted sex offenders are currently residing. Under HB 42, the state police would post a form on their website where parents can sign up for email alerts advising them when sex offenders changes residence, employment, or school attendance to a location within a particular zip code or within a specified distance from an address. The bill now advances to the senate for further consideration.

Under legislation advanced by State Rep. Dennis M. Reboletti, law enforcement will now have the ability to track and monitor electronic communications – such as chat rooms, My Space and Face Book - between sexual predators and young children. HB39, co-sponsored by Reboletti, gives law enforcement officials, with the approval of the local state’s attorney, the ability to intercept electronic communications during a child pornography investigation. Local prosecutors would have to also secure a court order within the first 48 hours of the investigation to allow for law enforcement to continue monitoring the electronic communications. HB 39 passed both houses and is awaiting the governor’s signature.

Legislation sponsored by State Rep John D’Amico will allow parents of new drivers to view their child’s record online. HB518, amends the Illinois Vehicle Code, and allows parents to become more involved in their teen’s driver’s education, says D’Amico.

Chicago Heights' Mayor Anthony De Luca announces that his town’s annual Summerfest will be held a little closer to autumn this year. The three-day festival, traditionally held during the Fourth of July weekend, has been moved to Labor Day weekend. As in previous years, the festival will include a fireworks display, carnival, motorcycle and car shows, entertainment, food vendors, a waterball competition between local fire departments, and a softball game between the city police and fire departments and.

Congressman Don Manzullo urged his colleagues to join the battle that gives foreign governments an unfair competitive advantage over U.S. manufacturers. Manzullo, who co-chairs the Congressional Manufacturing Caucus, urged his colleagues to support and urge House leaders to act this year on the Fair Currency Act of 2007, which would define foreign currency misalignment as an illegal export subsidy actionable under U.S. trade law. It would allow the U.S. to slap countervailing duties on any country misaligning its currency. Most countries in the world allow their currencies to "float" so they are valued by market conditions. Economists estimate China's currency misalignment alone gives Chinese products a 15-40 percent competitive advantage over products made in the United States.

This column is written by Nina Albano Vidmer, executive director of the Italian American Political Coalition. To submit information, please fax to 708-401-0360 by the first of each month for consideration in the following month's issue.