

U.S. Rep. Don Manzullo joined several colleagues and American manufacturing groups in urging House Democrat leaders to call up bipartisan legislation that would help level the playing field for U.S. manufacturers consistently harmed by the unfair trade practices of foreign governments. H.R. 2942, which Rep. Manzullo co-sponsored last year, would penalize foreign governments that give their companies a competitive advantage over U.S. manufacturers by manipulating their currencies. Specifically, the bill would define foreign currency manipulation as an illegal export subsidy actionable under U.S. trade law.

Most countries allow their currencies to “float” so they are valued by market conditions. China and a few other countries take actions to weaken the value of their currencies. A lower currency makes it less expensive for a company to export its goods to another country. Economists estimate China’s currency misalignment gives Chinese products a 15-40 percent competitive advantage over products made in the United States.

As Chairman of the House Small Business Committee, Manzullo held several committee hearings on the issue of currency manipulation and has testified on numerous occasions for the need to halt foreign currency manipulation to level the playing field for U.S. manufacturers.

To ensure that seniors are not forced from their homes due to soaring property tax bills, State Rep. Dennis Reboletti is co-sponsoring legislation that would provide property tax relief for senior and disabled citizens.

Rep. Reboletti says that it’s completely unfathomable to force seniors to move out of a home they have lived in for 20 or 30 years because they can’t afford their property taxes. The senior citizen assessment freeze currently freezes the equalized assessed value of your property – meaning, if your property was assessed at \$100,000, the boom in the housing market would not increase your home’s assessment. To be eligible for this program, one must be 65 years of age, have a household income of \$55,000 or less, use the property as the primary residence and have paid the taxes in the prior two tax years.

House Bill 4916 would change the following eligibility requirements for the senior citizen assessment freeze: raise the maximum income limitation from \$55,000 to \$75,000 for homeowners who have lived in their homes for five or more years; decrease the age eligibility to 55 years for the Senior Citizen Assessment Freeze; and exclude social security income when determining eligibility for the Senior Citizen Assessment Freeze.

Additional property tax relief measures include: increase the Senior Citizen Homestead Exemption from \$4000 to \$5500; grant disabled homeowners the opportunity to receive the Senior Citizen Assessment Freeze.

Additional questions can be directed to Reboletti’s office at (630) 530-2730.

Village of Berkeley Mayor Michael Esposito announces that senior citizen residents will have the opportunity to participate in a new taxi share a ride program. This program allows seniors to use discount ride tickets to pay half of any taxi ride within a 50-mile radius of Berkeley (providing that ride begins or ends in Berkeley.) Eligible senior residents must show proof of Berkeley residency, be 62 years of age or older, and must obtain a free Village of Berkeley ID card at the fire station. Discount ride tickets can be purchased at the Village Hall, sold in booklets, for \$10; all rides must be booked through American Taxi Company and your ID card must be shown to the driver at pick up.

Burr Ridge Mayor Gary Grasso announces several summer events, including a classic car show on Saturday, June 21 on Village Center Drive. A summer concert series is also planned. The first three concerts will be held on the Village Green in downtown Burr Ridge from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on the evenings of Friday, July 11, 18 and 25. On August 12, 19 and 26 the concerts move to Tuesday nights from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Harvester Park.

Forest Park Mayor Anthony Calderone announces Groov’n in the Grove, Tuesday, June 17th, July 15th, and August 19th, from 7pm until 10pm at the Forest Park Picnic Grove, 7824 Madison Street. Entertainment TBA. Mark your calendar for Forest Park’s 3rd annual Rib-Fest on September 13th.

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.