

Political Update
November 2007

The Italian American Political Coalition will hold a dinner in honor of Italian-American Judges at on Wednesday, November 7 at Victoria's Beaujolie Banquets, 9950 West. Lawrence Ave, Schiller Park. Cocktails are at 6 p.m. followed by dinner; tickets are \$100 per person. For more information, call Nina at 708-459-8060.

Stressing the need for proper oversight and fiscal restraint, Republican State Representative Franco Coladipietro voted against an increase in Cook and DuPage county's sales tax and Chicago's real estate transfer tax to bail out the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA).

Rep. Coladipietro says that the current mass transit structure does not meet the needs of his suburban constituents. According to Coladipietro, the cold, hard facts are that 80% of residents drive on our roads and bridges and infrastructure is crumbling under our congested roads.

On the other side of the aisle, Democratic State Rep. John D'Amico voted in favor of the funding, calling the measure a necessary reform for Chicago's ailing public transit system. Rep. D'Amico counters that a strong and stable public transit system is necessary to the economy and quality of life of the Chicagoland area.

Senate Bill 572 fell short the necessary 71 votes. It would have increased the sales tax in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will counties bringing in a projected \$400 million for the Regional Transit Authority (RTA). The RTA is comprised of the CTA, Metra and Pace. Forty-eight percent of the projected revenue would have been used for CTA operations with the rest being split between Metra & Pace. In addition, this bill would have allowed the Chicago City Council to increase its real estate transfer tax - bringing in an estimated \$100 million for only CTA operations.

Senate Bill 572 failed in the House, and the Governor previously had stated that he would veto the legislation.

In an effort to increase parental involvement in teens' driving habits, State Representative Dennis Reboletti (R-Elmhurst) co-sponsored legislation which would allow parents free, unlimited access to their teen's driving record online.

Under House Bill 518, parents would be allowed through the Internet, to gain access to their teen's driving record. The new driver must be under 18 years of age and hold a graduated driver's license or instruction permit.

Rep. Reboletti calls the legislation just another tool for parents to use to monitor their teen's driving habits."

Currently, the Secretary of State can furnish an individual's driving record upon receipt of a written request and a \$12 fee. This record includes traffic convictions, status of driver's license stating if it has been revoked, suspended, or cancelled, and notations of accident involvement.

House Bill 518 was recently signed into law by the Governor.

Congressman Don Manzullo voted against a proposed patent reform bill that he says will harm American competitiveness and make it easier for foreign companies to steal our intellectual property and jobs. Although the Patent Reform Act of 2007 (HR 1908) passed the House 220-175, Congressman Manzullo helped build significant bipartisan opposition against it. As a result, the patent-weakening legislation faces an uphill battle in the Senate and opposition from the White House.

Manzullo says the bill would weaken the strong patent system that has protected American entrepreneurs for decades from overseas companies trying to pirate their inventions. According to the congressman, the last thing America should be doing right now is to give foreign companies an even greater opportunity to take our ideas and our jobs.

Manzullo brought together a coalition of more than 300 business and labor organizations – including the National Association of Manufacturers, the AFL-CIO, the University of Illinois and other colleges, and the United Steelworkers – to repair this legislation that he says would weaken the U.S. patent system. Co-chair of the House Manufacturing Caucus, Manzullo held a roundtable discussion on

the issue a few months ago to give American manufacturers an opportunity to share their concerns with the bill.

The issue now heads to the Senate for consideration. Manzullo says he and the coalition will continue to work with the Senators and the White House to fix the bill.

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.