

## **Political Update – May 2005**

State Rep. Rosemary Mulligan spoke to high school students across Illinois participating in the sixth annual Capitol Forum on America's future in March, encouraging them to carry out their visions for the future and to get involved in government.

Rep. Mulligan also honored the Northwest Suburban Marine Corps League and the outstanding Chicagoland Sea Service personnel at their dinner dance in March.

State Rep. John D'Amico hosted a regional meeting in March of the Illinois House Speaker's Bipartisan Summit on State Finances and the Budget. Lawmakers are grappling with how to close a projected \$2.1 billion budget deficit while preserving funding for critical services and programs.

Rep. D'Amico acted to bring more rights to incapacitated voters in Illinois as vice chair of the Elections and Campaign Reform Committee. One measure currently before the committee ensures that voters who are hospitalized just prior to an election are entitled to have an absentee ballot hand-delivered to them. This legislation would guarantee those unexpectedly confined to hospitals near Election Day the right to cast their votes. If approved by the committee the bill will move forward to the house for consideration.

A bill co-sponsored by State Rep. Angelo "Skip" Saviano to establish a reasonable doubt standard for determining if death is the appropriate sentence for first degree murder passed the Illinois House in March. House Bill 2704 is aimed at establishing a stricter standard for the actual sentencing of death, and preventing an innocent person from execution. Under HB 2704: if there is a hinge of doubt that exists among the jury as to the defendant's guilt, the jury may not determine that death is the appropriate sentence, and the court shall sentence the defendant to a term of natural life imprisonment. The bill moves to the senate for further consideration.

Rep. Saviano sponsored another bill to prohibit residential mortgage lenders and investors who receive notice of the time, date and location of a closing, from failing to provide the escrow closer with the necessary loan documents and funds. Under HB 868, lenders who violate these provisions are jointly and severely liable to the borrower for the damages or \$1000 per occurrence, plus reasonable attorneys fees. The bill, which is supported by the Illinois Bar Association, moves to the House for further consideration.

Saviano recently received his committee assignments for the 94<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. He will serve as chairperson of the Committee on Registration and Regulation. This committee deals with professional and occupational statutes in Illinois. Working closely with the Dept. of Professional Regulation, this committee is responsible for ensuring the highest level of public safety through the governmental regulation of different professions and occupations. Saviano will also sit on the Aging, Appropriations-Public Safety, Executive and Public Utilities Committees.

Congressman Don Manzullo recently held a hearing to explore ways to stem the surging costs of medical liability insurance and health care in America. Manzullo says that malpractice insurance premiums have doubled, tripled and even quadrupled recently in certain states and certain health care professionals. Doctors are retiring because of the surging costs, and the emergency rooms are closing, says Manzullo. House Small Business Committee members, which Manzullo chairs, are considering medical liability reform measures before congress, including HR 534, the Help Efficient, Accessible, Low-Cost, Timely Healthcare (HEALTH) Act of 2005.

In an effort to fund the fight against breast cancer, Assistant Majority Leader James DeLeo is sponsoring legislation that is estimated to raise \$3 million annually. A new lotto game, "Ticket for the Cure" will fund breast cancer research, early detection efforts, prevention, screening and treatment, including clinical trials and services for breast cancer victims. Sen. DeLeo has a personal stake in the legislation; his own mother passed away at an early age of breast cancer. While women who have a family history of breast cancer are two to three times more likely to be diagnosed with the disease, 90 percent of women who develop it do not have a family history of the disease. Breast cancer is the leading causes of death in women between the ages of 40 and 55, yet when breast cancer is found early, the five-year survival rate is 96 percent.

Illinois will be the first state to create a lottery game where net proceeds would be dedicated to breast cancer.

Nina Albano Vidmer, Italian American Political Coalition executive director, writes this column. Information for publication in the next issue of Fra Noi should be faxed to 708-338-0997 by the first day of the previous month.