

## **Political Update 7-05**

**By Nina Albano Vidmer**

Italian Americans are making inroads in the judicial arena. Supreme Court Justice Bob Thomas replaces retiring Chief Justice Mary Ann McMorrow. Justice Thomas represents the Second District and has the power of appointing new Circuit Court and Appellate Court justices. Many sports fans remember Thomas for his tenure with the Chicago Bears, where he became the third leading scorer in the team's history. Prior to McMorrow, another Italian American, Moses Harrison, served as chief justice.

Congratulations to Mary Minella, Cheryl Cesario, Joe Sconza, Robert Senechalle Jr. and Darryl Simko who were recently appointed to the position of associate Circuit Court judge. Other qualified Italian-American candidates who were not successful will hopefully keep their hats in the ring and succeed in the next appointment process.

Legislation designed to increase the funding for diabetes research, sponsored by Assistant Senate Majority Leader James DeLeo, passed unanimously from the Senate and the House of Representatives. House Bill 1581 now moves to the Governor's desk for his approval. The legislation creates a new income tax checkoff, the Diabetes Research Check Off, giving individual tax payers the opportunity to make a designation on their income tax return to make contributions to the fund from which grants funding research on diabetes will be made. At least 50 percent of the grants must be used to research juvenile diabetes.

Other bills sponsored by Senator DeLeo that have moved to the governor's desk include: Senate Bill 3 authorizes the State Board of Education to implement and administer a Giant Steps Autism Center for Excellence pilot program; Senate Bill 12 requires insurers to provide coverage for mammograms for women under 40 years of age with a family history of the disease; and House Bill 35 provides that a person convicted of aggravated discharge of a firearm shall receive not more than 4.5 days of good conduct credit for each month of their sentence, even if the victim did not suffer bodily harm.

The Illinois House unanimously voted to pass a bill sponsored by State Rep. Angelo "Skip" Saviano to prohibit required overtime for nurses and hospital workers except in the case of an emergency. Senate Bill 201 is an effort to prevent a patient's safety from being jeopardized due to fatigue among the nurses who treat them, says Rep. Saviano. The serious nursing shortage often requires nurses to work extraordinarily long overtime hours. The bill has unanimously passed the Senate and moves to the governor's office.

A municipality would be permitted to inspect an apartment building prior to its conversion into condominium units, under a bill sponsored by Saviano. Senate Bill 1219, which has passed the Illinois House, also allows the municipality to require that each new proposed condominium unit comply with its current life safety, building and zoning codes. The bill has passed the Senate and next moves to the governor for final consideration.

Illinois Senate Majority Leader Debbie Halvorson has recently advanced a number of bills to the governor's desk focusing on labor disputes and traffic violations. House Bill 1480 amends the Labor Dispute Act to allow persons engaged in picketing the use of a public right of way. This will allow for tents, shelters and vehicles to be parked on highways as long as the picketing does not interfere with traffic signs or signals. Another bill, House Bill 1482, provides that a driver may not receive court supervision, if, within the preceding 12 months, that person has received court

supervision on two previous occasions. This bill is limited to moving violations, and does not apply to other offenses or graduated driver's licenses. Currently there is no restriction on the number of times court supervision can be given for speeding and minor moving violations.

House Small Business Committee Chairman Donald Manzullo says small businesses need freedom from excessive taxation, surging health care costs, burdensome regulations, abusive lawsuits and skyrocketing energy costs to continue to provide opportunities for working Americans. The House has approved legislation calling for a Small Business Bill of Rights that gives America's small employers the tools they need to grow their businesses and create jobs.

If you are interested in and would like more information about the Italian American Political Coalition contact Nina Albano Vidmer at (708) 338-1026, the executive director or visit us on the website, [www.IAPCVOTE.org](http://www.IAPCVOTE.org).