

## **Political Update – August 2005**

**By Nina Albano Vidmer**

Senate Majority Leader Halvorson advanced two bills to the governor's desk today. The first will allow children to accompany their parents in voting booths on Election Day and the second will broaden the definition of child pornography.

House Bill 1125 permits minor children to accompany their parent or guardian into the voting booth as long as a request to do so is made to the election officers and, in the sole discretion of the election officers, the children are not likely to disrupt or interfere with the casting of a vote.

House Bill 1173 will expand the description of child pornography to include transparent clothing. Currently, this law states that child pornography contains pictures of children unclothed, which provides producers of child pornography with a safe harbor from prosecution by photographing their victims with transparent clothing.

Both bills now go to the governor for his approval.

In response to a recent incident at a far Northwest Side Chicago church, Assistant Senate Majority Leader James DeLeo sponsored and passed legislation that gives churches and other private charitable organizations the ability to request criminal background checks on employees or volunteers who hold money handling positions at the church.

Recently an usher at a Chicago Catholic church was videotaped taking money from the church's collection on two different Sundays. The usher was charged with two felony counts of theft. At his arraignment hearing, it was revealed that he had been convicted of second-degree murder in 1984 in Nevada and was paroled in 1991. Currently all employees or volunteers at churches who have contact with children must undergo a criminal background check. Such a check is not required for ushers, who are volunteer workers and have no direct contact with juveniles. Senate Bill 630 now moves to the House of Representatives for its approval.

State Rep. John D'Amico was among area lawmakers welcomed residents of Chicago's Northwest sides to a regional meeting of the Illinois House Speaker's Bipartisan Summit on State Finances and the Budget this spring.

A bill sponsored by State Rep. Angelo "Skip" Saviano that allows a ticket holder to sell a ticket for admission to a baseball game, football game, hockey game, theatre entertainment, or any other amusement for 1) a price greater than face value, and 2) for more than the price of the ticket at the box office if sold through an Internet website or an Internet listing auction was signed into law. Under House Bill 873, the operators (Ticket Master, eBay, SubHub, et al) must register with the Secretary of State, along with the Dept. of Financial and Professional Regulation. The bill also permits ticket brokers to sell tickets near the event if selling on their own property or leased land.

A person convicted of creating a public disturbance at a cemetery would face stiff penalties, under a bill sponsored by Rep. Saviano. Senate Bill 1210 provides a list of offenses a violation of which includes a Class A misdemeanor for a first offense and a Class 4 felony for a second or subsequent offense. Offenses under this bill include: any unauthorized trespassing on cemetery property; the solicitation of mourners or funeral directors before or after a funeral; any on-site harassment of any cemetery employee; and the disturbance, removal or destruction of any cemetery devices or property placed for the safety of visitors or employees. The bill has passed the Senate and moves to the governor's office for final consideration.

The U.S House approved legislation to help create jobs in America and preserve our industrial base by requiring the U.S. Dept. of Defense to make more than 50 percent

of their purchases from companies operating in the United States. House Small Business Committee Chairman Don Manzullo authored the provision, part of an en bloc amendment to the Dept. of Defense Authorization Act ("Buy American Act"). Specifically, the provision requires more than 50 percent of the components in any end product procured by the Dept. of Defense to be mined, produced or manufactured inside the United States. Congressman Manzullo's provision prevents the Defense Dept. from waiving the 50 percent stipulation without an affirmative vote by congress. The House passed a similar amendment in May to the Homeland Security Authorization Act that requires the Dept. of Homeland Security to buy more than 50 percent of its products from American manufacturers.

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.