



Manzullo rival fears the demise of manufacturing

U.S. Rep. Don Manzullo was elected in 1992 and has never faced a serious challenge to re-election. Until now: The 2008 campaign is shaping up to be a barn-burner.

This time, Democrats say they have a candidate who can beat the popular Egan Republican. He's Robert G. "Bob" Abboud, a McHenry County Democrat.

Unlike Manzullo, Abboud isn't a lawyer. He's a nuclear scientist and engineer who holds five patents. He's president of RGA Labs Inc., an engineering, research and development firm. In his spare time, Abboud, 50, is village president of Barrington Hills, an enclave of business titans.

Abboud also has plenty of money. And he said he understands that defeating Manzullo will mean having to raise \$2 million. So, why does a successful businessman in the prime of life want to run for Congress?

"I've been extremely fortunate in my technical career, and so the question for me is, when I'm 85, will I have spent the last 35 years throwing things at the TV set? I'd like to see if the 16th District is interested in the skills I have to offer," Abboud said.

Abboud is alarmed at what he calls a nation whose leaders embrace Wild West capitalism run amok, encouraging corporations to trash their manufacturing plants by the thousands and sell off American intellectual property to China and India.

He decried the profligate spending of a national government that has run up a \$9 trillion debt, most of it owned by foreign interests. "Debt service alone is \$28 billion a month," he said.

"No one is more of a capitalist than I am. I come from a capitalistic family," said Abboud, whose father, A. Robert Abboud, was chairman and CEO of First Chicago Corp., parent of the former First National Bank of Chicago.

"But the direction we're taking in this country, this ultra free market laissez-faire approach is somewhere we have never gone before. We became the dominant manufacturing power because we established a public, private partnership," he said.

That meant government tackled the big physical and intellectual infrastructure issues, building public universities and subsidizing transcontinental railways, in order for the private sector to prosper.

"Imagine where we'd be if Eisenhower hadn't built the interstate highways. Or if we hadn't built the Tennessee Valley Authority. Or the big dam systems out West. Those things were not built by nine mutual fund managers," he said. The dominant economic philosophy today causes corporations to cannibalize themselves because investors demand maximum short-term profit.

America cannot remain a First World country without manufacturing, Abboud said. He charged that Manzullo supported the free-trade policies that have led to the wholesale abandonment of our manufacturing capability.

"Only First World countries manufacture. If you don't have manufacturing, think Africa," Abboud said.

"I believe in free trade, but you have to play for Team America. You cannot be a Halliburton that

moves its headquarters to Dubai, you cannot be a Boeing and say, 'Oh, we've sold our wing technology to the Japanese.' Why are the president's helicopters built in Italy? Because Lockheed created this little American headquarters and used Italian and English manufacturing to build them."

Abboud also believes America must invest strongly in nuclear electric power and alternative fuels, both to combat climate change and to end dependence on foreign oil.

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