

# Manzullo, Sacia talk U.S. 20

Republicans discuss expansion plans near the highway outside Freeport.

BY TRAVIS MORSE  
The Journal-Standard

**FREEPORT** — As traffic whizzed by in the background, Congressman Don Manzullo and Republican candidate for state representative Jim Sacia on Friday discussed the need for state and federal collaboration on the project to expand U.S. 20 to a four-lane highway.

At a news conference held adjacent to U.S. 20 near the Kelly Springfield Tire Co. in Freeport, Manzullo and Sacia were joined by several local business and legislative leaders.

Manzullo commented to the group about a three-part approach to getting the highway expanded. In order to get the project going, Illinois must get its federal road fund formula back up to 100 percent, Congressmen must push for the small portion of federal road dollars that can be earmarked for particular projects, and state legislators from the area

must also fighting for funding. Manzullo said Sacia is a candidate who has worked tirelessly building a coalition of people to rally around the fight for U.S. 20.

"It's extremely important," Manzullo said. "I've been working on this road very hard ever since I've been in Congress. Mr. Sacia has a petition signed by 18 of his colleagues to place a priority on funding for U.S. 20. This is extremely significant."

The event culminated in Manzullo signing Sacia's

SEE HIGHWAY A6

## HIGHWAY

CONTINUED FROM A1

"Expand Route 20" petition. "The state itself has to prioritize this," Manzullo said. "The state has not done that yet because the state has been sitting on releasing the environmental impact study."

Sacia said the support from legislators like Manzullo will be instrumental in getting the highway expansion project moving.

"Just to get so many area business leaders and legislators and civic leaders together to share with me the deep importance of this Highway 20 initiative is what I had hoped to accomplish," Sacia said. "Of course, having Congressman Manzullo here and willing to sign the petition was huge."

A lone protester was present at Sacia's news conference, holding a sign in favor of Democratic state representative candidate Warwick Stevenson. The demonstrator was Dan Kreeger, a vice president of the local union representing Kelly Springfield employees.

Kreeger said he was on hand Friday because he was upset Sacia's conference was being held in the vicinity of the Kelly Springfield Tire Co. plant near U.S. 20. Kreeger's union has formally supported Stevenson, he said.

"When they were here when I came out, I was somewhat upset by the lack of information," Kreeger said. "Our local is supporting Warwick Stevenson and (we) don't want it misrepresented that somehow the employees or the members are in support of Mr. Sacia."

Sacia mentioned at the conference that Stevenson was president of a Freeway Watch Committee several years ago when he actively fought against a four-lane highway.

Stevenson has denied these accusations, saying that the Freeway Watch Committee, in a popular vote, chose to advocate the expansion of U.S. 20. Also, Stevenson said his own proposal for expanding the highway was endorsed by four local mayors, including Freeport Mayor Jim Gitz and Rockford Mayor Doug Scott.

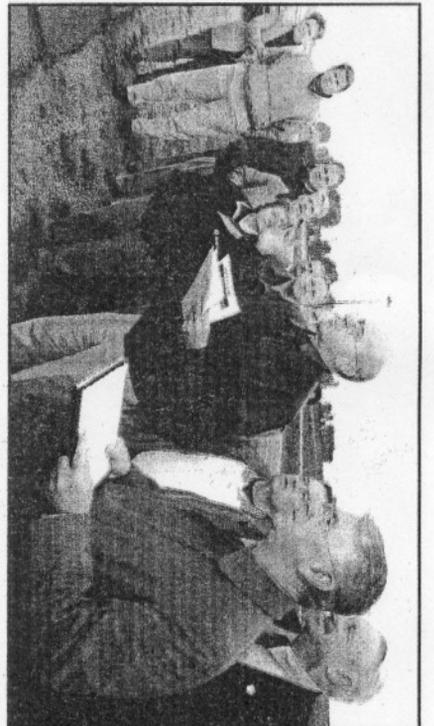
"It is a tell-tale sign that these are the actions of a desperate candidate," Stevenson said. "I've been running on an issues campaign. His actions are irresponsible."

Stevenson also quoted his grandfather, Adlai Stevenson II, who in 1952 said, "If my opponent stops telling lies about me, I will stop telling the truth about him."

Despite the controversy, Sacia said he felt good about more attention being paid to the need to expand U.S. 20.

"It shows that there is a coalition in the legislature that will do what has to be done to get it on the five-year plan," Sacia said. "And that has to be the first step. We have to get it on the five-year plan and that will happen. If we get Highway 20 going, it means good life wage jobs to not only our independent working people, but our union people as well."

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Kevin E. Schmidt / THE JOURNAL-STANDARD  
Congressman Donald Manzullo, left, and other supporters listen as state representative candidate Jim Sacia, center, talk about U.S. 20 expansion at a Friday afternoon press conference near the Kelly Springfield tire plant.

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