

# Congressional candidate makes rounds

By Tom Collins  
NewsTribune Senior Reporter

OTTAWA — The Republican seeking to replace Congressman Jerry Weller criticized an anti-business environment in Illinois created by partisan gridlock and said his Democratic opponent is part of the problem.



Ozinga

During a campaign stop at an Ottawa restaurant, Marty Ozinga said as a private businessman — he heads Ozinga Bros., a ready-mix concrete company

that he'll turn over to his sons while he pursues public office — has shown how political strife has hurt employers and suppressed the growth of jobs in the state.

"Illinois' climate or business promotion ... is not the most ideal climate in the country," the 58-year-old Homer Glen resident said. "We have higher taxes, we have regulations that are more restrictive, we have workers' comp rules that are more costly, we have a number of things that result in businesses ... too often choose to go elsewhere.

"I don't like to run down (Illinois) because this is where we live and where we make our living, but there are issues

that put at risk somewhat Illinois' position as a place for business to pursue growth and for people to locate in."

Ozinga said Democratic opponent state Sen. Debbie Halvorson (D-Crete) shares in the blame for the current state of affairs and didn't back away from recent press releases linking Halvorson to troubled Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

"For years, instead of using her Rules chairmanship to help the people she represents, Halvorson has used her influential position as a platform to rubber-stamp the Blagojevich-Jones Agenda in the hopes of moving up the leadership ladder," according to a statement from the Ozinga campaign.

Ozinga said his campaign has been "professional," rather than "negative," and said statements have merely cited Halvorson's record in Springfield.

"Most of us in the state are very discouraged by what I would call the mess in Springfield," he said.

Ozinga said the differences between Halvorson's positions are striking: he is anti-abortion, opposes gun control, supports the death penalty and supports a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between a man and a woman.

Asked about running for a seat in a Democratically-controlled Congress — or in the same party as an unpopular

president — Ozinga said he is undaunted and that the voters aren't dissatisfied with one party.

"I think people are frustrated all over the place," he said, citing the economy as the chief concern. "I'm not sure the criticism is necessarily directed at

Republicans or Democrats but directed at government in general. There seems to be way too much gridlock; there seems to be way too much decision-making in a bubble where they're just disconnected from the rest of us in the real world."

Ozinga pledged to fund his campaign primarily through individual contributions and, if elected, to preserve America's future through energy independence and greater security in the Middle East. He said he's been involved in economic development projects in the poor, politically repressed nations that convinced him of the need to protect America's legacy at home and abroad.

"That experience has made me feel that I should never take for granted the blessings and benefits of being born in America and living in the greatest country on the face of the earth," he said.

*Tom Collins can be reached at (815) 223-3206 Ext. 130 or courtreporter@newstrib.com.*

