



U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

Don Manzullo

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 1, 2010

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Manzullo Seeks \$200,000 to Launch Job Training Initiative, Help Put NW Illinois Residents to Work

[FREEPORT] Congressman Don Manzullo (R-IL) today announced he is seeking \$200,000 in federal funds to help launch an exciting public-private initiative in Freeport to better prepare Northwest Illinois residents for good-paying jobs and help employers find and train qualified workers.

Manzullo discussed plans for the workforce development initiative this morning with 25 members of the local business and education communities, including representatives of Highland Community College, Freeport School District 145, the Freeport Area Midsize Manufacturers Council, Freeport Area Chamber of Commerce, Freeport Health Network, Northwest Illinois Development Alliance, and Berner Food and Beverage Company. The program will be based at Highland Community College and serve residents and employers within the college's boundaries, including Stephenson and Jo Daviess counties, the northern part of Carroll County and the northwestern part of Ogle County.

The initiative will consist of two components -- one would better prepare residents to enter or return to the workforce and the other would help employers find and train qualified and dependable workers.

- **Certificate of Employability (COE) program** – Certificates of Employability are awarded to participating high school students who meet or exceed a pre-defined aptitude rating, an attendance requirement, and an attitude assessment. It is an incentive for students to attend school, study hard, and maintain good behavior, knowing that a COE would give them an advantage over other students in hiring. Employers would know they are hiring a reliable, well-behaved and hard-working employee.
- **WorkKeys program** – WorkKeys is a workplace skills analysis and assessment system developed to help employers match workers with jobs. A center created at Highland Community College will help businesses by creating job profiles, assessing employee skills, and helping develop training and education programs to fill employee skill gaps.

“For years, one of the biggest complaints I have heard from northern Illinois employers has been their inability to find qualified workers to fill their job openings,” Manzullo said. “The COE and WorkKeys program at Highland Community College will attack this problem directly by better preparing students to enter the workforce and by ensuring employers will be getting reliable, well-behaved, and hard-working employees who are ready to work on Day 1. It’s a win-win for employers and those seeking jobs, and it could actually help lure future employers to northwest Illinois knowing they will have a great resource to fill their hiring needs.”

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