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Topinka: Stop the bleeding at the state's border

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Gifts from Wabash

Angie Crum, right, secretary for the Wabash County Republican Central Committee, presents a Mt. Carmel throw blanket to Judy Baar Topinka, Republican nominee for the Illinois governor seat, during the candidate's visit Wednesday to CST, Inc., in Mt. Carmel. The blanket was provided by the committee. Another gift, on behalf of the Wabash County Chamber of Commerce, was a Christmas ornament bearing the area's theme. (Staff photo by Jami Maday)

'...Make Wabash County a destination place where people do want to work'

By Tonie Wilkinson - Register Staff Writer

Republican Gubernatorial candidate Judy Baar Topinka visited Mt. Carmel Wednesday afternoon to promote her proposal for job and economic growth that she said she hopes will revitalize Illinois' jobs creation efforts throughout the state.

Topinka was accompanied on this campaign stop to Wabash County by State Rep. Roger Eddy (R-Hutsonville) and State Sen. Dale Righter (R-Mattoon). The three visited CST, Inc., in Mt. Carmel, where Topinka held a news conference highlighting her initiative to disband the state's failed current economic agency, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO).

She plans to launch the "Illinois Jobs Partnership," a new public-private partnership headed by business and economic development leaders, in place of the DCEO.

"It won't be just a change in name, it will be a very big change in how this agency is structured and how it works," said Topinka. "The Partnership will be focused exclusively, and I mean exclusively, on

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creating quality jobs for Illinois.”

Florida and Indiana have had success with strategies similar to Topinka's "Illinois Jobs Partnership" proposal. Florida has created 12 times the number of jobs in the past four years under its partnership plan, and Indiana has had similar success.

"Indiana just landed the coveted Honda factory, and I would submit we could have had Honda if we (would have) had somebody working on it using our game-plan," she said.

Topinka later discussed Southern Illinois' struggle against Indiana for industry.

"You're (Wabash County) competing very strongly with Indiana. One of the things we need to do is to stop the bleeding at the border, and make Wabash County a destination place where people do want to work, they want to establish businesses, they want to make sure to expand here and they don't go over the border."

Topinka's plan for economic growth in Illinois will focus on bringing back jobs in manufacturing.

"Our state has lost too many manufacturing jobs, and I want to bring them back," she explained. "I want Illinois to be attractive for manufacturing jobs because these are the jobs that are going to have the good salaries, and the benefits and the health care that makes for a good middle-class living."

Topinka plans to propose a tax credit for manufacturers that commit to creating jobs and keeping them on staff for five years, as well as establishing a state-wide enterprise zone for manufacturing.

She also discussed putting more focus on the Southern Illinois region's coal and energy industries, and said, "I can see Southern Illinois becoming the 'energy capital' of the state."

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