

## IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

# Chamber finally convinces me they don't have my best interests at heart

Because I am a member of the Galesburg Area Chamber of Commerce, this week I received a letter from the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. According to them, Congressman Lane Evans has voted against economic growth and business most of the time. They endorse Evan's opponent, Mark Baker, and a small group of local businessmen is having a fundraiser for him. For one horrible moment, I thought Roger Coverley was back in town.

First of all, it's against the Constitution of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to endorse candidates. Of course, I've known for years the Republican Party is the political arm of the Illinois Chamber but because I started my own business eleven years ago, I thought it was important to join. I have many friends in the business community and in the Chamber. Even so, when I joined in 1989 I was treated like a Communist spy by Chamber Executive Director Al Smith and President George Warren. Warren was probably still annoyed with my fundraising and membership efforts for the Downtown Council when it began in 1975. It was clear he considered our project a threat to the Chamber. But their biggest objection to me was that I am active in Democratic party politics.

I served on the Business Retention Task force for four years. I was a member of the Tourism Council for four years. In my marketing business I have regularly recommended to my clients who are new businesses that they join the Chamber for networking and exposure to the community. I have supported local Chamber programs and been a financial supporter of the Galesburg 2000 economic development program. I have supported the work of the Economic Development Council, particularly after Al Smith left and the EDC became more accessible to the community at large.

I worked successfully with Chamber President Bob Maus and Economic Development officer Linda Utsinger during the County Board's involvement in the Maytag incentive plan. I served on the Chamber's environmental task force and was instrumental in restoring communication between that committee and the County Board when the County was supposed to be developing a long-range waste management plan.

It's a mystery to me why Lane Evans' efforts to improve the lot of Seniors, middle class citizens, poor people and veterans would be considered "antibusiness." Probably for the same reason that when unemployment is down, the stock market goes down. It seems that what's good for American workers is considered bad for "business." Rather than concluding that something is the matter with Evans, I think we might conclude there is something terribly wrong with the business community in this country. They are greedy beyond all imagination. They job out work to minimum wage and non-union companies here and overseas, with slaves often being the source of labor. Overseas women are chained to sewing machines. Children are sold to companies for life. But, hey, the company is making money and business is good, so everything must be hunky-dory.

They drop long-time, loyal employees like hotcakes, throwing well-educated and experienced people into unemployment without retirement benefits. They get rid of older employees to hire cheap young ones, at the expense of quality and service. All in the name of money.



So if Congressman Lane Evans isn't always approved of by American "business" I'd say he must be doing something right. There is hardly a more decent man alive than Lane Evans. He wins elections because he cares deeply for people and his offices cut through red tape and help people who

thought they would never find a solution to their problems. He is honest and hardworking. He has helped people of all political persuasions and economic levels. He fought against all odds for veterans who were affected by Agent Orange during the Vietnam war, of which era he is a veteran.

Mark Baker, on the other hand, is being paid by our tax money to campaign against Congressman Evans. He's been given a State Republican patronage job so he has income for doing nothing while he campaigns full time. He whines about Congressman Evans not being available for debates because Evans is in Washington D.C. — working — for all of us. A national business organization like the Chamber of Commerce has got to be desperate and ignorant to endorse someone as unqualified and shallow as Mark Baker.

Well, my days as a Chamber member have come to an end. The local Chamber has made a conscious decision that people like me are not useful or welcome. Too bad.

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