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Owens discusses green energy

Paterson sets special election for 23rd Congressional District for Nov. 3

By NATHAN BROWN, Enterprise Staff Writer

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PLATTSBURGH - Bill Owens, Democratic candidate for New York's 23rd District congressional seat, ended a four-stop trip around the district with a tour of the SolarNovar facility Tuesday.

Owens' "upstate jobs initiative" tour, intended to discuss green energy and job creation, began Thursday with stops in downtown Oswego and at the Maple Ridge Wind Farm in Lowville, in the western part of the 11-county district. He visited the Curran Renewable Energy Biomass Facility in Massena on Friday.

SolarNovar specializes in dual-axis tracker solar panels, which follow the sun. The panels can be monitored remotely, dump snow off themselves, park themselves in high wind and have a high-energy output that can be put to many uses.

Owens, a lawyer and retired U.S. Air Force captain, is running against Republican state Assemblywoman Dede Scozzafava of Gouverneur and Doug Hoffman, a Lake Placid accountant and businessman running on the Conservative line.

John McHugh, a Pierrepont Manor Republican who represented the district since January 1993, resigned Sept. 21 to assume the position of Army secretary. Gov. David Paterson announced Tuesday that the special election to fill the rest of McHugh's term will be held on Nov. 3.

"The campaign to replace John McHugh is on," Scozzafava said in a statement reacting to the announcement. "I am confident that my platform of creating more good-paying jobs, reforming health care, and fighting for our seniors is reflective of the people's priorities."

"We're remaining focused on what we have been focused on to date - talking to voters about keeping Fort Drum strong, my experience helping create jobs, and my jobs plan to bring new jobs and economic development to upstate New York," Owens said in a statement later Tuesday, after the announcement.

The Hoffman campaign put out a statement saying that Hoffman will be officially nominated by the Conservative Party on Oct. 7.

All three candidates have discussed job creation repeatedly throughout the campaign. Owens has specifically pointed to his work with the Plattsburgh Airbase Redevelopment Corporation after the military left in 1995.

As well as working with PARC, Owens said Tuesday he was part of an informal group, started about 25 years ago, that would travel to Canada to entice Canadian companies to move to the area.

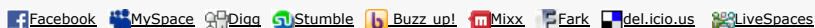
Owens has said he had a role in creating 500 jobs through PARC and 2,000 overall, numbers which the National Republican Congressional Committee has disputed.

Owens said Tuesday that the 2,000 jobs were over a 25-year period, and that about 200 Canadian-based companies do business in Clinton County, with a combined \$1.6 billion annual economic impact in 2006.

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23rd Congressional District candidate Bill Owens speaks Tuesday in Plattsburgh as part of his "upstate jobs initiative" tour. (Enterprise photo — Nathan Brown)