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# Governor candidate visits local factory

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SAXONBURG — Republican gubernatorial candidate Laura Ellsworth tried her hand at an extruding machine Monday, during a tour of Du-Co Ceramics as part of her campaign visit to two of the county's women-owned businesses.

Ellsworth, who will vie with two men in the May 15 primary for a spot on the general election ticket, chatted with Du-Co owner Lora Cooper Rothen before donning a pair of safety glasses to walk the plant and learn about the products churned out each day.

Ellsworth told Rothen that she decided to run because she can no longer tolerate the "noise, posturing and pandering and negative ads" seen in each election.

"The voters are tired of it," Ellsworth said. "They just want someone who can get things done."

She explained that her father was a doctor who made curing a specific childhood cancer his life's work and flew children to New York for treatment.

Many of their families lived at her family's home until her mother created a residence in Harlem that served as the model for the current Ronald McDonald Houses used by parents of hospitalized children all over the United States.

Ellsworth said instead of waiting for someone else to treat children with cancer or create a residence for their worried parents, her folks took steps to make it happen.

That penchant for getting things done, she said, rubbed off on her and has been her main goal during several years as an attorney who ran the Pittsburgh office of a large international law firm.

"That's what I do," Ellsworth said. "I take complicated problems and find solutions."

She said as governor she would create a 10-year business plan for the state and every action taken thereafter would fit into the business plan.

Rothen told Ellsworth that attracting and retaining experienced workers is one of her biggest challenges.

Ellsworth said that as a member of the Workforce Investment Board, she worked to educate high school students on opportunities available in manufacturing.

Rothen also decried the ever-increasing cost of employee health care.

"Insurance costs are high, and I don't know what can be done about that," Rothen said.

Ellsworth said preventive health care as well as a more efficient health care system are two ways those costs could be reduced.

Ellsworth told Rothen that of the three candidates, she is the only one who has been in a leadership position, which she has held for 15 years.

"We need somebody who has lived that and walked that out," she said.

Rothen led a curious and interested Ellsworth through the Du-Co plant, where machines created ceramic parts from 3-foot-long tubes to tiny honeycombs the size of a nickel.

Workers at presses prepared the parts to be fired in one of two huge kilns.

Ellsworth tried her hand at the station of one employee who expertly removed long, narrow ceramic tubes from an extruding machine, laid them on his work station, scored the tubes by hand with precision and placed the pieces on a rack for firing.

Ellsworth, clad in a dark blue knit pantsuit with spots of ceramic dust, did pretty well removing the first two tubes from the extruder but allowed the next batch to fall on the floor.

Rothen laughed after pointing out the mistake, which caused Ellsworth to shriek in disappointment.

"It's a lot harder than it looks," Ellsworth said.

She is visiting industries across the state to listen and learn from the owners, managers and workers there. Those experts in their respective fields should work together to improve and increase industry across the state, Ellsworth said.

"These intergenerational family business owners devoted to their communities at large make Pennsylvania incredibly unique," Ellsworth said.

Rothen enjoyed Ellsworth's visit and tour Monday and liked her ideas on growing the economy and other issues.

"I appreciate that she is reaching out to the small manufacturers and trying to educate herself on what the state needs," she said.