



MARCH 2010 E-NEWSLETTER

Dear friends,

The spring legislative session has begun in earnest, and already hundreds of bills have been introduced for consideration by the legislature.

Last week, the House of Representatives approved a bill I sponsored which extends the rights of victims by allowing victim impact statements to be reviewed and considered when determining the placement of a defendant found not guilty of an offense by reason of insanity.

This legislation arose out of a situation in which a defendant was found not guilty of murder by reason of insanity. The defendant was then housed at a Department of Human Services (DHS) facility in close proximity to the surviving family members of the victim, creating a frequent painful reminder to the family of the loss of their loved one. This bill would allow DHS to review victim impact statements and consider, among other things, the proximity of a facility to surviving victims when evaluating a defendant for placement.

Also last week, a House Committee approved a resolution designating April 25 – May 1, 2010 as Vasculitis Awareness Week.

Jennifer Naida, Mrs. Illinois International 2010 who is a 25-year survivor of a form of vasculitis joined me in committee to testify on behalf of HR 839, which will give to us the opportunity to educate the public about vasculitis diseases and the need for research funding.

State Budget

The state budget crisis is on everyone's mind as session continues, but unfortunately some things never change in Springfield. Gov. Pat Quinn and the other Democratic leaders in the legislature have refused entertain any of the Republicans reform ideas pertaining to the budget. While the governor has posted a website taking input from the public on budget ideas, he has yet to release specifics on the budget and he was given an additional three weeks from his Democratic colleagues to delay the process.

Along with my House Republican colleagues, we are sponsoring a number of bills aimed at reforming the budget and the budget process in Springfield. Some of the reforms include:

- PAYGO – This would require the legislature to identify a permanent funding source or budget cut for any new or additional spending for a program;
- A tax amnesty program that would create \$104.9 million in new revenue;
- A Sunshine Commission to get business leaders to evaluate the state budget and suggest ways to eliminate waste and duplication;
- Medicaid reforms such as requiring income tests on 30-days of income rather than just one paycheck and placing a 2 year moratorium on Medicaid eligibility or program expansion;
- Adopting Truth-in-Accounting principals.

Eight years of fiscal mismanagement and uncontrolled state spending by Democratic leaders when combined with the downturn in the economy has led us into this fiscal crisis, and it won't be easy to dig ourselves out of the mess. The only solution Democrats have is to raise income taxes on families and business, and expand the taxes you pay for a variety of state services.

However, I remain firm in my position that unless we fundamentally change the way Illinois government operates – our fiscal problems will haunt us for generations.

If you agree with any of the above reforms and feel that cutting the budget, instead of a tax increase, is the responsible way to get Illinois back on the right track, visit budget.illinois.gov and let Gov. Pat Quinn know where you stand.

Medical Malpractice

Illinois residents could struggle to find access to quality health care after an Illinois Supreme Court ruling which overturned medical malpractice lawsuit caps this month.

In 2005, the General Assembly approved Senate Bill 475 which limited non-economic damages in malpractice cases to \$500,000 for physicians and \$1 million for hospitals. Just two years later

a Cook County judge ruled that these caps interfered with juries' power to award appropriate damage awards for medical errors, and the issue was sent to the Supreme Court. However in early February, the Supreme Court overturned the law by stating it was a violation of the Constitution.

The fact remains that 30 other states impose some form of limits on medical damage awards, placing them at a competitive advantage over Illinois. Health care is at the center of debate throughout the country, and this ruling will make it even harder for residents to find access quality doctors and other health care providers.

As always, feel free to contact me by emailing me at staterepramey55@aol.com or calling my district office at (630) 876-0703.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Ramey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

State Representative
55th District