



NEWS

From the Illinois Senate

State Senator Dave Koehler

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Further information:

Ian Watts 217/782-0591

KOEHLER FIGHTS FOR PEOPLE ON LIFE SUPPORT

SPRINGFIELD—State Senator David Koehler (D-Peoria) is sponsoring legislation that allows the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (DHFS) to consider extraordinary medical expenses when selecting families for energy assistance money.

Senate Bill 2271 helps families who have extraordinary utility bills due to a loved one being on life support. Life support and other medical equipment use large quantities of electricity and can lead to exorbitant bills. Senator Koehler wants to make sure these families get a helping hand in the form of energy assistance.

“When a family is dealing with a serious illness, they need extra help,” said Koehler. “The intent of my legislation is to prevent anyone from ever ending up in a situation where they can’t afford to pay their energy bills because of medical equipment.”

Senator Koehler was inspired to introduce his bill by an individual family’s story. One member of the family suffers from a debilitating disease and needs life support machinery. The family lives on a fixed pension. They make just enough money not to qualify for energy assistance, a few hundred dollars too much per month. During the winter, when heating costs are high, they cannot afford to pay their heating bills, so in the spring and summer they have their service shut off.

“A family in this circumstance really only has two choices,” said Koehler. “They can keep all of their pension money but lose gas service in the summer, or give up some of the pension money they have earned in order to qualify for state aid. That isn’t a choice anyone should be asked to make.”

Senator Koehler is a champion for health care reform. He also is sponsoring measures to help families care for sick relatives at home and to help the physically and mentally disabled avoid unnecessary institutionalization.

Senate Bill 2271 has passed the House Human Services Committee and awaits consideration in the full House.

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