



# NEWS

---

**From the Illinois Senate**

***State Senator Dave Koehler***

**For immediate release**

May 19, 2009

**Further information:**

Ian Watts 217/782-0591

## **SPOUSAL CAREGIVER BILL PASSES GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

SPRINGFIELD—A measure to allow spouses to care for their seriously-ill husbands or wives, sponsored by State Senator David Koehler (D-Peoria) and State Representative Donald Moffitt (R-Galesburg), has passed both houses of the Illinois General Assembly.

House Bill 39 creates a pilot program that will allow properly-qualified spouses to be paid to care for their seriously-ill husbands or wives at home. Under current law, spouses are not allowed to provide home-care. Instead, they must hire strangers to care for their husbands and wives. The pilot project will be under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Department of Public Health's Home Services program. It will include no more than 100 people in one fiscal year and will stretch from 2009 to 2011. If the pilot program is successful, the General Assembly may expand it to include all Illinoisans.

"We've been working on this legislation for a long time, and I'm glad to finally see it on the governor's desk," said Koehler. "This program will help make the already-difficult lives of the terminally ill and their families easier."

The legislation was drafted in response to the stories of a number of families who have been trapped by this situation. One spouse has been stricken by an illness that requires constant care, but the other, despite being qualified, could not be paid under the Home Services program. One specific example is Kathi Kuperschmid of Peoria. Her husband suffers from Lou Gehrig's Disease, and she wants to be able to care for him, but still receive at least some income. She believes that since she knows her husband's situation best, she is best qualified to care for him.

"I think the argument that a husband or wife knows his or her spouse's situation best carries a lot of weight," said Moffitt. "If they have the skills and training they need, there is no reason they should not be allowed to care for their loved ones."

The legislation provides a number of safeguards to ensure that participants are properly qualified. It also includes careful attempts to protect the state from fraud. Since it is a pilot program, there will be an opportunity to add more requirements and safeguards before opening the program up to more participants.

"This bill has been a terrific bipartisan effort," said Koehler. "It shows that we can all work together to do what is best for the people of Illinois. Health care, especially, is too important to be a partisan issue."

House Bill 39 now awaits the governor's signature.

###