



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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Secretary of State Jesse White Pushes For 1st Person Consent Organ & Tissue Donor Law

Springfield—Secretary of State Jesse White is pushing for a first person consent organ and tissue donor registry in Illinois that would make a person's decision to donate organs and tissue following their death a binding decision.

While Illinois has the largest donor registry in the country with more than six million participants, organs and tissue may not be donated unless the registrant's next of kin gives consent.

"Six million people in Illinois have decided that upon their death they would give others a second chance at life," White said. "Unfortunately, there are times when a donor's wishes are not carried through. When someone decides to become an organ donor, we owe it to them to honor their wish."

The General Assembly created a legislative task force last year to serve under the direction of White's office to study the issue of first person consent. After studying the issue in great detail and crafting a plan for implementation, the committee recommended that Illinois create a first person consent organ and tissue donor registry. State Rep. Kathy Ryg (D-Vernon Hills) and State Rep. Dan Brady (R-Bloomington) introduced House Bill 1077 to create the new registry. Similar legislation has passed in 42 other states.

According to Gift of Hope, an organ and tissue procurement organization covering much of Illinois, 40 percent of families say no to organ donation when approached for permission. Families also say no 19 percent of the time even when notified their loved one had joined the state's donor registry.

Families can have a difficult time making the decision to donate when they are grieving over the loss of a loved one. Complicating matters is the fact that the decision has to be made quickly before the organs deteriorate.

Although Illinois has the largest donor registry in the country, approximately 300 people in the state die each year waiting for a transplant. Nationally, there are 87,000 people waiting for transplant operations – nearly 5,000 of them in Illinois. Every 13 minutes a new person is added to the national waiting list and 17 people across the country die each day waiting for a transplant.

"First person consent is a proven and logical step for us to take in Illinois," Ryg said. "Thanks to the leadership of Secretary of State Jesse White, Illinois has the largest list of potential donors in the nation. This legislation provides that participating in the organ and tissue donor registry will constitute legal authorization of donation at the time of death. I am honored to carry this legislation that will save more lives each year."

“First Person consent will reinforce the wishes of those who truly wish to be a donor and will give surviving family members peace of mind,” Brady said. “As a former coroner and funeral director, I know how important organ and tissue donation is.”

Gift of Hope estimates that a first person consent law could save at least 100 additional lives each year. One donor can save or enhance the lives of more than 25 people.

“First person consent is a rare legislative opportunity to enact a change that will directly save lives,” said Jerry Anderson, President/CEO of Gift of Hope. “In carrying out Illinoisans’ declared wishes to become organ donors, we can provide about 100 additional organs for transplant each year. It means we have the opportunity to save 1,000 more lives in the next decade.”

To become an organ or tissue donor:

- Sign the back of your Illinois driver’s license or ID card right on the plastic and have it witnessed by two people.
- Discuss the issue with your family because donation cannot occur without next-of-kin consent.
- Join the state registry. If you agree to be a donor when you visit a driver’s facility you will automatically be listed in our Organ Donor Registry, one of a handful in the country. To join at another time, call 1-800-210-2106, write to the Illinois Secretary of State’s Office, or register via the Internet (<http://www.cyberdriveillinois.net>).

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