

Rep. Jil Tracy Newsletter

August 19, 2009

Rep. Tracy: Uniform Speed Limits on Rural Interstates Finally Coming to Illinois

Quincy, IL...For years, state lawmakers have attempted to create a uniform speed limit of 65 mph for both cars and semi-trucks on Illinois interstates outside of the Chicago area, and last week Governor Pat Quinn made that a reality. State Representative Jil Tracy (R-Quincy), who sponsored similar legislation during the 95th General Assembly creating a uniform speed limit for large trucks, stated that the change is long overdue and stressed that the measure will actually make Illinois interstates safer for motorists.

"Legislation that would allow cars and trucks to travel at the same speed on rural interstates has passed the General Assembly on three separate occasions, only to be vetoed by former Governor Blagojevich," said Rep. Tracy. "If you look at our surrounding states, each of them allow trucks to travel 65 mph or higher, and throughout the nation 41 states have a uniform speed limit in place for rural highways. In those areas that have a uniform speed limit, fatality rates on rural interstates are actually lower than here in Illinois."

House Bill 3956, signed by Quinn on Friday, will allow large trucks weighing over 8,000 pounds to travel at 65 mph on rural interstates outside of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will counties beginning January 1, 2010. Current law maintains a split speed limit on Illinois interstates requiring trucks to travel at 55 mph, while ordinary vehicles may maintain a maximum speed of 65 mph.

"For years truckers carrying interstate commerce from Missouri or Iowa would cross over the state line and immediately have to slow down by 15 mph," said Tracy. "This caused some trucking companies to avoid Illinois completely, thus hurting our chances to attract new business opportunities."

"I commend Governor Quinn for his action on this legislation, making Illinois a more inviting economic climate while also improving safety for interstate travelers," reiterated Representative Tracy.

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Rep. Tracy Has Three Bills Signed Into Law

Quincy, IL...State Representative Jil Tracy (R-Quincy) is pleased to announce that three pieces of legislation, ranging from added tax benefits for seniors to providing information on Illinois telemedicine, were signed by Governor Quinn over the past week.



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“My colleagues and I worked very hard to get these measures enacted into law. As a matter of fact, two of these bills received near unanimous approval during the 95th General Assembly, but were caught up in the infighting last year between the Speaker and Senate President and never made it to the Governor’s desk,” said Rep. Tracy.

House Bill 228 would allow seniors to retain their Senior Citizen Homestead Exemption and the Senior Citizen Assessment Freeze in the event they move into an assisted living facility. The senior property tax relief would remain in place as long as the owner or a spouse kept the residence and did not rent the property for a profit.

“The Illinois Property Tax Code allows residents under the Nursing Home Care Act to qualify for the Senior Freeze and Exemption, but because the concept of assisted living wasn’t prevalent at the time the statute was written, no provision was included to address this loophole,” Rep. Tracy said. “Seniors who move into an assisted living or a shared housing facility should have the option of retaining their home, which in some cases is dependent on these types of tax incentives. I would hate to see a senior not be able to return to their home simply because the property tax burden was too high for them to maintain control of their residence.”

Governor Quinn recently put his signature on House Bill 1112 as well, requiring the Department of Public Health to develop and distribute an educational brochure on the use of telemedicine in Illinois. According to the Task Force on Rural Health and Medically Underserved Areas, the area south of Springfield lacks qualified mental health professionals. As a result, individuals often times leave the state to meet their health care needs. This brochure would inform individuals of alternative options that would allow them to see an in-state professional.

Also signed into law was Senate Bill 1527. The legislation will allow county clerks to issue death certificates for families of residents of their county, even if the death occurred in another county. Currently, only the county clerk in the county where the death occurred may issue a certification of death. The new law should make it more convenient for families to obtain death certificates of their loved ones, while avoiding an unneeded trip during what is a difficult and emotional time.

If there are further questions regarding these new measures or other recently enacted laws please contact Representative Tracy’s district office at (217) 223-0833.

Sincerely,

Rep. Jil Tracy