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## **Lives to be saved through new Illinois law honoring individuals' wishes to become organ/tissue donors**

### **Change to 'first-person consent,' new donor registry goes into effect by Jan. 1**

ELMHURST, Ill. (July 6, 2005) – Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network projects that a new state law to enact first-person consent for organ and tissue donation may save the lives of up to a third of Illinois patients who die waiting for organ transplants each year.

House Bill 1077, signed into law on June 24, "will have a direct impact on our work saving and improving lives through organ and tissue donation and transplantation," Gift of Hope President/CEO Jarold Anderson said. "We anticipate that first-person consent may help increase our region's donation rates by as much as 10 percent."

First-person consent means that in Illinois, by Jan. 1, additional family consent will not be required to carry out an individual's documented wishes to become an organ and tissue donor. Currently, Gift of Hope reports, about 19% of potential donors enrolled as a "yes" in the Illinois organ/tissue donor registry each year have had their intent overruled by family members.

"As a result, the individual's wishes to donate are not honored and opportunities to save lives through transplantation are lost," Anderson said.

The principle behind first-person consent, passed in 42 other states and sometimes called "donor rights" legislation, is the same as that of a living will – that an individual who legally documents an end-of-life decision should be assured that his decision will be honored.

Among those that have worked in support of first-person consent in Illinois are Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, Mid-America Transplant Services, the Illinois Hospital Association, the Illinois State Medical Society, the Illinois Nurses Association, the office of Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White and the Illinois Department of Public Health, along with officials from each of Illinois' eight organ transplant centers.

*(MORE)*

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White's office must develop the state's new first-person donor registry before first-person consent can be implemented. Illinoisans age 18 or older will be able to enroll at a special website, at state driver's license facilities or by calling the Illinois Secretary of State Organ/Donor Program.

Until the new first-person donor registry is launched, Gift of Hope must still obtain consent for donation from a potential donor's legal next-of-kin at the time of the patient's death.

After first-person consent is implemented, Gift of Hope's role will continue to be one of support for the donor patient's family during and after the donation process. The only change for families under first-person consent will be that if a donor has already given consent to donate through the registry, the family will be not required to make an additional decision.

Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network is the federally designated not-for-profit organ procurement organization (OPO) responsible for coordinating organ and tissue donation in the northern three-quarters of Illinois and northwest Indiana. Since its inception in 1986, Gift of Hope has coordinated donations that have saved the lives of more than 10,000 organ transplant recipients, and improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of tissue transplant recipients.

*For more information on organ and tissue donation, visit [www.giftofhope.org](http://www.giftofhope.org).*

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