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## **Lutheran Groups Honor Legislators for Commitment to People in Need**

***Currie Receives “Paul Simon” Award; Mulligan, Jakobsson,  
Hunter and Radogno Named “Legislative Champions”***

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**SPRINGFIELD, Illinois** – Five state legislators were honored this week by prominent Lutheran organizations for their work on behalf of children, people with disabilities, senior citizens and others in need in Illinois.

Gathering for their fifth annual Lutheran Day on April 16, the coalition of Lutheran-affiliated social service, health care and advocacy groups and about 200 Lutherans from around the state bestowed the annual *Paul Simon Courage in Public Service Award* upon State Representative Barbara Flynn Currie. In 2004, several Lutheran organizations, along with Patti Simon, widow of the late senator, created the Paul Simon award to recognize Illinois public officials who demonstrate a commitment to just, compassionate and responsible public policy.

Currie (D-Chicago) serves as the Majority Leader in the Illinois House of Representatives, where the late Senator Simon began his career in politics. Currie began serving the 25th District in 1979. In 1997, she became the first woman Majority Leader in the history of the Illinois General Assembly.

Similar to Senator Simon, Currie has acted as an advocate for her community, the working class and the state’s youth throughout her career. Some of her legislative accomplishments include initiating a program that funds pre-school services for disadvantaged youth and sponsoring legislation to increase learning opportunities for the state’s children.

The group also named four lawmakers – Representative Rosemary Mulligan, Representative Naomi Jakobsson, Senator Mattie Hunter and Senator Christine Radogno – as *Legislative Champions for Social Services* in Illinois for their leadership, hard work and dedication in representing their constituents and advocating on behalf of the state’s most vulnerable residents.

- Rep. Rosemary Mulligan (R-Park Ridge) was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1992 and currently serves as minority spokesperson of the

Human Services Appropriations Committee. She has been recognized as a leader in human services appropriations, state budget issues, health care and early childhood education.

- Rep. Naomi Jakobsson (D-Champaign) was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 2002 and currently serves as chairperson of the Human Services Committee. Jakobsson leads the discussion on a variety of issues, including mental health, developmental disabilities and community-based services. She and her husband, Eric, adopted six of their eight children and are active in parent support groups and adoptive services.
- Sen. Mattie Hunter (D-Chicago) has served in the Illinois State Senate since 2003. She is currently the chairperson of Appropriations III and a member of several non-legislative committees relating to alcohol and drug dependency, aging and disabilities. Before Hunter began her political career, she worked as a certified alcohol and drug counselor and prevention specialist. She participated and presented lectures at a number of health and human services conferences in Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Zambia.
- Sen. Christine Radogno (R-Lemont) has served in the Illinois Senate since 1997. During her career, Radogno has sponsored reforms with the intention of restoring accountability to the state's borrowing and contracting systems. With her previous experience as a social worker, Radogno has sponsored laws creating equality for coverage of mental illnesses, which expanded assistance for indigent families, the elderly and those with disabilities.

“These legislators exemplify the values that Lutherans cherish by working for policies grounded in compassion for our neighbors,” said the Rev. Dr. Frederick Aigner, president of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois. “We look forward to continuing to work with them to make Illinois a leader in caring for people who need a helping hand.”

About 200 Lutherans from around Illinois took part in Lutheran Day, which is held annually to advocate for people in need. This year's focus was to call attention to a growing crisis in social services funding. Participants met with individual legislators to educate them about the problem and ask for adequate and timely reimbursements. The reimbursement rates for most services haven't increased in nearly a decade. Making matters worse, the state currently is up to five and a half months behind in paying reimbursements, threatening services on which thousands of Illinois residents depend every day.

Lutheran Day sponsoring organizations included: Lutheran Social Services of Illinois; Lutheran Child and Family Services; Bethel New Life; Lutheran Life Communities; Advocate Health Care; Lutheran Senior Services; Mosaic; Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services; Concordia Avondale Campus; Saint Luke Ministries; and Zion Development Corporation. Lutheran Advocacy-Illinois, a grassroots justice advocacy organization, also sponsored Lutheran Day.