



Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **LSSI Leaders Named to State Commissions on Human Services, Elimination of Poverty**

The Rev. Dr. Denver Bitner and the Rev. Daniel Schwick of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) were each recently named to serve on a state commission. Bitner, president of LSSI, was named to the Illinois Human Services Commission by Governor Pat Quinn. Schwick, director of church and government relations, was named to serve on the Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty. LSSI, based in Des Plaines, is a major provider of social services throughout the state.

Illinois Partners for Human Services, a coalition of human services providers including LSSI, initiated the formation of the new human services commission, which was created by Governor Quinn on November 22. The 36-member Human Services Commission will make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly about improving the delivery of high-quality human services to Illinois citizens.

The Human Services Commission is comprised of people with expertise in the public and private sector, including legislators, chief administrators of eight of the State's major human service agencies, human service advocates and community leaders. The Commission will address issues, such as "the process for determining fair, adequate and timely reimbursement; efficient management of publicly funded programs and services; and projects for future human services need in Illinois." Its first meeting is January 20.

"I am pleased to be a member of this commission," says Bitner. "Its creation acknowledges that continued support of human services is vital to the health and safety of the citizens of Illinois. We at LSSI will continue to advocate for policies that promote continuity of care for the very vulnerable clients we serve."

Schwick fills a seat on the Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty for a faith-based organization that provides social services. He was appointed by House Speaker Michael

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Madigan at the request of Illinois Representative Sara Feingenholtz, who represents the north side of Chicago. Rep. Feingenholtz is also the chair of the Illinois House Human Services Appropriations Committee.

The goal of the commission is to come up with ways to cut the number of Illinoisans living in extreme poverty by 50 percent by 2015. “It’s an ambitious goal, but doable,” says Schwick. He notes that his participation in the commission “recognizes LSSI’s long-term commitment to walking with those who tend to be on the fringes of our society, including those who are very poor.”

LSSI supported House Bill 4369, which created the commission. It was signed into law in August 2008. The definition of those living in extreme poverty is those people who “are forced to survive on less than \$11,000 a year for a family of four,” which is less than half of the poverty level. The commission has 26 members – five of them representing elected offices and 21 representing the public.

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#### **About Lutheran Social Services of Illinois**

Founded in 1867, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois is a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. LSSI serves people through an array of services at 83 sites across Illinois. LSSI’s services include foster care, adoption, pregnancy counseling, Head Start, child care services, services for at-risk families, residential services for youth, counseling, mental health, substance abuse treatment, residential programs for adults with developmental disabilities, housing and services for older adults and individuals with disabilities, nursing care and rehabilitation, and programs for prisoners and their families. For more information on Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, visit [www.LSSI.org](http://www.LSSI.org).