

News...

...from the Illinois House of Representatives

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Riley Passes Bill Protecting Rights of Victims of CTA Accidents

SPRINGFIELD, IL – State Rep. Al Riley (D-Olympia Fields) sent bipartisan legislation to Governor Quinn last Wednesday that closes a legal loophole used by the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) to deny injury victims their day in court.

“I have fought for this legislation in response to a constituent’s fourteen year ordeal for justice and statutory clarity. Mrs. Huckabee, six months pregnant at the time, was rammed by a CTA bus but forced to pay her own medical bills because the CTA used a legal loophole to have the case thrown out and avoid their responsibilities,” Riley said. “The CTA’s abuse of this loophole has resulted in bankruptcy and unpaid medical bills for many victims of CTA accidents throughout the years. This legislation will help ensure that victims and their families get their day in court and hold the CTA accountable for public safety.”

Senate Bill 84 eliminates a 60 year-old law giving the CTA special rights by requiring victims of CTA accidents to provide the CTA with six months advanced notice of their intention to seek legal restitution for damages. The law required victims to provide detailed information including the date and estimated time of the accident, the exact address of the accident and the name and address of any attending physician. The CTA has used technical language in the written notice to have legitimate cases thrown out of court and bar victims from resubmitting their case.

Riley’s constituent, Merle Huckabee, was rammed by a CTA bus which was cited by Chicago police for illegal lane usage. But when Huckabee sought restitution for car repairs and her medical bills, the CTA had her case thrown out because the written notice didn’t include the address of her doctor. Huckabee was forced to pay all of the damages caused by the CTA out of her own pocket, and she continues to suffer medical problems and serious financial problems as a result.

"For years, the CTA has been exploiting a loophole in the law to deny people injured in CTA bus and train accidents their day in court," said Lynda DeLaforge, co-director of Citizen Action-Illinois. "We applaud Representative Riley for championing the rights of victims and fighting to make the CTA more accountable."

Senate Bill 84 passed the Illinois Senate nearly unanimously, and was approved by the Illinois House on a bipartisan vote of 82-32-1. The measure now awaits Gov. Quinn’s approval.

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