

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 5, 2008

CONTACT:

Kimberly Parker - 312.814.1577

Department on Aging Touts Rights of Residents in Long Term Care During Weeklong Observance

Residents' Rights Week is October 5-11

SPRINGFIELD – Illinois Department on Aging Director Charles D. Johnson is calling attention to the rights of more than 120,000 citizens who reside in long-term care facilities, including nursing homes and assisted-living facilities, in Illinois. This is Residents' Right Week (October 5-11) a national observance started by the National Citizen's Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (NCCNHR) to highlight the importance of resident focused care. Residents' Rights Week is celebrated each year during the first full week in October.

“During Residents' Rights Week, we want to raise awareness about residents who live in long-term care facilities and our state programs designed to protect their rights,” said Director Johnson. “This week is also a time to honor the family members, staff and advocates who work tirelessly to ensure that residents' human rights are maintained and that they are treated with dignity.”

In Illinois, residents of long term care facilities receive assistance and protection from the state. The Illinois Department of Public Health licenses, regulates and inspects these facilities. Another safeguard for residents is through the Illinois Department on Aging's Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. The Ombudsmen serve as advocates by protecting and defending residents in long term care facilities, supportive living facilities, and assisted living and shared housing establishments. The Long Term Care Ombudsmen inform residents and their families of their rights; resolve any complaints or issues; provide information on resident's needs and concerns to their families, facility staff and their community; and advocate for good individualized care.

In honor of this year's Residents' Rights Week observance, National Citizen's Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (NCCNHR) and National Ombudsman Resource Center are asking residents of long term care facilities to submit their “recipe” of what home means to them and how to create a home in a long term care facility. Resident submissions will be randomly displayed on the websites of NCCNHR and National Ombudsman Resource Center in a new section called “The Resident Voice.” Residents who participate will receive a certificate of participation. For more information, log on to www.nccnhr.org or www.ltombudsman.org

Governor Rod R. Blagojevich has proclaimed October 5-11, 2008, as Residents' Rights Week in Illinois. (The full text of the Governor's proclamation is attached.)

For more information on how to reach a Long Term Care Ombudsman, contact the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 or for TTY (hearing impaired use only) call 1-888-206-1327.

WHEREAS, *there are 1.7 million men and women living in 17,000 nursing homes throughout the United States, and another 1 million individuals living in 46,000 other board and care/assisted living facilities; and*

WHEREAS, *residents of long-term care facilities include those whose dedicated service during World War II and hard work in the post-war years made this nation great; and*

WHEREAS, *the federal Nursing Home Reform Act of 1987 guarantees residents their individual rights in order to promote and maintain their dignity and autonomy; and*

WHEREAS, *all residents should be aware of their rights so they may be empowered to live with dignity and self-determination; and*

WHEREAS, *we wish to honor and celebrate these citizens, to recognize their rich individuality, and to reaffirm their rights as community members and citizens, including the right to vote; and*

WHEREAS, *the Illinois Department on Aging Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program works to advocate, defend, and protect the rights of these citizens; and*

WHEREAS, *individuals and groups across the country will celebrate Residents' Rights Week from October 5-11. The theme this year is "Recipe for Home: Defining and Creating Home in Long-Term Care Facilities," to emphasize the importance of affirming these rights through facility practices, public policy and resident-centered decision-making that impacts quality of care and quality of life:*

*THEREFORE, I, Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim October 5-11, 2008 as **NATIONAL LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENTS' RIGHTS WEEK** in Illinois, and reaffirm my commitment and dedication to ensuring the best care and treatment for residents of long-term care facilities.*

#