

# NEWS



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## FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE JOHN FRITCHEY

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
Aviva Gibbs  
773-871-4000

### **Rep. Fritchey Speaks Out on Moment of Silence** *New Legislation Would Repeal Mandate, Prayer References*

Chicago – State Rep. John Fritchey (D-Chicago) and State Rep. Roger Eddy (R-Hutsonville) today announced legislation amending a recent mandate requiring public school students to observe a moment of silent prayer or silence at the beginning of each school day. The announcement comes in the wake of widespread objections and a federal court ruling stating that the requirement is both unconstitutional and unenforceable.

Earlier this year, the Illinois General Assembly amended the previously-existing “Silent Reflection and Student Prayer Act,” thereby requiring all public schools to observe a moment of silence for ‘silent prayer or silent reflection.’ The previous law simply permitted school districts to observe such a moment if they so chose. Although Governor Blagojevich had vetoed the legislation, both the House and Senate overrode the veto, making the law immediately effective last month.

Rep. Fritchey’s proposal, HB4180, would eliminate the mandate, remove all mention of “student prayer” from the legislative language, and change the title of the Act to the “Student Reflection Act.” The bill proposes a return to a permissive and secular law, and allows each school to decide what type of moment of silence, if any, to conduct.

“The General Assembly took an already-questionable law and made it worse with provisions that were as poorly drafted as they were conceived,” stated Rep. Fritchey. “It is my hope that, given a third bite of the apple, lawmakers will use the opportunity to do what’s right.”

Rep. Fritchey was joined at the announcement by Rep. Roger Eddy (R-Hutsonville), who is also the School Superintendent of Hutsonville Unit District #1. “The legislature should be spending more time trying to figure out how to adequately fund our classrooms, rather than telling teachers how to run them,” stated Rep. Roger Eddy. “The hours we have had to spend discussing this mandate have only added insult to injury when we have schools that are not sufficiently equipped to educate and prepare our students for the future.”

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A Wednesday ruling by U.S. District Judge Robert Gettleman stated that an ambiguous mandated moment of reflection would violate the First Amendment, since the law does not specify the length of silent time, what could be included, and what penalties would be assigned to those in violation and by whom. Judge Gettleman subsequently ordered the superintendent of the Illinois State Board of Education not to enforce the law, but stopped short of a statewide injunction.

“School district dollars should be spent on education, not litigation,” added Rep. Fritchey. “Our efforts today are bolstered by Judge Gettleman’s ruling in which he echoed the issues that the legislature debated both when it was first introduced and again when considering the Governor’s veto.”

Reps. Fritchey and Eddy plan to move the legislation as soon as possible.