



January 16, 2015

Dear Friends,

I hope that everyone enjoyed the holiday season and that all those New Year's resolutions are going well!

We are at the start of a new General Assembly, and I wanted to take this opportunity to give you an update about what is going on at the Capitol. I also encourage you to [contact me](#) if you have any questions, concerns or ideas for legislation.

What do you think?

As the new session of the General Assembly starts, I want to hear what is important to you. Please take this short, eight-question [survey](#) to register your opinions and share your ideas.

New year, new laws

At the start of every new year, hundreds of laws take effect. Many of them are minor changes to keep up with advances in technology and culture, but some may help improve your daily lives. For example, Illinois' new "sign and drive" law went into effect on January 1. From now on when you are pulled over for a minor traffic violation (e.g., speeding), the police cannot take your driver's license. [Watch this slideshow](#) to learn about 15 of the most important and interesting laws that took effect January 1.

Goals for 2015

I plan to continue working to [raise Illinois' minimum wage](#). Last year, the voters gave overwhelming support to raising the wage to \$10 per hour by January 1 of this year. We passed legislation in the Senate, but unfortunately the House of Representatives left without finishing its work.

I won't rest until everyone in Illinois who works 40 hours per week makes a basic, living wage. If you are able and willing to work full time, you should not need to rely on the government for assistance. You should be able to take pride in your ability to keep healthy food on the table and a roof over your head.

Of course, our real goal is to make sure that everyone can find a job that pays more than the minimum wage, so I will also continue fighting to make sure everyone has equal access to jobs, training, education and other opportunities.

I also am continuing my work on [school discipline reform](#). Too often, students who need the most help end up losing time in the classroom because of behavioral issues. There's also a disturbing trend of minority students getting suspended and expelled more often than their peers. I spent much of 2014 working with teachers, administrators, parents and other advocates to find a plan that will help troubled students without putting the educational opportunities of others at risk. I want to thank everyone who came to my town hall meeting last summer, and I believe we are close to a final plan.

Of course, school discipline reform is not my only goal for Illinois' education system. I believe we need to fully fund our schools and make sure that every child has the same opportunities, regardless of ZIP code. I plan to keep fighting for school funding and to keep working on school funding reform.

I hope you are all having a blessed new year!

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Senator Kimberly G. Lightford in black ink.

Assistant Majority Leader
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