

## Assisted suicide legislation to be debated at 2010 assembly

Stephanie Mindock  
BR Ryall Wheaton Warrenville South

According to SB-O-01, assisted suicide is defined as "any adult terminally ill patient who wishes to end his or her life will be permitted to do so through the uses of lethal doses of medication prescribed by the patient's physician without incurring criminal charges against the physician."

One of the authors of this bill, Amanda Meyer, Senate sponsor from B.R. Ryall Wheaton Warrenville South, said the opportunity is right to initiate such legislation.

"Now is the time to push this bill into law because the support of the bills in Oregon and Washington has been so high," said Meyer.

Recently, both Oregon and Washington have had assisted suicide bills introduced in their legislatures.

Assisted suicide legislation is highly controversial, and co-author Leah Dudak is prepared to answer the critics.

"Even though some people may feel it is morally wrong to kill oneself before [one's] time is up, our

opposition needs to know that the patient's choice is the number one factor in every circumstance," said Dudak.

Pooja Saxeng of Heritage Neuqua Valley agrees.

"The decision to legalize [assisted suicide] depends on the circumstances in which the act is used.

**"Now is the time to push this bill."**

If there is even a slight chance of the patient recovering, then assisted suicide is not okay.

However, I believe that if the patient and his or her family are willing to go through with the process, then it can be done," said Saxeng.

However, Sarah Cline, also from Heritage Neuqua Valley, questions the law.

"The patient should use whatever time he or she has been allotted with his or her family and right any wrongs he or she has committed during his or her lifetime," said Cline.

Cline also questioned the role of the physician in the suicide.

"The physician who has reached the decision that the patient is ready could be biased. Maybe they want the person to die because a family mem-

ber of their own has gone through the same thing," said Cline.

The authors were quick to refute this claim. "An entire panel of judges will come to the decision of whether or not the

patient is mentally sound enough to make their own decisions," said Meyer.

Clearly a controversial topic, assisted suicide is a theme in a number of bills that will be debated at this year's assembly.

### 2010 Y&G Ballot

#### GOVERNOR

- Andrew Benson
- Janesh Rahlan
- John Palmer Rea

#### LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

- Samantha Allen
- Chris Fernandez
- Tyler Hamer

#### SECRETARY OF STATE

- Kelsey Allen
- Jessica Jozwik
- Rani Shah

#### CHIEF JUSTICE

- Dan Cronin
- Tony Rogina

#### SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

- Zach Hersh
- Clay Jackson
- Jeannette Straeter
- Spencer Teiken
- Kelsey Fitzpatrick

#### PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

- Emily Drone
- Sean Fouts
- Ashley McKibben
- Kayla Sample

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE LOBBYISTS

- Michael Burrafato
- Caroline Hensley
- Kathryn Spenn

# Elmhurst Lake Park's Thompson hopes to learn from 2010 Y&G experience

Spruha Shah  
Elmhurst Lake Park

Like many of her colleagues in the program, Y&G Senator Paige Thompson from Elmhurst Lake Park joined the program in great hope of "learning about and experiencing our system of government personally."

Thompson entered the program with no prior experience as this is her first year in Y&G, yet from what she has seen already, she is impressed.

"I was very surprised to see that the program is very put together and that it functions in a very mature way," said Thompson.

The primary aim for a legislator in the program is to draft a significant bill and aid it through the pro-

cesses to ultimately make it a law.

Legislators must work with others in not only the creation of the bill but also in presenting it to the assembly.

The bill that Thompson helped draft calls for all official state government documents to be sent electronically.

"We believe that this will drastically cut costs and ensure more efficiency," said Thompson.

"In today's economy, we need to prioritize our budget and this bill would be a step in that direction."

Apart from her involvement in Y&G, Thompson is very active in other activities at Lake Park High School.

She has been an ath-

lete on the varsity tennis team as well as on the soccer team.

Furthermore, Thompson is a member of the National Honor Society, FCCLA, and Lancers Lead, a school leadership program.

Her involvement in these activities exhibits the diversity of her interests.

Ultimately, although she does not aim for a career in government, Thompson hopes that her participation in Y&G will make her a better citizen, assisting her in forming more informed opinions concerning issues in the world.

"In the future, I'd like to be more enriched in what I'm voting for," said Thompson.

## THE OBSERVER goes online, will run updates throughout weekend

This year, *The Observer*, the Y&G official newspaper, will be operating an online publication in addition to its traditional print publication. Starting Friday afternoon, the editors and advisors will be updating *The Observer* website ([ilymcayg.org/news](http://ilymcayg.org/news)) with news as it happens. This will continue until Sunday, noon. Check the site often for breaking news. You can also follow us on Twitter @illinoisyg for updates.

Finally, this year the print publication of *The Observer* will be available during lunch in the cafeteria, instead of during breakfast.

Stay up to date with the latest news from Springfield all weekend long...



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# Elmhurst Lake Park delegation proposes mandatory drug testing of Illinois high school student athletes

Spruha Shah  
Elmhurst Lake Park

A bill to legalize drug testing of all high school students involved in extracurricular activities in Illinois was introduced by an Elmhurst Lake Park delegation.

According to the Mayo Clinic, the use of illegal substances is known to cause the death of approximately 1 in 68 or 1.47% of Americans. This is a statistic the bill group wants to change.

Katie Rutishauser, House Sponsor, believes that the bill, S-B-15(a), would provide "more fairness and equality" in the athletic arenas of many high schools. "Kids who take steroids have an unfair advantage over those who abide by the laws, and they should be punished," said Rutishauser.

The bill calls for those students who test positive for drug use to be punished with ineligibility to participate in sports.

The first offense calls for a 50% reduction in event participation for remainder of the school year.

After a second offense, the student would be ineligible to participate in the activity for the remainder of his or her high school career.

The sponsors expect some opposition to the bill on the grounds of cost of implementing the bill and the potential invasion of the privacy of high school students.

However, Rutishauser is not deterred.

"Illegal activities should not be tolerated,"

she said.

Lobbyist Nick Wittman encouraged the opposition to take a serious look at the bill.

"I think the opposition should think about the big picture and future of high school activities, not about themselves," he said.

B.R. Ryall Wheaton Warrenville South legislator Brian Ruehlmann likes the idea but believes that "the punishments are too harsh. People can change and should be given a chance to do so."

Brad Wilkinson, a legislator from Elmhurst Lake Park, points out that the participant of a school activity is a representative of

the school.

"They should be expected to be a good law-abiding citizen that is a good example to their peers," he said.

Page Kelsey McNeela, also from Elmhurst Lake Park, argues the bill would ensure more fairness and equality.

"Drug testing would eliminate an uneven playing field," she said.

However, McNeela believes that all students have the option of choosing what is good for them, and the bill could inadvertently have unfair consequences.

In her eyes, punishing a student who tested positive and allowing a drug user who luckily tests negative would be more unfair.

## Restaurants should eliminate transfats, bill group argues

Gilbert Botham  
Heritage Oswego East

Legislators from Elmhurst Lake Park have proposed a bill that bans the use of transfats in all public food establishments in Illinois.

According to the bill, "trans fats are the most dangerous fats consumed because of the effect they have on one's cholesterol."

Chloe Turner, the House sponsor of the bill, sees extreme urgency in this legislation.

"[Approximately] 330,000 U.S. citizens die from heart disease and diabetes. We feel that

more health [oriented] bills will help keep 330,000 people from dying," she said.

Turner also has a personal connection to what this legislation is trying to prevent.

"My grandmother died of type II diabetes, and helping someone else who has it would be great," said Turner.

Erin LePoire, from Heritage Neuqua Valley, sees this proposal as worthwhile.

"Yes, [it's a good bill] because [transfats are] causing a lot of problems and [the bill] would be a step forward for Illinois," she said.

"Kids who take steroids have an unfair advantage over those who abide by the laws."

*The Observer*, which is distributed free of charge to Illinois YMCA Y&G participants, is published four times annually. Please send letters to the editors to the press room in the Holiday Inn Express. The advisors/editors reserve the right to edit the letters for considerations of brevity, clarity, and tastefulness.

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# Editorial: We need to end abstinence-only curricula in high schools right now

In a time that around 63% of 18-29 year olds know little to nothing about birth control pills and around half of the pregnancies in America are unplanned (according to a recent CNN article), we need to consider whether or not abstinence-only curricula are really in the best interest of our future generations.

This year at Y&G there are two bills dealing with this subject matter. One is from Heritage Batavia and would require that schools with abstinence-only curricula start teaching about contraception in their health courses.

Noncompliance would result in funding cuts in the sexual education programs for the school.

The second bill is from McHenry County Crystal Lake, and it would require that a semester long comprehensive sex education course be taught to students during their sophomore year.

While there may be small technical issues in both these bills that could hinder their passage, hopefully, they will be fixed in final committees this weekend.

The intention behind each is good, and, ultimately, we need to move away from abstinence-only courses in our high schools.

Teaching abstinence-only classes in high school does not prepare students for life after graduation, which is supposed to be the goal of high school curricula.

Exchanging wedding vows does not bring a sudden, "magical" understand-

ing of how contraception works, and unplanned pregnancies happen in wedlock, not just out of it.

Teaching contraception in high schools is an easy way to lower the number of unplanned pregnancies in Illinois and the United States, and is something that we need to pursue legislatively.



**Chelsea Dreher**  
The Observer  
Editor



*A delegate votes during PreLeg II. Y&G holds three PreLeg II's throughout the state, and the winning candidates from those assemblies make up the final ballot of the March assembly. The full ballot can be found on Page 1*

## Bill group wants to increase cigarette tax by over 100 percent

Lindsay Holler  
Springfield Williamsville

A Christian County Taylorville delegation introduced a bill regarding an increase in taxes on cigarettes to help stop smoking. According to the bill group, evidence has shown that when the price of cigarettes goes up, less people buy them. They are looking to increase the current tax on cigarettes, which is \$0.98, by \$1.00 making the total tax \$1.98.

The money generated from this would go to the state to offset Illinois health care costs.

The bill was developed because of the current smoking ban in Illinois that mandates no smoking in public places.

Ryan Drea, Senate sponsor, said, "It's nice to go into those places and not come out smelling like

smoke, not coughing while you are in there, and not being around the second hand smoke."

Springfield Williamsville page Courtney Leka agreed. "Smoking is gross and this will encourage people to quit."

Drea added, "Second hand smoke is just as bad for you as the real thing and passing this law will save lives of the people around smokers, the smokers and the people who may one day smoke".

Co-sponsor Shannon Reese said, "People should look at the long term effects of the bill. It will help because even though people may not be able to afford it after the tax, they do not need it and if they are that addicted to it then they need to get help and they need to stop buying [cigarettes]."

# Christian County Taylorville delegation to restrict smoking

Katie Schmidt  
Springfield Williamsville

A Christian County Taylorville delegation introduced a bill to limit the number of underage kids buying cigarettes by requiring a retailer to purchase a tobacco license that would allow the store to sell tobacco products.

According to the bill, if retailers are caught selling tobacco to underage customers, they can be fined or even lose their privilege of selling tobacco

products. Senate sponsor Suzanne Nolan says that current law is completely ineffective.

“Even if [retailers] get caught selling cigarettes to minors, [under current law] there is nothing that can really be done about it... Underage smoking is a big problem right now and it could really be cut down,”

“There are already 38 other states that have passed this.”

said Nolan. When asked why she thought that underage kids smoke, Nolan answered, “I

think they usually just give in to peer pressure.”

Nolan believed that delegates who oppose this bill probably are already smokers.

House sponsor Lauren Martin stated that this type of legislation has worked

elsewhere. “There are already 38 other states that have passed this, and Illinois is behind,” said Martin.

Martin does not think that delegates could have reasons to oppose the bill because it only puts money back into the state’s pocket and could save lives.

According to the bill group, there were 317,000 premature deaths in Illinois that have occurred because of minors smoking under the age of eighteen.

# Bill group wants to restructure P.E.

Stephanie Mindock  
BR Ryall Wheaton Warrenville South

In the words of Jason Schubert, “grading two days of stress-increasing physical education for something that actually does set the mind at ease is a no-brainer.”

Schubert, a legislator from B.R. Ryall Wheaton Warrenville South, proposes in H-G-02 a new way to run physical education classes.

Schubert believes that with the rush of the high school life, students are not given the chance to take a breather.

Using his own personal experience – a full class schedule of AP classes, marching band, Y&G, youth group, and other extracurriculars plus the strain of junior year college testing, Schubert found that exer-

cise in physical education classes was not as anxiety-relieving as doctors and P.E. teachers say.

He suggests that “instead of gym five days a week, schools would host gym three days, and the other two would be dedicated to fine arts classes, which ease the mind better for some kids rather than gym.”

Depending on the school, any number of relaxation classes could be offered, from drawing and painting to yoga and dance.

Amanda Rush from Elmhurst Lake Park supports the bill saying that a relaxation class would be “more beneficial” than a P.E. class.

With an actual curriculum and actual homework, P.E. at her school

is just another class that adds tension to her day.

Even though he believes the bill has potential, Adam Schumacher, a legislator from B.R. Ryall Wheaton Warrenville South, thinks now is not

the time for legislation.

“It is a legitimate concern. However, there are other things for our government to focus on right now,” he said. “It can, and probably should, be focused on at a later date.”



Painting may become a substitute for physical education classes if a bill from B.R. Ryall Wheaton Warrenville South is passed and signed into law. Image from <http://www.drue.net/images/dance-paintings-drue.jpg>.

# Bill proposal to place restriction on state-aid money

Megan Newbury  
Jefferson County Sesser-Valier

A Jefferson County Mt. Vernon delegation introduced a bill designed to help individuals who receive welfare checks by giving them drug tests.

The provisions in this bill will force the state

to stop giving money to people who, according to the bill group, just do not care.

The proposal is also to help end the drug problem in the state.

Writers of this legislation see the intent of the bill as positive.

## Legislation attempts to limit residence options for sex offenders

Jack Sullivan  
Elmhurst York

During legislative session this weekend, a Heritage Geneva delegation is trying to stop heinous crimes against children.

Garrett Lance, Even Kling, and Nick Bielski will attempt to amend the Illinois Compiled Statue relating to sex offenders.

According to the bill, sex offenders will "not be allowed to live within 500 feet of any public or private school bus stop."

The offenders will also be given twelve months to leave their homes if they are found near a bus stop. Lance, the Senate sponsor of the bill, says this is action is necessary.

"So many factors come into play. We need to make sure that we nip the problem in the bud and get rid of it," said Lance.

A question that has been brought up in debate is how the bill takes into consideration the lives of the former sex offenders who the bill targets.

When asked about how this will affect the living conditions of the offenders who are found to reside near bus stops, House sponsor Kling said, "They've made their choice and deserve to suffer the consequences."

The bill sponsors said that the idea for the bill came to them after a 2008 incident involving two Geneva elementary students who were approached by a man near a bus stop.

"Students are protected on school grounds, but at a bus stop, they do not receive that same protection," the bill group states in their bill brief.

This legislation attempts to give students that protection.

All three sponsors state the primary goal of the bill is to protect their communities.

They do not expect to find much contention during the weekend's debate and are determined to have the bill passed as soon as possible.

"The goal of the bill is not to take money away from people and families that need it to survive, but it is to help these people get off of welfare and into a working job," said Tyler Weston, House sponsor.

Furthermore, Weston wants conditions placed upon the money these individuals receive from the state.

"This bill will make it mandatory that all people receiving welfare checks to pass a drug test to receive the check," he said.

According to Weston, the average welfare check is about \$300, and that is

\$300 one could use to buy drugs.

Therefore, the bill group thinks the state should keep tabs on its money.

"This bill proposes that a person who fails a drug test will not receive their check for that month but will in fact be eligible to take the test again the following month," said Weston.

"This will make an individual strive to stay off of drugs to receive money, and will be eligible to receive the next month's welfare check if the next drug test comes back negative."

## Springfield Williamsville legislation wants to change foreign language requirements

Emily Mordacq  
Springfield Williamsville

A Springfield Williamsville delegation introduced a bill that is designed to help bilingual students. The bill states that bilingual students should not be required to take a high school foreign language for future college admittance if they take a standardized test proving proficiency in a second language.

Lauren Hollinshead, House sponsor said, "The bill we've created states that the students who are bilingual already can take a standardized test, and if they pass, the school

will give them high school foreign language credit. I think it's a good idea."

When Hollinshead was asked how many people the bill would affect in Illinois, she said, "Not a ton, but I believe it is enough to make a difference."

The bill was originally created for the purpose of one foreign language in particular, ASL, or American Sign Language.

Senate Sponsor, Jessica Miller, has a family that is deaf. The bill was really driven by her because she feels ASL gets neglected and thinks the recognition of it as a language is an important issue.

# Group wants limits put on seatbelt use, cites safety concern

Danielle Dow  
Springfield Williamsville

A Springfield Pawnee delegation introduced an amendment to current law which would make wearing a seatbelt optional for those passengers and drivers over 18.

According to the bill group, every year there are many injuries in the U.S. that are inflicted on people wearing their safety restraints.

Samantha Clauser, House sponsor, said, "A lot of things can happen [as a result of wearing a seatbelt] such as internal bleeding and lacerations, paralysis, brain trauma, broken bones, and much more."

Unfortunately, Clauser has had experience with such a situation.

She said, "We got the idea for this bill because my uncle was killed in a car accident because he was wearing his seatbelt."

Clauser points out that there has been a 10% decrease

in traffic deaths among those who were not wearing their seatbelts, but the number of fatalities grows when safety restraints are worn.

In order to replace the lost revenue from the citations issued to those over 18 who are failing to wear their seatbelts, this law plans on increasing the fine for those under 18

from \$55.00 to \$75.00.

However, Clauser points out that "in Texas the fine is \$200, so [the Illinois fine] could be a lot more."

Senate Sponsor Drew Tavernor feels this bill will grant people more freedom.

"We believe it is against people's rights to make them wear a seatbelt. This law will make people open their minds and reexamine the subject," said Tavernor

The bill group says that this legislation is not promoting the disuse of seatbelts, however.

Clauser said, "If you

feel more comfortable [wearing a seatbelt], go ahead. If you don't, don't. We just think people should have the choice."

But the choice may not be wanted. Lauren Slegrist, a lobbyist from Christian County Taylorville, said, "I think all people should wear seatbelts. I'm just as at risk to getting injured as a young child. We are all at risk."

Abby Withrow, a legislator from Springfield Williamsville, agrees. "I don't like this at all," she said.

"Seatbelts save lives, and I choose life. Really, the whole thing confuses me. We're trying to protect kids, but then we're putting them in danger if we don't wear seatbelts. I don't get it."

**"We're trying to protect kids, but then we're putting them in danger?"**

# Jefferson County Elverado group wants stricter helmet laws

Jori Moore  
Jefferson County Sesser-Valier

A bill group of girls from Jefferson County Elverado has proposed a bill which would require youths to wear helmets while on motorcycles.

This bill states that "any person who has not yet reached the age of 18 shall wear a helmet while operating or riding as a passenger on a motorcycle or motor driven cycle.

The group chose this bill because of their interests in secure roadways.

"Safety hazards are a huge concern on highways. I don't think 16-18 year old drivers have enough driv-

ing experience to stay safe and keep others on the road safe too," said Adrienne Hardwig.

Senate sponsor Hardwig thinks the age requirement is appropriate.

"I don't want to take away freedoms of adults over 18. I think they are mature enough to make their own decisions by 18. At this age you have most all other rights," said Hardwig.

If this bill becomes a law, violators will be charged a fine of \$75.

Hardwig believes the law will not only be beneficial for safety reasons, but it also economical.

"The law will not cost the state money to go into effect because all police departments will have to do is simply issue tickets. It is simple," said Hardwig.

Hardwig and her co-

sponsors believe the bill will rally support from many different motorcycle organizations, concerned citizens, and police departments.



If H-G-11 is passed, all motorcycle riders under the age of 18 will be required to wear a motorcycle helmet. See related story on page 8.

# Interest in program brings Myers back to Y&G

Megan Newbury  
Jefferson County Sesser-Valier

Taylor Myers, a youth legislator from Jefferson County Sesser-Valier, said, "Y&G seemed interesting, so last year I thought I would give it a try. I'm glad I did, because now I understand how our government really works."

She really didn't know what to expect when joining Y&G for the first time last year.

"I had no clue that Springfield was so much different than Pre Leg I and Pre Leg II. It's a completely different atmosphere," said Myers.

Myers said that a legislator would be a perfect fit for her.

"I like being a legislator because I know that I am trying to help improve our state, and I also know now what a real legislator's role in the House and the Senate is like," said Myers.

She also noted, "Y&G is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and it's a great experience."

Myers was somewhat familiar with how the gov-

# Given a choice for office, most go with Governor

Chelsea Dreher  
Springfield Williamsville

Every year Y&G has a slew of new candidates hoping to hold an office during the big weekend.

Different candidates have different reasons behind their bids for office, and the positions they desire are varied.

There seems to be, however, one office that is the most coveted in the program.

A majority of people surveyed were quick to say that the office that they would run for would be Youth Governor. The reasoning for most was similar, and as Springfield Williamsville's Chelsea Nichols

ernment process worked, but she didn't know the full aspect of it.

She said, "Since this is my second year as a legislator, I now understand better how our government really works. You never know the full aspect of something until you take it into your own hands. Being in the Capitol as a legislator, it's a better understanding of how the process really works."

Myers believes that students should take advantage of Y&G.

"I think that if you have the opportunity to be in Y&G, that you should take it. It's worth it."

so succinctly put it, "The Governor gets to control everything."

Jefferson County Mount Vernon delegate Cassy Austin agreed with Nichols, adding that the Governor is at "the top" of

who is working as a lawyer in Y&G this year, brought an interesting perspective to the discussion.

She was interested in the position of Speaker of the House, explaining that the floor debate would be "exciting," and adding that it would be great to be "representing" a constituency.

There are many different opinions to be found, both on which office is best and why. Thankfully, this fact assures a plentiful and varied pool of candidates for the many different offices, and ideally, it allows government to operate at its best.

"The Governor gets to control everything."

the system.

There were other offices that had some interest as well.

Some delegates professed a wish to be a Chaplain of the House or Senate because of their religious convictions.

Bianca Davies-Mears of Knox County Galesburg,

## Delegates react to motorcycle helmet legislation, have mixed feelings

Zach Mierzejewski  
Springfield Williamsville

Delegates have mixed feelings about the bill requiring motorcycle riders under 18 to wear helmets.

Those that agreed with the legislation did so because of the safety concerns to the rider provided in the bill.

Alex Frisby, a delegate from Mount Vernon, said, "If [riders] get in a wreck and don't have a helmet on and get their heads smashed in, they'll die. People dying is bad." Michael Hampleman, from Jefferson County Sesser-Valier agreed.

"Yeah I do [agree with the legislation], because I believe that they are the youth of the future and if they're not wearing a helmet, then there is no future."

There were also some vocal opponents to the proposed legislation. "If they are stupid enough to not wear a helmet, they should [deal with the consequences]," said Nathan Tissier, a legislator from Danville Schlarman.

Adam Balder, from Springfield Williamsville, also disagreed with the legislation. "Since we're in America we should have a choice," he said.