



Haine visits Godfrey senior care facility, talks Medicaid reform

July 12 2012 2:43 PM

ALTON, IL-- Senator Bill Haine (D-Alton) was welcomed to Blu Fountains Manor in Godfrey this week for a tour and discussion with facility residents and staff.

Blu Fountains Manor features a virtual rehabilitation system, the OmniVR, the first and only in the region. Much like the Nintendo Wii and the Xbox 360's Kinect, users interact with objects on the screen through movement. The system was tailored to an older audience for ease of access and is used to help individuals in their recovery. Blu Fountains Manor prides itself on helping seniors recover and adjust to living in their own home. The facility will celebrate its 50th year of service this November.

"It is important that we have dedicated, caring individuals assisting seniors and others on their road back to good health," Haine said. "The service personnel at Blue Fountains Manor are a shining example of that dedication."

Haine also answered questions relating to recent reforms in the Illinois' Medicaid system. In the spring, Haine joined with a large, bipartisan coalition of lawmakers in support of a plan that guarantees \$2.7 billion in Medicaid savings. The Medicaid reform package puts Illinois eligibility requirements on par with most other states and includes reductions in coverage such as a new limit on prescription eye glass coverage for adults to one pair every two years (down from one per year).

"We have taken the steps necessary to reduce waste, fraud, and abuse in the Medicaid system by passing a bill this year that guarantees \$2.7 billion in savings," Haine said.

"These reforms were meticulously worked out in order to ensure that those truly in need of care continue to have access to essential health services and that other budget priorities, like education and public safety, are protected."

The Illinois Cares Rx program, which helps low-income seniors with prescription drug costs, was eliminated in the Fiscal Year 2013 budget. Haine has heard from many seniors and is in support of a measure to restore funding to the program.

"Representative Beiser and I have heard concerns from many seniors about the Illinois Cares Rx program and we remain hopeful that funding can be restored," Haine stated. "We have to take another look at helping seniors who are clearly eligible and in need of prescription drug assistance."

Haine was also asked about state payments to service providers. In the Fiscal Year 2013 budget, over \$1.3 billion was dedicated to pay state bills. Haine said that tough decisions needed to be made and supported a temporary tax to help stabilize the state's finances after revenues bottomed out following the economic downturn.

"Without the temporary income tax, facilities like these would not be paid for services rendered to our seniors," Haine stated. "It would have been catastrophic for seniors in need of care, local vendors, and the hardworking staff that provide care with the utmost compassion."

"The tax kept many health and senior care facilities open and without it, the State would have forced local vendors to take ten cents on the dollar for their services, which was absolutely unacceptable," Haine added.