



# **Bourne introduces "Donna's Bill" to grant timely grandparent visitation**

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LITCHFIELD - State Representative Avery Bourne (R-Raymond) has filed a bill to expedite hearings to ensure that grandparents' visitation requests are ordered and initiated in a timely manner. Under this legislation, grandparents would be able to spend precious time with their grandchildren instead of waiting while their hearings are stuck in the court system for months or possibly even years.

Rep. Bourne said, "'Donna's Bill', House Bill 4255, came about after talking with a constituent and family friends, Bob and Kevin Hilligoss. Bob's wife and Kevin's mother, Donna, struggled for nearly two years in the courts to spend time with the family to no avail before she passed without being able to spend precious time with her grandchildren. I am proud to sponsor this bill and glad that the family brought it to my attention. Grandparents should be ensured visitation and it shouldn't take years to accomplish."

"Due to delays of attorneys, courts schedules, and agreements which were not lived up to by the other parties my Mother was unable to see her Grandchildren before her death," said Kevin Hilligoss. He added, "Donna's Bill will put an end to time wasted in order to have valuable time with Grandparents and family members that love their Grandchildren but are not allowed to do so by an uncaring, selfish parent. Hopefully, this bill will help families going through the same situation we are and also help families in the future."

Upon becoming law, "Donna's Bill" would require that proceedings concerning a petition for visitation brought by a grandparent or great-grandparent be given priority when setting a hearing and requires the court to set the first hearing date for a petition for visitation within 45 days of filing the petition. The bill also orders that a decision be rendered within 6 months of the petition for visitation being filed, unless the parties

agree otherwise and allows the court to impose penalties and sanctions on any party that intentionally or recklessly causes an undue delay in proceedings regarding a visitation petition brought by a grandparent or great-grandparent.