



BUILDING BETTER LIVES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 17, 2009

Contact: Melissa Meighen, 312-516-5551
mmeighen@voices4kids.org

Ryg Joins Voices for Illinois Children

New president the perfect match for advocacy group's dedication to kids

CHICAGO – As families face ever-increasing challenges, Voices for Illinois Children gains a new leader who shares its strong commitment to improving kids' education, health care and economic security: State Representative Kathleen Ryg.

Voices Board Chairman Craig Culbertson announced today that Ryg will join the organization as its [new president](#), effective Sept. 1. The move launches an ambitious new chapter for the organization, as Voices deepens and expands its efforts to confront some of the greatest fiscal challenges to good public policy in Illinois' history.

Ryg has served Lake and northern Cook counties since 2003 as the 59th District State Representative. She is resigning that post, effective Aug. 31, upon accepting her new position as president of Voices. In addition to 20 years of public service at the state and local levels, Ryg has experience in direct counseling of persons with developmental disabilities and mental illness and administration of community-based organizations, experience she will draw on as she transitions from elected office into the leadership of this public policy and advocacy organization.

“Kathy is well-recognized for her commitment to children's well-being, her record of policy accomplishments and her vision for shaping an even better future for children,” said Culbertson. “She has a long history of nonprofit and public service, and a track record of deep involvement on a wide range of family, children and human service issues. We look forward to her leadership in these areas.”

Like Voices, Ryg has been a tireless leader in efforts to improve voluntary, early learning opportunities for children from birth to age 5. She's helped quarterback significant improvements in Illinois' mental health supports for children and youth, and has served as a strong voice for shoring-up schools' quality and accountability. She is also well known for her work on after-school issues.

Ryg joins a 22-year-old organization that counts among its successes dramatic improvements in families' access to high-quality early childhood, mental health and

health care programs, establishment of the state Earned Income Tax Credit, and many other policy and program achievements. Under Ryg's leadership, Voices expects to take its advocacy on behalf of children to a heightened level of effectiveness – and at the time families need help most, given the fiscal and economic crises that threaten children's services.

“The only way to effect positive policy change is to work collaboratively and forge consensus, characteristics for which Voices is highly regarded,” said Ryg. “I'm honored to join an organization whose reputation reflects the high quality of its policy analysis and advocacy work.”

Throughout her career, Ryg has fostered relationships with educators, law enforcement officials, social service providers, state and local government and business leaders to achieve progress on issues important to children's lives. While she served in the legislature as a Democrat, she is withdrawing from elected politics. And [policymakers from both parties](#) speak very positively about Ryg's leadership and consensus-building work – important skills for her work at nonpartisan, nonprofit Voices.

“Kathy has a stellar reputation as a champion on children's issues, mental health and developmental disabilities,” said State Senator Pamela Althoff (R-McHenry). “Legislators from both parties respect her and her strong record of working in a bipartisan and bicameral manner.”

“Kathy's joining Voices bodes well not only for the organization, but for the children of Illinois. She'll continue to be a tremendous advocate and forceful voice who will help us finally get movement on some of the issues we confront as a state,” Althoff said.

“Kathy Ryg will be an excellent fit for Voices, as Voices' mission so very well matches Kathy's own: improvement of children's lot in life,” said Illinois House Majority Leader Barbara Flynn Currie (D-Chicago).

“She is an accomplished lawmaker with a passion for public policy, and has developed a particular expertise in issues involving children and people with disabilities. Kathy always has worked well with others, Republicans as well as Democrats, and she knows how to build consensus among advocates, legislators and community leaders alike,” Currie said.

“Fulfilling our mission is especially important during this difficult time in our state's and country's history, when so many Illinois families are struggling at the very time that services they rely on are being reduced or cut altogether,” said Gaylord Gieseke, Voices' interim president. Gieseke has served as interim president while the search was underway and will return to her role as vice president on Sept. 1.

“We know Kathy will bring a strong vision and creative methods for solving the myriad issues confronting Illinois children and families.”

Ryg becomes only the second president in Voices' 22-year history. The group's first president, Jerry Stermer, left in February to join Gov. Quinn's office as chief of staff.

#

Voices for Illinois Children champions the full development of every child in Illinois to assure the future well-being of everyone in the state. We work with families, communities and policymakers on all issues to help children grow up healthy, happy, safe, loved, and well-educated. For more information, visit www.voices4kids.org.