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from the Illinois House of Representatives

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BILL REQUIRING TESTING OF DNA EVIDENCE MOVES TO HOUSE FLOOR FOR VOTE

Franks' bill advocates for sexual-assault victims

SPRINGFIELD, IL – State Representative Jack D. Franks' (D-Woodstock) bill that will require Illinois police departments to submit all State Police Evidence Collection Kits used to collect evidence of sexual assault for DNA testing received a unanimous committee vote Wednesday.

“When I learned that many evidence kits containing important DNA evidence are not submitted for testing, and instead remain in law enforcement’s possession, I was shocked,” Franks said. “DNA testing technology is a valuable tool in crime investigations, and one that has assisted law enforcement in solving cases that may have remained cold for years. We have a duty to do everything we can to protect these victims. In order to fulfill that duty, this evidence must be tested in a timely manner.”

Franks began working on this legislation after reading a June 2009 Chicago Tribune article detailing the failure of many suburban Chicago police departments to test sexual assault evidence collected using State Police Evidence Collection Kits, commonly referred to as rape kits. Current Illinois law requires rape kits be retrieved from the hospital within two weeks but does not require that the kit then be submitted to a crime lab for testing. Kits often remain in law enforcement’s possession, in storage and untested. Franks’ bill would require kits to be submitted for testing within six months after all necessary evidence of a crime has been collected, as funding and staffing resources are available.

“It takes extreme courage for victims of violent crimes to confront their experience and seek justice,” Franks said. “No victim should be victimized again by the people who have a duty to protect them. By not testing this evidence, police departments are not fulfilling their duty to the community or to the victim.”

House Bill 4765 now moves to the House floor for further consideration. For more information, contact Franks’ constituent service office at (815) 334-0063.

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