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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Wednesday, December 12, 2012

GAS STATION ACCESSIBILITY BILL PASSED BY ILLINOIS HOUSE; UPON GOVERNOR'S SIGNATURE TO BECOME LAW JANUARY 1, 2014

CHICAGO, Ill. —The Illinois House of Representatives culminated the 2012 Veto Session last week by unanimously passing legislation that assists people with physical disabilities in refueling their automobiles. **HB4866**, co-sponsored by Rep. Sidney Mathias (53rd district) and Rep. Iris Martinez (20th district), amends the Motor Fuel Sales Act, giving people with disabilities greater access at gasoline service stations within the community.

The new legislation, which upon the Governor's signature is to take effect January 1, 2014, requires gas stations to post a phone number of the station directly onto one gas pump to make it easier for people with disabilities to communicate with gas station employees. HB4866 imposes minimal financial obligations on gas stations while creating an increased consumer base. Stations not in compliance are subject to financial penalty.

Among the issues faced by people living with multiple sclerosis as well as other disabilities prior to the passage of the legislation was difficulty in refueling their vehicles because of inability to use the controls, hose, or nozzle on a self-serve gas pump, which compromised safety for the individual, other customers and the station. Others were relegated to honking or flagging down an attendant in order to have their gas tank filled, which often went unnoticed.

"Living with a chronic condition and disability such as multiple sclerosis can be a great challenge," said Greater Illinois Chapter President John Blazek. "This legislation is another positive step not only for the 20,000 individuals statewide with MS, but for all Illinoisans with mobility issues who want to remain active and engaged in their communities and deserve to have the best quality of access to everyday needs."

The bill was driven by MS activists in collaboration with the Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in Illinois, the Illinois Secretary of State's Disability liaison, the Illinois Assistive Technology Project, Access Living, Attorney General Lisa Madigan's office, Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living, Equip for Equality and Paralyzed Veterans of America.

Every hour in the United States, someone is diagnosed with MS, an unpredictable, often disabling, autoimmune disease of the central nervous system. MS interrupts the flow of information between the brain and the body and stops people from moving. The disease affects more than 20,000 people in Illinois, 400,000 in the U.S. and 2.5 million worldwide.

The Greater Illinois Chapter (GIC) mobilizes people and resources to drive research for a cure and to address the challenges of everyone affected by MS. Envisioning a world free of MS, the GIC moves toward that end by driving change through advocacy, facilitating education, collaborating with others and by providing helpful programs and services. For more information, visit MSIllinois.org.