



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

## Senate Passes Lauren's Law to Increase Organ Donation

JACK M. MARTINS April 14, 2011

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In honor of National Donate Life Month, the New York State Senate was joined by 11-year-old heart transplant survivor Lauren Shields and passed life-saving legislation to significantly increase organ and tissue donation. Lauren's Law (S.3885), sponsored by Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Orange), would increase the number of eligible and willing organ donors by requiring driver's license applicants to specifically indicate their donation decision.

"The bottom line is that organ donation saves lives. We all have seen it in our own communities. The ability to give life to another is extremely powerful. We need to bring attention to this issue. It is that important," said Senator Jack M. Martins.

"New York State took a giant leap in encouraging life saving organ donation," Senator Carlucci said. "Today is a very special day for Lauren, not just because this legislation that is so personal for her passed the Senate, but because she turns 11 years old today. My gratitude goes out to Lauren Shields and her family for doing so much to bring attention to this very important issue, and I wish her many more birthdays to come. I also extend my thanks to Senator Skelos for bringing Lauren's Law to the floor today. I am looking forward to Lauren's Law being passed by the Assembly and signed into law by the Governor."

“Lauren Shields is not only a courageous young girl, but a model for why this legislation is so necessary,” Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos said. “The bill recognizes that choosing to donate one’s organs is a very personal decision, but it also brings new attention to this important issue. I sincerely thank Lauren and her family for their advocacy to increase organ and tissue donation so that other children and adults can be fortunate enough to find a donor and have many more happy birthdays with their families.”

April is National Donate Life Month. Nationally, there are approximately 110,000 men, women and children waiting for organ transplants. Every 11 minutes, a new name is added to the national waiting list and each day, 18 people die because of the lack of donated organs. In New York, more than 9,300 people are on the list for organ transplants. However, the state has ranked last in the number of organ donors signed up through their DMV program. In 2009, New York ranked last in the nation, signing up only 11 percent (or 427,562) of the 3.8 million people who received a driver's license or a non-driver's identification. By contrast, Colorado signed up 64 percent of new license holders.

Lauren’s Law would prohibit a driver's license application from being processed unless the organ donation section is filled out. Applicants would have to check a box stating “yes,” or “not at this time.” There currently is an organ donation section on the application, but it is not required to be filled out.

The bill has been sent to the Assembly.