



# Senator Dale Righter

## Property taxes and regulations for rural landowners

Reducing the enormous tax burden faced by many rural homeowners was a top priority this spring. I joined with colleagues on both sides of the political aisle to pass Senate Bill 17. The measure, which has been signed into law by the Governor, protects owners of unimproved woodlands, grasslands and wetlands from dramatic increases in their property taxes, and helps preserve open space.

Under the new law, land placed in an approved conservation plan would be assessed at 5 percent of the market value, and must be a minimum size of five contiguous acres. Land not in such a plan would see its assessment frozen at 2006 levels until it is transferred. The measure came about after the Illinois Dept. of Revenue compelled many county assessors to increase their assessments of rural properties.

Another potential financial hazard facing rural residents are new proposed fees and regulations for the owners of private surface discharging septic systems. The regulations would mean hundreds of dollars a year in related fees for these residents.

After hearing from hundreds of constituents and sponsoring legislation to curb the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's authority on the issue, IEPA Director Doug Scott promised to move forward in protecting homeowners from any state fees or over-burdensome septic system testing. He also gave assurances the IEPA would not seek any new regulations that go beyond what current federal guidelines require.

