

**Award:** Leadership in Government  
**Recipient:** Illinois Representative Naomi Jakobsson  
**Presenters:** Lisa Dixon

Good evening. My name is Lisa Dixon and I'm the Co-Chair of the Health Care Consumers Board of Directors.

It is my honor to present the Leadership in Government Award tonight to Rep. Jakobsson. We at Health Care Consumers have long appreciated, and been fortunate to work with, and be represented by Naomi Jakobsson. We are also proud to claim Naomi as a longtime friend of Health Care Consumers (but that's not why we are giving her this award tonight).

Naomi Jakobsson was first elected to the Illinois General Assembly 12 years ago, in the fall of 2002 to represent Illinois 103<sup>rd</sup> District. Last fall, when Naomi announced that she would not run for re-election, it caused us to pause and reflect on her time in office, the many issues we worked on together, her leadership, and what she, as Representative, has meant to us and our work.

We know that we are just one of many organizations and groups paying tribute to and honoring Naomi on this occasion of her retirement from office. In fact, earlier today, the Prairie Group of the Sierra Club dedicated a new Tulip Tree in Urbana's Victory Park to honor Naomi as a strong supporter of environmental issues throughout her time in office as our Representative.

I can't possibly detail all of Naomi's work and accomplishments, but it is our direct experience at Health Care Consumers that Naomi has been a leader and a champion on many of the issues that are so important to us and that affect the daily lives of people in our community and our state – health care, social services, education at all levels, the environment, economic justice, civil rights, and many more. I hope to give you just a few snapshots of Naomi's leadership and why we are grateful for the opportunity to honor her tonight.

As Representative, and also as Chairperson of the House Human Services Committee, Naomi has been a consistent champion of access to affordable health care; efforts to improve the mental health system; home and community based services for people with disabilities; and the availability of public health and human services – just to name a few.

She has championed these issues for people of all ages – from babies to seniors, and everyone in between. But Naomi's leadership is not just about what she has gotten done in the legislature, but how she has brought the voices and experiences of the

people she represents to the legislative process. Naomi has always been willing to listen, and question, do research and investigate, and provide information to constituents. In other words, part of Naomi's leadership has been her accessibility.

Claudia tells me that there have been countless times over the years when our Medicare Task Force members have requested a meeting to talk about some issue, and were invited to come meet with Naomi at her office where as many as 7 to 10 Task Force members and Staff would crowd into Naomi's office to talk about prescription drug costs or some other issue affecting them.

Naomi has also been a steadfast champion of the environment and our natural resources. When we first started our 5<sup>th</sup> & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign, dealing with the Ameren-owned toxic site in that neighborhood, we frequently turned to Naomi for help in dealing with the IL EPA. But Naomi wasn't content to just sit in her office and help from there. She took time to go door to door with Claudia in the neighborhood and meet with several residents to hear directly from them how they were affected by the toxic site.

And Claudia tells me that, later, when Ameren wanted approval for a rate increase, Naomi made sure that there would be a public hearing in our community, and at that hearing, Naomi spoke passionately and forcefully against the rate hike.

Naomi understands the daily lives of people and what it takes to make ends meet. She, along with Sen. Frerichs, championed a progressive tax for Illinois. And in an act that made national news last November, Naomi left the bedside of her dying son, Garret, to drive to Springfield and cast her vote in favor of the bill she co-sponsored legalizing same-sex marriage. That bill passed by only two votes, but forever changed the lives of many people in our state, as Naomi knew that it would.

Naomi isn't brash and showy. If anything, she is a bit understated. But, as a leader in government, she is sincere, dedicated, hard working, effective, and has been quietly heroic in many of her efforts because she knows how real people are affected by the things she is fighting for.

And that is why, tonight, it is with tremendous gratitude that we honor you, Representative Naomi Jakobsson, with the Health Care Consumers Leadership in Government Award.