

**Award:** Legislative Leadership Award  
**Recipient:** State Senator Scott Bennett – 52<sup>nd</sup> District  
**Presenter:** Claudia Lennhoff

And now, I would like to ask Sen. Bennett to join me on stage.

Our community is fortunate to be represented by two amazing legislators, and it is my privilege to present the Legislative Leadership Award to both Sen. Scott Bennett and to Rep. Carol Ammons.

The CCHCC Board of Directors awards the Legislative Leadership Award to individuals who distinguish themselves in public service as members of government, and these two have certainly done so.

Scott Bennett is our State Senator for the 52<sup>nd</sup> District, and he began serving in 2015, and he hit the ground running.

In his short time in office as a State Senator, he has already achieved an impressive track record and our community has benefitted from his work.

Senator Bennett has sponsored and championed legislation in many areas that are important to our organization and our constituents, including in the areas of health, the environment, energy, civil rights, and the rights of people with disabilities, and, along with Rep. Ammons, has been a champion in working to advance a resolution to our State's budget crisis.

One of the things that I appreciate most about Sen. Bennett is that he is very pragmatic. His work focuses on doing what he can to improve the lives of people – especially those who are considered the “least among us”. Sen. Bennett works to remove barriers and improve laws and regulations to help people.

For example, one of the bills that Sen. Bennett sponsored amends the insurance code to provide that insurance policies cover preventive physical therapy for insured people diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, rather than just covering the therapy for purposes of rehabilitation.

This is not sexy legislation that makes headlines – no offense, Sen. Bennett – but it *is* important legislation that helps people who are living with MS. It helps them live healthier, and it improves the quality of their lives.

Another example of an important bill that Sen. Bennett sponsored is the Achieving a Better Life Experience bill, which provided for the creation of tax-free saving accounts for people with disabilities, so that they can save money without jeopardizing their Medicaid or Social Security disability benefits, which frequently limit recipients' assets to \$2,000 or less, forcing many to live in poverty and on the margins, never able to get ahead or have some security. This is known as the ABLE program.

Sen. Bennett also went on to sponsor another ABLE related bill, which protects ABLE Account funds from being seized in bill collection efforts.

One of the issues that we worked closely with Sen. Bennett – and Rep. Carol Ammons – on, was legislation to protect the Mahomet Aquifer from contamination as a result of toxic dumping in area landfills. Thanks to Sen. Bennett and Rep. Ammons, Illinois passed a law prohibiting toxic waste from Former Manufactured Gas Plants (like the toxic site located at 5<sup>th</sup> & Hill) from going into landfills where they can contaminate our Sole Source Aquifer.

I want to tell you about my favorite time spent with Sen. Bennett. It was on car ride over to the Farm Bureau in Piatt County for Governor Rauner's signing of HB 1326 – the Mahomet Aquifer protection bill that Rep. Ammons had sponsored. Now, normally, the bill signing would have been in Rep. Ammons' district and with her present, but Gov. Rauner apparently doesn't like Carol, so she wasn't even invited to this bill signing of *her* bill... On the car ride over, we were talking about the Governor, and Sen. Bennett was telling me about how when Gov. Rauner comes downstate, he wears his "downstate uniform" – and he described to me what the governor wears, I guess trying to fit in with downstate folks. And damned if he wasn't right! The "uniform" was exactly what Sen. Bennett had predicted!

In these award presentations, we don't have time to detail all the good and important work that award recipients have done.

But here is what I can tell you about Sen. Bennett and why we wanted to recognize him with this award. Sen. Bennett works hard to improve the lives of the people of Illinois and this community, and to protect our environment. He is a champion of health care and has supported our organization's efforts to get people covered and to protect the ACA and Medicaid.

He and Rep. Ammons have been absolutely dedicated in their efforts to engage and keep our community informed and active on the efforts to address our State's budget crisis.

Sen. Bennett is principled, smart, effective, accessible, kind, and down-to-earth, and he has assembled a great team of staff and interns who are working hard for our community's interests.

We couldn't ask for someone better to serve as our State Senator in Springfield.

Sen. Bennett, on behalf of Champaign County Health Care Consumers, it is with our tremendous gratitude and appreciation that I present you with the Legislative Leadership Award.