

Award: Legislative Leadership Award
Recipient: State Representative Carol Ammons – 103rd District
Presenter: Claudia Lennhoff

And now, I would like to ask Rep. Carol Ammons to join me on stage to receive the Legislative Leadership Award.

Again, our community is so fortunate to have these amazing individuals serving as legislators to represent our interests.

Like her colleague in the Senate, Representative Ammons took office in 2015 and she also hit the ground running.

One of the things that has really distinguished Rep. Ammons is that she ran an incredibly effective grassroots campaign to get elected. And once elected, she has continued her grassroots approach to the democratic process.

Under her leadership, her office has created avenues for community engagement and involvement. She works with staff and interns to help support the involvement of community members in various panels, so that they can be apprised of, and give their input on various legislative bills and initiatives. Her panels include Health and Human Services, Environment and Energy, Judicial and Criminal Justice, and several others.

Also in keeping with the grassroots approach to participatory democracy, Rep. Ammons has worked closely with Sen. Bennett on the state budget crisis, hosting frequent town hall sessions, and bringing various experts to our community.

We appreciate and recognize Rep. Ammons because she is on a mission for justice! Like the other individuals and organizations we recognize tonight, Rep. Ammons is dedicated to making concrete improvements in people's lives, and she has made amazing strides.

She has sponsored and championed legislation that creates protections for temporary workers, prioritizing the safety of these workers under OSHA.

She has sponsored groundbreaking legislation – one of the first in the nation – that limits the costs of video calls for people in prison. These video calls are essential for incarcerated individuals to maintain contact with their loved ones, but the costs had been prohibitive and were a form of cruelty.

We at Health Care Consumers have been fortunate to work closely with Rep. Ammons on a couple of noteworthy bills that have become state law.

One was HB6213 which required that Medicaid Managed Care plans have more accurate and timely information on the website, including providers' directories, so that Illinois residents choosing a Medicaid Managed Care plan can make informed health care decisions. Rep. Ammons worked closely with EverThrive IL and CCHCC to help shape this bill and shepherd it to passage. I remember going and meeting with her at her office and showing her how poorly the Medicaid Managed Care website worked and why these changes were needed.

And when Rep. Ammons held a legislative committee hearing on the bill, our own Adani Sanchez was invited to go and provide testimony based on her experience helping to enroll consumers in Medicaid Managed Care plans.

And in one of the most thrilling experiences I've had – at least, legislatively – Rep. Ammons masterfully championed HB1326, the legislation that protects the Mahomet Aquifer from contamination from Manufactured Gas Plant toxic waste going into area landfills. Sen. Bennett championed the bill on the Senate side.

The grassroots support for this legislation was staggering (thanks to many of you)! Thanks to the groundswell of support, Rep. Ammons helped bring the IL EPA around, and she invited me to a meeting with the heads of the IL EPA, where they finalized their support. The car ride back to my office after the meeting was really fun – it is a special joy to share a moment of victory together.

And when it came time for the legislative committee hearing on this bill, Rep. Ammons and her staff let us know that testimony was needed because there was strong opposition from the landfill groups, so we mobilized people and taught them how to use the electronic testimony function that is now available online.

Over 100 people submitted witness slips in favor of Rep. Ammons' bill, and many showed up in person, and I was able to provide testimony at that hearing.

We have so much to thank Rep. Ammons for. She is fierce and determined and so smart, and she really cares about people. She is visionary, but not afraid to get into the weeds on policy details in order to understand how things play out in real life. And she is truly a champion of participatory democracy at every step of the way, from voter registration to community engagement in the legislative process.

Rep. Ammons, for this, and so much more, on behalf of Champaign County Health Care Consumers, it is my great privilege to present you with the Legislative Leadership Award.