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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 23, 2012

PRESS RELEASE

State's Attorney Tom Gibbons Applauds Legislators Work

Edwardsville – Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons is commending state Sen. Bill Haine and state Rep. Dan Beiser for their responsiveness in introducing and supporting several important law enforcement bills during the spring legislative session.

Among the legislation is a bill that would allow prosecutors in Illinois greater jurisdiction to pursue charges of Drug-Induced Homicide in heroin overdose cases. Gibbons asked Haine to propose the legislation in response to the acquittal of Taylor Kennedy on charges of Drug-Induced Homicide for his role in the death of Shannon Gaddis, the Troy teenager who died of a heroin overdose in January 2011. The charges against Kennedy were dismissed when the judge ruled that current Illinois law requires the delivery of heroin to have occurred in Illinois for Madison County to have jurisdiction in the case. A second pending case was also dismissed at the request of the State's Attorney's Office due to the ruling in Kennedy's case.

"We are very disappointed by the lost opportunity to seek justice in the recently dismissed cases," Gibbons said. "However, thanks to the dedication and responsiveness of Sen. Haine and Rep. Beiser we hope to have the tools to combat the unique situation we face in Madison and St. Clair counties moving forward."

Haine is the bill's sponsor in the Senate, while Beiser has indicated he is also supportive of the bill.

"If a drug-induced homicide occurs in Illinois, our prosecutors should have the jurisdiction to bring the offender to justice," Haine said. "This law reflects the reality of the drug trade in the metro-east. Many drug addicts jump state lines to buy heroin or other dangerous drugs."

"When a precious life is lost, it should be of no matter where the life-taking drugs were purchased," Beiser said. "It is the life and memory of the victim and the promise to bring justice to the situation that matters most. We must strengthen the law to ensure that when individuals purchase drugs across state lines, they are forced to bear the full weight of the law."

The Drug-Induced Homicide bill is only one of several pieces of legislation Gibbons, Beiser, and Haine have collaborated on in the last year. The Illinois House and Senate recently voted to pass two other bills sponsored by the legislators in response to requests from Gibbons on behalf of law enforcement officials.

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House Bill 5121 was introduced in response to the case of Olutosin Oduwole, who was sentenced to five years in prison after being convicted of attempt to make a terrorist threat. The law would limit how much good-time credit can be earned by someone serving a prison sentence for attempting to commit terrorism.

House Bill 5122, sponsored by Haine, D-Alton, would make it illegal to remove or carry away a court, and was introduced to prevent the dumping of overdose victims' bodies.

Both HB 5121 and 5122 have been sent to the governor's office to be signed into law.

Gibbons said the positive working relationships between local, state, and federal officials benefits everyone.

"We called upon our local legislators to help solve these problems and they responded to that call," Gibbons said. "When law enforcement and elected officials at all levels work together, we can achieve more than we could alone."

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