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DONATE LIFE CALIFORNIA ONLINE REGISTRY JUMPS FORWARD WITH 100,000 REGISTRANTS

Organ, Tissue Donor Registrations in California Could Increase into the Millions if SB689 Is Approved

Sacramento, Calif. – Aug. 2, 2005 – It's an unprecedented achievement in the United States – an online organ and tissue donor registry signing up 100,000 registrants in just four months.

“Californians have once again taken the lead in the nation – this time in saving lives,” stated Tracy Bryan, president of Donate Life California, the not-for-profit organization that administers the organ and tissue registry. “We are deeply gratified by the incredibly strong response to our donor registry.”

Bryan reported that since the Donate Life California Organ & Tissue Donor Registry was launched on April 4, the website, www.donateLIFecalifornia.org, has attracted twice as many registrants as expected within its first four months of operation.

“The high number of registrations underscores the demand for a registry as a way to save lives,” she said. “However, our goal is to reach millions of Californians, especially lower income and ethnic minorities who do not have access to the Internet, and we can only do that with the passage of SB 689.”

SB 689 (Speier, D-San Francisco/San Mateo) will bring the registration process to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), which will collect organ and tissue donor designation information on its applications and renewals for drivers licenses and identification cards. The bill was approved unanimously by the Senate in May and is now under consideration by the Assembly.

Tom Mone, secretary/treasurer for Donate Life California and chief executive officer of OneLegacy, the federally designated organ procurement organization that serves the Greater Los Angeles area, pointed out, “With 36 million Californians, 23 million of whom are licensed drivers, we have a long way to go. We believe the key to the Donate Life California Registry’s success is accessibility, and accessibility is best provided by the DMV. In fact, of the 36 states that have registries, most are connected with the DMV – and about 98% of their signups come from the DMV versus 2% from online registrants.”

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SB 689 could make a partnership between Donate Life California and the DMV occur as early as July 2006. In the Assembly, SB 689 passed out of the Transportation Committee unanimously and is now before the Assembly Appropriations Committee. It will go from there to the full Assembly, back to the Senate and, if passed, on to the Governor.

Under SB 689, Californians applying for a driver's license would have the opportunity to check a box on the application that asks whether they would like to register to be an organ and tissue donor. The names and contact information for those who choose to donate would be forwarded electronically to the registry. Registrants would also be able to make a voluntary contribution of \$2.00 or more to support the registry and public education about donation.

Results have been eye-opening in states where the DMV is linked to a registry. For example, in New Jersey it took five years to register 50,000 people, but registrants tripled in just six months once the DMV was authorized to collect donor information.

As the Donate Life California Registry now exists, Californians with email addresses can sign up to be organ and tissue donors at any computer with Internet access. Each registrant's personal donation decision is stored in a secure database free of charge, and the information is accessible as "read-only" solely to authorized, non-hospital organ and tissue recovery personnel. At the time of registration, registrants will have the option of sending an email notification to friends and family as well. The Donate Life California Registry also offers current data and information about donation, personal stories that reinforce the life-enhancing result of organ and tissue gifts, and links to local resources.

There are currently more than 18,500 people waiting for life-saving organs in California, of which 13,600 are waiting for kidneys. Of the nearly 90,000 people on the national organ transplant waiting list, 17 people die each day waiting. Many hundreds of thousands more require donated tissues to prevent or cure blindness, heal burns, or prevent amputation. An individual donor can save the lives of eight people through organ donation and enhance the lives of 50 others through tissue donation.

Information on the Donate Life California Registry can be obtained at www.donateLIFECalifornia.org or in Spanish at www.doneVIDAcalifornia.org.

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