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O'DONNELL ATTACKS WELFARE VETO

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-Germantown) today blasted Governor Thornburgh's veto of a bill that would have restored public assistance benefits to 6,000 needy persons cut off welfare by the 1982 "Thornfare" law.

O'Donnell, the House Majority Whip, called the veto "a callous and cruel slap in the face of the same needy and disadvantaged people who were most devastated by the Reagan social service cuts and the original Thornfare law."

O'Donnell said the \$11.1 million aid bill was "a fair and humane response to these people which was supported not only by Democrats but by many Republicans as well. The people who would benefit from this bill have no jobs and no realistic chance of getting jobs. This was at least an attempt to fight back and to alleviate unnecessary suffering."

The Governor's veto will deny year-round cash benefits to poor pregnant women, battered wives who are financially dependent, homebound caretakers of children under 18 years old, displaced homemakers over 35, the mentally impaired, and recently discharged military veterans whose unemployment benefits have expired. Currently, Thornfare limits benefits for these needy people to 3 months in any one year period.

"This veto is a direct extension of the vicious and mean-spirited Reagan attacks on the poor," O'Donnell said. "The state has a responsibility to help these people, and, particularly with the winter months coming up, this bill would have done that."