

# Press Release...



FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

**For Immediate Release:**

MAY 6, 2015

## **Ford Calls For The End To Criminal Charges For Loose Cigarette Sales**

**SPRINGFIELD** – IL State Representative La Shawn K. Ford (D-Chicago) introduced a bill to the House decriminalizing the sale of single or loose cigarettes. 43-year-old Eric Garner, a father of six, lost his life in New York for suspicion of selling single or loose cigarettes. The sales of single or loose cigarettes is a petty criminal offense. Illinois law will force police officers to arrest an individual for the sale of single or loose cigarettes.

"The aim of this legislation is not to make it easier to sell or smoke cigarettes, but to be smart and right about our justice process in Illinois", Ford said. "Our laws in Illinois continue to strain relationships between communities and law enforcement".

The bill looks to amend the Prevention of Tobacco Use by Minors and Sale and Distribution of Tobacco Products Act. It provides that a violation of the Act involving the sale or distribution of single or loose cigarettes that are not contained within a sealed container, pack, or package to persons who are 18 years of age or older is a petty offense punishable by a fine of not more than \$50, which may be satisfied without a court appearance by a written plea of guilty and payment of all applicable fines, penalties, and costs. The bill looks to amend the Cigarette Use Tax Act to provide that those violations shall be subject only to the penalties provided in the Prevention of Tobacco Use by Minors and Sale and Distribution of Tobacco Products Act.

"If we are going to improve relationships between law enforcement and communities we must reduce the responsibility of our police officers. It's important that we do everything to support policing that focus on keeping our communities safer by taking dangerous people off the streets", Ford concluded.

For more information, contact one of Ford's constituent service offices: 816 S. Oak Park Avenue in Oak Park at [708-445-3673](tel:708-445-3673), 4800 W. Chicago Avenue in Chicago at [773-378-5902](tel:773-378-5902) or in the Stratton Office Building in Springfield at [217-782-5962](tel:217-782-5962).

###