

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

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Shortage of organs

Financial incentives are often argued as a simple answer to eliminating the transplant waiting list. It's possible the concept could have some impact if ever implemented. But there's no way given the complexity of the issue that financial incentives could be the single solution to solving the organ shortage. The problem is when the debate focuses people on rhetorical discussion instead of motivating them to take the obvious action to help solve the growing need for organ donations: Register as a donor (at www.ilsos.gov/OrganDonorRegister/).

Arguments for financial incentives often present increased consent as the single way to increase donation. Consent is critical, but remember that a few other factors are just as crucial -- for example, that potential donors at the time of death are consistently identified and referred for evaluation for donation.

In addition keep in mind that 60 percent of people already consent to donate, and that percentage will only grow as millions of Illinoisans continue registering in the state's new donor consent registry.

Given the passion of opinions for and against financial incentives, it seems probable that for as many families to which an incentive would appeal, others would be turned off by the idea or would continue to say "no," payment or no payment. That's another reason that Illinois' new registry was established, so that an individual's consent decision will be honored at the time of death and the final "yes" or "no" is not placed on family members.

The Trib asked readers to weigh in: "Should the U.S. legalize the sale of body organs?" A more direct question to gauge public opinion on financial incentives and the intended impact is: "If you said 'no' to being an organ donor or allowing a family member to become a donor, would a financial incentive change your mind?" But the best question of all is: "If you care enough to weigh in on saving more lives through donation, are you registered as a donor and have you encouraged others to do the same?"

Registering as a donor is often overlooked when editorial writers examine issues of increasing consent for donation, perhaps because it's a given and there's little to debate.

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