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## Letters to the Editor: Sept. 23

THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

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### Ombudsmen program shouldn't be cut

It was upsetting to me when I recently read that funding for the Illinois Long-Term Care Ombudsmen would be cut by 19 percent. If you have never had a loved one or friend reside in a nursing home, you may not be familiar with the ombudsmen or understand the crucial role they play in protecting the welfare of nursing home residents. But to thousands of seniors living in Illinois nursing homes, these advocates act as the eyes, ears and voices for both residents and their families.

An ombudsman is a resident advocate who can assist families when issues arise at a nursing home. In many instances, it is the ombudsman who identifies poor care or abuse when a resident does not have anyone else to advocate for them. They are the residents' watchdogs and whistleblowers, unafraid to demand quality care and respect for every nursing home resident under their care. Budget cuts in the ombudsman program will likely mean that fewer voices will be raised and poor-quality care or neglect will go unnoticed or unpunished.

I ask Gov. Pat Quinn and Department on Aging Director Charles Johnson to reconsider this cut so that these advocates can continue to serve as a voice for one of the most vulnerable populations in Illinois.

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