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SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

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Students Participate in 1st Annual Capitol Forum on America's Future

SPRINGFIELD — Secretary of State Jesse White and the Illinois Humanities Council welcomed more than 60 Illinois high school students to the State Capitol today who are participating in Illinois' first Capitol Forum on America's Future.

The Capitol Forum is a civic education program that challenges young people to learn about and discuss controversial issues that impact America's future.

"As the Secretary of State and as a former school teacher, I am proud that Illinois is one of only four states in the nation chosen to participate in this project," said White. "As I welcome you to the first annual Capitol Forum on America's Future, I remind you that you represent the next generation of leaders. I congratulate you for taking an interest in the future of our country and the challenges we face."

Illinois is one of four states chosen to take part in the curriculum that is coordinated nationally by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Project, a program of the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University.

The participating schools include Gordon Tech High School, Chicago; Lexington High School, Lexington; Lincoln Park High School, Chicago; Maine South High School, Park Ridge; Normal Community High School, Normal; Streamwood High School, Streamwood; and Wheeling High School, Wheeling.

The curriculum addresses four themes – international conflict

resolution, immigration, global environmental problems and international trade. Students gather in groups to examine four distinct visions for the future of US foreign policy. Each group analyzes its assigned "Future" and prepares a brief persuasive presentation. A fifth group prepares questions for the presenters. All the participants meet in the House Chamber to present and debate the issues. State, federal, and university officials with backgrounds in foreign affairs and trade are serving as expert panelists.

"The first Capitol Forum is an investment in the future of our neighborhoods and nation, and will prepare high schools students to take their place as informed citizens in the global community," said Kristina Valaitis, Executive Director of the Illinois Humanities Council.