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NEWS

ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

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Legislation Targeting Drunk Drivers and Drivers Without Valid Licenses Gains Senate Committee Approval

SPRINGFIELD — The Illinois Senate Judiciary Committee today approved two bills initiated by Secretary of State Jesse White targeting drunk drivers and drivers without valid licenses.

"Enacting these measures into law will help rid our highways of the most dangerous and irresponsible drivers - people who get behind the wheel at double the legal limit, drive drunk with a child in the car, or continue to drive after their license has been suspended or revoked," said White.

House Bill 2265 provides increased penalties for anyone caught driving at double the legal limit (.16 Blood Alcohol Content and higher) or driving drunk with a child in the vehicle. The measure sets escalating penalties that include mandatory jail time for repeat offenders. The measure also requires any repeat DUI offender to have a Breath Alcohol Ignition Interlock Device installed in their vehicle. The device will not allow someone who has been drinking to start or operate a vehicle.

House Bill 2266 targets people who ignore the law and continue to drive after their license has been suspended or revoked. Under the measure, those caught driving repeatedly on suspended and revoked licenses would face jail time. The legislation also allows judges to order the driver's vehicle immobilized by removing the license plates or installing a boot on the vehicle. Nearly 75,000 drivers were arrested for driving on a suspended or revoked license in 1998.

"These are two well thought-out and extremely comprehensive pieces of legislation aimed at drastically reducing the carnage caused by the hard-core segment of the drunk driving population," said Brad Fralick, Executive Director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) of Illinois. "We believe this legislation will have an impact upon alcohol-related traffic fatalities greater than any legislative initiative that has preceded it."

House Bills 2265 and 2266, sponsored by State Senator Debbie Halvorson (D-Crete), received unanimous approval from the Senate Committee. The measures now move to the full Senate for consideration.

Both measures have been approved by the House of Representatives with bipartisan support and have received unprecedented support from anti-drunk driving advocacy groups, law enforcement officials and the beverage alcohol industry.