



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- **February 20, 2001**
- CONTACT: Dave Druker
- CONTACT: Randy Nehrt

White Announces New Plan To Reduce The Fraudulent Use Of Disability Placards And Plates

CHICAGO — Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White announced new legislative and administrative initiatives today to reduce the fraudulent use of disability placards and license plates.

"Disability plates and placards were created for those who truly need them," White said. "It's tragic that some people abuse the system either to get free parking or to get a nearby parking space. I believe this new plan will prevent individuals from manipulating the system."

The new administrative changes include:

- Creation of three new disability placards
 - Permanent placards will have new punch card expiration with a hologram, making them more difficult to tamper with. The placard holder's gender, birth month and birth year will also appear punched on the placard.
 - Temporary placards will also have a new punch card system for expiration with a hologram. They will also be coded by gender.
 - Organization placards, a new category, will also be included on a new punch card hologram system.
- Formation of a new Disabilities License Plate/Placard Unit, which will handle and process all permanent placard and plate requests. The unit will be in Springfield and will be up and running by April 1, 2001.

- Initiation of a public awareness campaign to focus on raising awareness of the parking program for people with disabilities. This campaign would center on the general public, medical community and law enforcement agencies.
- Implementation of a personnel policy, the first of its kind, within the Secretary of State's office, that can result in disciplinary action including termination for any employee who violates the parking program for persons with disabilities during working hours.

The new legislative changes include:

- Changing the current definition on the application from "Cannot walk 200 feet without stopping to rest," one of five specific medical reasons
- Issuing only one permanent placard and/or one set of disability license plates
- Allowing law enforcement to seize any placard if abuse occurs, then allowing the Secretary of State to revoke the placard
- Issuing disability license plates to qualified applicants only if their name appears on the vehicle title or to a parent or legal guardian of a person with a disability
- Making it illegal to park in the access aisle of a reserved parking space or for two vehicles to share one accessible parking space
- Requiring a \$10 replacement fee for placards that are lost or stolen, with the exception of those who meet financial eligibility criteria set forth in the Circuit Breaker program

"Those who abuse the system are violating the rights of people who genuinely need this vital program," White said. "It is imperative that we regard the rights of others and treat them with the respect they deserve."

Currently, there are 84,458 disability license plates, 507,851 permanent disability placards and 16,858 temporary disability placards (issued by the Secretary of State) in Illinois. There are 5,000 organizations that have been issued disability placards.

Rep. James D. Brosnahan (D-Evergreen Park) is

sponsoring the legislation.

"As a member of ACCESS and chairman of the Illinois House Committee, the Disabled Community, I am honored to sponsor House Bill 846," said Brosnahan. "This long overdue legislation will strengthen the standards for obtaining disability placards and disability license plates."