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SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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**White Commends General Assembly for
Addressing Major Initiatives**

*Measures Address Road Safety, Disabled Parking Abuse,
and Consumer Protection*

SPRINGFIELD — Secretary of State Jesse White thanked members of the General Assembly for supporting major initiatives his office proposed ranging from road safety to disabled parking privileges to consumer protection. The General Assembly concluded its Spring Legislative Session today.

"I want to thank Senators and Representatives in the Illinois General Assembly for their strong support of legislation that will provide us with the tools to make Illinois roads safer, preserve parking spaces for persons with disabilities and protect consumers from unethical securities dealers," said White. "I was pleased with the strong bipartisan cooperation on these important issues."

The General Assembly unanimously approved White's legislation (HB 2265) that increases penalties against people arrested for driving at double the legal limit (.16 Blood Alcohol Content and higher) or driving drunk with a child in the vehicle. The measure also requires that all repeat DUI offenders have Breath Alcohol Ignition Interlock Devices (BAIIDs), which stop drunk drivers from starting a vehicle, installed in their cars.

The Legislature also approved White's measure (HB 2266) increasing penalties against 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. More than 73,000 people were arrested for driving on suspended and revoked licenses in 1999.

"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.

Another important initiative White won legislative approval for was a measure (HB 846) aimed to reduce the fraudulent use of parking placards and license plates intended for people with disabilities. The measure will allow law enforcement to seize any placard and the Secretary of State to revoke the placard when abuse occurs. It also restricts qualifications to one of five specific medical conditions and limits 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.

In addition to the legislation, White has also proposed administrative changes to the disability parking program including the creation of three new disability parking placards. The new placards indicate the user's birth year and gender to help law enforcement officers identify people abusing the program.

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.

"This plan will reduce the fraudulent use of disability parking placards and disability license plates in order to make parking accessible for those who truly need it," said White. "I'm pleased to have received such strong support from the General Assembly on this issue."

The General Assembly also approved White's initiative (SB575) to increase investor protection against unscrupulous securities dealers by expanding the powers of the Secretary of State to deny or revoke the securities registrations of registered parties or applicants. It also would raise the penalty for violations of the Illinois Securities Act from a Class A misdemeanor to Class 4 Felony. The bill specifically prohibits persons from acting as a loan or business broker without

registration or selling unregistered business opportunities.

"As the United States continues to grow as a nation of investors, increased protection of investors is of paramount importance," said White. "It is vitally important that the Secretary of State has the authority to investigate and prosecute misconduct in the securities, business broker, loan broker and business opportunities industries."

As the clearinghouse for business filings, White also gained legislative approval on a comprehensive bill (SB 725) to expedite business services and cut government red tape for corporations required to register in the state.

Each of the measures now await final approval from the Governor.