



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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White Urges All Illinoisans to Observe School Bus Safety Week

CHICAGO — Secretary of State Jesse White today emphasized to all Illinois drivers and children the importance of school bus safety and reminded motorists that police will be more closely monitoring school bus zones throughout the state as part of National School Bus Safety Week, which runs from October 20-26.

"There is no more important issue to this office than the safety of children on the roads," said White, adding that thousands of students nationwide are injured and dozens are killed annually in mishaps involving school buses. "We need to obey school bus safety laws more closely and teach our children to be more careful around school buses."

In observance of National School Bus Safety Week, Secretary White will announce the winners of the 2002 School Bus Safety Poster contest. The third annual contest, which is sponsored by the Secretary's Office and the Illinois Association of Pupil Transportation, helps to raise awareness about the importance of school bus safety. In addition, speakers from the Secretary's Office will visit a number of schools-as they do throughout the year-to present the Toby Tire school bus safety program. Toby tire is a 48-inch fully automated talking robot that teaches students the basics of school bus safety and provides tips on how to board, ride, and exit the bus. White's Toby Tire program has been awarded top honors by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators.

As part of his focus on school bus safety this week, White reminded children of the following tips:

- Walk safely to the bus stop and stay three giant steps away from the street.
- While waiting for the school bus, stay away from the street and private property.
- When your school bus arrives, never move toward the bus until the doors open.

- Stay in your seat until the bus stops and the driver opens the door.
- Be quiet, especially at railroad crossings, and follow the driver's directions.
- When exiting the bus, walk quickly away from the door and don't go back.
- Take 10 giant steps in front of the bus and wait for the driver's signal before crossing the street.
- Avoid strangers while waiting for the bus and never go anywhere with them.

White also warned motorists that the Secretary of State Police will be monitoring school zones throughout the state to ensure greater compliance with traffic laws. The project is a joint effort between the Secretary of State Police and the Illinois Department of Transportation and is funded through a federal highway safety grant.

White said motorists should also remember the rules of the road regarding school zones and school buses:

- Drivers in school zones must obey reduced speed limits during school hours when children are present.
- On roads less than four lanes, all vehicles following or approaching a school bus must stop when the red lights on the bus are flashing and the stop sign is extended.
- On four-lane roads where traffic moves in both directions, drivers traveling in the same direction as a school bus must stop when the red lights on the bus are flashing and the stop sign is extended. School buses may let students exit only on the side of the road that the bus is traveling. Students are not permitted to cross four-lane roads where traffic moves in both directions.
- Drivers should be aware that school buses make stops at all railroad crossings.