



# Jesse White

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## SECRETARY OF STATE

# NEWS

### ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- **September 4, 2002**
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#### **White Stresses Important School Bus Safety Lessons**

**SPRINGFIELD** — Secretary of State Jesse White said today the first lesson of back-to-school safety is simple: *Stay away from strangers.*

"The recent rash of kidnappings across the United States reminds us that our children are vulnerable whenever they are out of their parents' sight," White said. "So the first step to staying safe when going back to school this fall is to remind children never to go with a stranger."

As part of his school bus safety program, White utilizes the animated character Toby Tire to teach children the basics of school bus safety. White's school bus safety program, distributed to grade schools all across Illinois, instructs children to tell their school bus driver if a stranger makes any advances toward them.

"Through our Toby Tire school bus safety program, we have told children that the very first step to school bus safety is to stay away from strangers," White said. "Students are taught that the school bus driver is a friend. If there is an occasion where a stranger approaches a child while he or she is waiting for the school bus, the driver needs to be informed in order to notify school authorities."

A central Illinois school bus driver was credited last spring with saving a 9-year-old boy from a domestic violence situation following the arrest of the boy's step-father, just weeks after the boy's school hosted Secretary White's school bus safety program.

White reminds children of the other basic steps to school bus

safety:

- Make sure you arrive at the bus stop five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive.
- Stay at least three giant steps away from the roadway while walking to the bus stop and waiting for the bus.
- Wait until the doors of the bus open before boarding. Board the bus in single file and hold on to the handrail. Never push the person in front of you.
- After taking your seat, it's all right to talk to friends, but talk quietly so the driver can maintain concentration.
- When exiting the bus, get away from the bus immediately. Never go under the bus to retrieve a dropped object.

Secretary White also reminds motorists to slow down to the posted speed limit in school zones during school hours when children are present.