



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 5, 2004

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White Welcomes Students To 5th Annual Capitol Forum On America's Future

(SPRINGFIELD)—Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White and the Illinois Humanities Council welcomed more than 150 Illinois high school students to the State Capitol today to participate in Illinois' Capitol Forum on America's Future.

The Capitol Forum is a civic education program that challenges young people to learn about and discuss controversial issues that impact America's future. The program brings debate to the classroom and educates students about current United States foreign policy issues.

"Illinois is one of only six states in the nation chosen to participate in this project," White said. "I think this speaks to our state's commitment to education. We began this program five years ago with just six high schools participating. This year we have 24 high schools from across the state in attendance. As the future leaders of this country, I applaud these students for addressing and debating the challenges we face as a nation."

The Capitol Forum curriculum is coordinated nationally by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Project, a program of the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. For the first time this year, a grant was given by the McCormick Tribune Foundation to help school districts pay for the additional costs incurred by the school and students.

The participating schools include Amundsen High School from Chicago; Bureau Valley High School from Manlius; El Cuarto Ano High School from Chicago; ESP/ARC Alternative School from Jacksonville; Eureka High School; Geneva High School; Greenville High School; Hindsale South High School from Darien; Homewood-Flossmoor High School; Joliet West High School; Judah Christian High School from Champaign; Lane Technical College Prep High School from Chicago; the Latin School from Chicago; Maine South High School from Park Ridge; New Approach School from Vandalia; Newark High School; Normal Community High School; Normal West Community High School; Pawnee High School; St. Scholastica Academy from Chicago; SIU-East St. Louis Charter School; Streamwood High School; University High School from Normal; and Whitney Young Magnet School from Chicago.

The curriculum addresses four themes – international conflict resolution, immigration, global environmental problems and international trade. Students gather in groups to examine four distinct visions for the future of US foreign policy.

"With upcoming presidential elections and our military presence in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, this is a great opportunity for students to get together and talk with their peers about our government and United States foreign policy," said Kristina Valaitis, Executive Director of the Illinois Humanities Council. "These are sometimes difficult issues to discuss but the Capitol Forum gets students involved in the process. We need more opportunities like this for our high schools."