



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY APPROVES BILL TO SUSPEND DRIVING PRIVILEGES FOR BRIBERS

(Springfield)--The Illinois General Assembly today approved legislation initiated by Secretary of State Jesse White that would allow his office to suspend driving privileges for people who attempt to bribe driving examiners.

White is also seeking to extend criminal felony provisions for bribes involving driving examiners to include commercial driving schools and trucking companies who provide third party testing. Current law allows criminal penalties for bribing public officials - in this case secretary of state employees.

"I want to thank the General Assembly for again providing us with the tools to fight corruption," White said. "We will not tolerate bribes that put unqualified drivers on our highways. A driver's license in the hands of an unskilled driver places all other motorists at risk."

The legislation (SB 2167) would allow the secretary of state to suspend a person's driver's license or prevent an application for a driver's license for 120 days for anyone caught trying to bribe a driving examiner. Burns said the ability to deny or suspend a license is an important component because small bribe attempts often do not get prosecuted.

In addition, the legislation clearly defines the act of bribery to obtain driving privileges and brings driving schools, trucking companies who administer third party testing, and all other individuals who administer driving instructions or tests into the fold. Under the measure it would be a Class 2 felony for any person to offer or give a bribe to anyone authorized by law to provide driving instructions or administer driver's license examinations. The legislation also applies the same penalties to anyone authorized to train drivers or give tests who solicits or accepts a bribe. A Class 2 felony carries penalties that include imprisonment for three to seven years and fines up to \$25,000.

White credited his Inspector General Jim Burns, a former US Attorney from the Northern District of Illinois, for bringing the initiative to his attention. Burns said that while bribery cases have fallen off under his watch, he wants to ensure that the tools are available in all cases to penalize offenders including those who offer bribes.

"It takes two sides to complete a bribe," Burns said. "We should not lose sight of the fact that the so-called culture of corruption included the driving applicants as well as employees and driving schools. This legislation would allow the secretary of state's office to take action even if the briber is not prosecuted."

The House of Representative approved the bill unanimously today. The Senate also approved the bill unanimously March 3. The bill's Chief Sponsors were State senator Patrick Welch (D-Peru) and State Rep. Careen Gordon (D-Coal City). The bill awaits the Governor's approval to become law.

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