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SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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Senate Committee Approves Legislation To Increase Penalties For Disability Parking Abuse

Legislation initiated by Secretary of State Jesse White to address the fraud and abuse of disability placards and license plates was approved today by the Illinois Senate Transportation Committee.

Under White's proposal (HB 1316), those caught improperly parking in a disability parking space could face a fine of up to \$500 and a driver's license suspension. It also increases penalties against those who illegally alter or fraudulently manufacture disability placards or plates.

"It is unconscionable that able-bodied people would abuse this important program and take parking spaces reserved for persons with disabilities," White said. "I want to thank the members of the committee for approving this legislation to increase fines and suspend driving privileges for motorists who violate our disability parking laws."

Recent sting operations conducted by the Secretary of State's Parking Program for People with Disabilities and police agencies indicate that many people still consider it worth the risk to abuse the laws reserving parking spaces for persons with disabilities or use a placard or disability plate without the authorized holder present.

The proposed legislation, sponsored by State Sen. Mike Jacobs (D-Moline), will do the following:

1. For vehicles not displaying a disability license plate, disabled veteran plate or placard parked in spaces reserved for persons with disabilities-- the mandatory minimum fine will be increased from \$100 to \$250. The maximum fine municipalities are allowed to impose increases from \$100 to \$350.
2. For vehicles displaying a disability license plate, disabled veteran plate or placard and parking in a spaces reserved for persons with disabilities when the authorized holder of the plate or placard is not driving the vehicle or being transported in the vehicle --the mandatory fine is \$500, up from \$100.

In addition, the Secretary of State can administratively suspend or revoke the driver's license of the driver and the license plates or placard. Suspensions and revocations were not allowed previously.

3. Persons who illegally manufacture or alter plates or placards, obtain plates or placards based on fictitious information, or knowingly transfer plates or placards to others so that they may use privileges granted to authorized holders of the plates or placards will be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor which is a maximum of \$1,000 and subject to a fine of not less than \$500 for the first offense.
A second or subsequent offense would be a Class 4 felony with a minimum fine of \$2,000 and a maximum fine of \$10,00. Currently, all offenses are Class A misdemeanors.
In addition, the Secretary of State may suspend or revoke the license plates or placards of the persons who violate this provision.
4. Clarifies that all restrictions and penalties related to license plates and placards for persons with disabilities also apply to license plates issued to disabled veterans.

There are over 550,000 placards and over 90,000 disability plates in Illinois. The legislation now moves to the full Senate for consideration.