



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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Secretary White Cites Dramatic Downward Trend in Alcohol-Related Fatalities As He Unveils Four New Public Service Announcements

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White cited a dramatic downward trend in the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities statewide as he unveiled four new video Public Service Announcements (PSAs) in his continued effort to combat drunk driving. The PSAs were distributed statewide preceding the Labor Day Holiday weekend.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in 2004, 604 people lost their lives in alcohol-related crashes as opposed to the year before when 637 people were killed. This is a 5.2 percent decrease -- the largest drop since Illinois adopted .08 Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) standard in 1997.

This two-year trend coincides with important legislative initiatives including primary enforcement of safety belts and Secretary White's 2001 comprehensive DUI package which included mandatory jail time and fines for driving drunk with a child in the vehicle and driving drunk at double the legal limit (.16 BAC).

"Although I am pleased with this dramatic decrease, more needs to be done," White said. "Over 13,000 people were injured in Illinois last year in alcohol-related crashes. We need to continue our efforts to get the message out. These videos are a sobering reminder to young and old of the dangers of drinking and driving."

The videos, which were sent out to broadcast and cable stations across the state, remind viewers of the consequences of drinking and driving.

In 2004, over 40 percent of all fatalities on Labor Day weekend were alcohol-related, according to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). Law enforcement arrested 50,147 drivers statewide for DUI in 2004.

Media outlets have been encouraged to air the PSAs prior to the Labor Day holiday weekend.

The first video *The Grave Spot* is shot from the perspective of someone whose life was taken due to drinking and driving. *The Bottle* focuses on how the small opening of a bottle of beer causes so much damage when mixed with driving. *Dionne* highlights the story of Dionne Brown who was struck by a drunk driver at the age of 19 as she was coming home from a school volleyball game. She is now confined to a wheelchair and can only speak with the help of a computer. The last video, *The Pact* features young adults making a deal with one another to ensure friends don't let each other drink and drive.

"We want the roads of Illinois to be the safest ever, that's why we're encouraging all drivers, if they've had too much to drink to give their keys to someone or stay where they are," said White. "Don't ever get behind the wheel of an automobile after you've had too much to drink. You are jeopardizing your life as well as the lives of others."

Funding for the PSAs was provided through a grant from IDOT. Representatives from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists (AAIM) participated in the unveiling of the PSAs.