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**Jesse White's Law Toughening the Penalties for Fraud and Abuse of the Disability Parking Program Takes Effect January 1st**

The law proposed by Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White to crack down on fraud and abuse of the state's disability parking program takes effect January 1<sup>st</sup>. The new law includes toughening the penalties for those who abuse a deceased person's placard or disability license plate.

"The message we are sending is simple: if you don't belong there, don't park there," said White. "These stronger penalties will hopefully make people think twice before they deprive a person with a disability from using a disability parking spot."

White first initiated the legislation at a public hearing at the first meeting of his Advisory Committee on Traffic Safety – a committee to make Illinois roads safer, reduce traffic fatalities and to consider increased penalties for those who blatantly disregard traffic laws.

Public Act 97-844, which was sponsored by State Representative John D'Amico (D-Chicago) and Senator Martin Sandoval (D-Cicero), toughens penalties for those who abuse parking privileges designed to assist persons with disabilities.

Public Act 97-844 strengthens the penalty for using a placard and/or disability license plates in which the person is now deceased, which under the previous law fell under the category of general misuse of a placard or plate. The law creates a new offense for this egregious act, making it a Class A Misdemeanor, which carries a minimum one-year driver's license revocation and a \$2,500 fine.

In addition, the license suspension periods for general misuse of a disability license plate or placard increases from 30 days to a six-month suspension for a first offense; from six months to a one-year suspension for a second offense as well as increasing the fine from \$750 to \$1,000, and from a one-year suspension to a minimum one-year revocation for a third offense. A license revocation requires the offender to meet with a Secretary of State Administrative Hearing officer at the end of their revocation period before driving privileges may be restored.

"My goal is to eliminate fraud and misuse, and to ensure that disability parking spots are available for those truly in need," said White.

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