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Jesse White's Legislation Toughening the Penalties for Fraud and Abuse of the Disability Parking Program Approved Unanimously by House Committee

Legislation proposed by Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White to crack down on fraud and abuse of the state's disability parking programs was approved 7-0 by the House Transportation Vehicles and Safety Committee. The legislation now goes to the full House for its consideration.

House Bill 5056, sponsored by State Representative John D'Amico (D-Chicago), will toughen penalties for those who abuse parking privileges designed to assist persons with disabilities.

"The message we are sending is simple: if you don't belong there, don't park there," said White. "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.

House Bill 5056 seeks to strengthen the penalty for using a placard and/or disability license plates in which the person is now deceased, which under current law falls under the category of general misuse of a placard or plate. The legislation 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 will be increased from 30 days to a six-month suspension for a first offense; from six months to a one-year suspension for a second offense, 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.

White is committed to conducting a top-to-bottom review of the state's Parking Program for Person's with Disabilities. He has formed a subcommittee to outline ways to eliminate fraud and abuse of this vital program. White tabbed former U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Sam Skinner to chair the subcommittee.

"The goal of the subcommittee 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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