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Jesse White Moves to Toughen Penalties for Fraud and Abuse of Disability Parking Program

Names former U.S. Dept of Transportation Secretary Sam Skinner to Subcommittee to Review Program

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White today moved to toughen penalties for those who abuse parking privileges designed to assist persons with disabilities. White initiated the action 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.

White also established today a subcommittee to conduct a top-to-bottom review of the state's Parking Program for Person's with Disability. White tabbed former U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Sam Skinner to serve on the committee. "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

The traffic safety committee approved White's recommendations 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 new proposal 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.

"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."

The Advisory Committee on Traffic Safety consists of ten members, including: White as chair; Representatives John D'Amico (D-Chicago) and Mike McAuliffe (R-Chicago); Senators Martin Sandoval (D-Cicero) and Darin LaHood (R-Peoria); Anne Schneider, Secretary, Illinois Department of Transportation; Mike Witter, Regional Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; Commander Jay Keaven, Illinois State Police; John Ulczycki, Vice President, National Safety Council; and Ray Bradford, Executive Director, Northwestern University Center for Public Safety.

“My mission as Secretary of State is to make the roads of Illinois as safe as possible,” said White. “We have made great progress over the last twelve years to position Illinois as a national leader in traffic safety. For instance, teen driving deaths are down by 50 percent since we strengthened the state’s graduated driver licensing (GDL) law, and drunk driving fatalities have dropped by 38 percent since 1999. Yet I believe we can do better, and I am confident the efforts of the Advisory Committee on Traffic Safety will lead to safer roads and fewer fatal crashes.”

White said the Advisory Committee on Traffic Safety and the Subcommittee on Parking Program for Persons with Disability will hold future meetings beginning this spring at locations throughout the state.

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