



# JESSE WHITE

## Secretary of State

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Jesse White (Democrat) was first elected Secretary of State in 1998, becoming the first African-American to serve as Secretary of State. He was re-elected in 2002, winning all 102 Illinois counties, and won another landslide victory in 2006 for a third term.

White has brought integrity and innovation to the Secretary of State's office. He has managed the largest distribution of new license plates in state history, fought for tougher DUI laws, reformed the Commercial Driver's License program, overhauled the Parking Program for Persons with Disabilities, supported investor protection laws, and created the office's first online services. White also strengthened his Inspector General's office, giving it more investigative authority.

Secretary White has been a strong proponent of traffic safety initiatives in Illinois. In 2009, he chaired the Distracted Driving Task Force, which resulted in legislation banning motorists from texting while driving and using a cell phone while driving in school and construction zones. The laws became effective Jan. 1, 2010.

In his continuing efforts to combat drinking and driving, White partnered with Mothers Against Drunk Driving to initiate a new law, effective in January 2009, requiring all first-time DUI offenders who wish to obtain driving relief to install a Breath Alcohol Ignition Interlock Device (BAIID) on their vehicles. A BAIID prevents an offender from driving after consuming alcohol.

To address the high rate of teen traffic fatalities in Illinois, White initiated new provisions to strengthen the state's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) Program for young drivers. Since implementation of the law in January 2008, teen traffic deaths have fallen 52 percent, attributed in large part to the new GDL provisions. Illinois' GDL program has been praised by state and national traffic safety organizations as one of the best in the nation.

The Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Program continues to serve as a model for other states. Since taking effect in January 2006, the new Organ/Tissue Donor Registry has topped 5 million donors. The registry makes a person's wishes to be a donor legally binding and family consent is no longer required.

Secretary White's innovative Project Next Generation program is in its 10th year of operation in Illinois libraries. The program provides a mix of technology experiences and life skills for junior high-age students to set them on the path to success.

Prior to becoming Secretary of State, White served in the General Assembly for 16 years and served as Cook County Recorder of Deeds from 1992 to 1998. In 1959, he founded the internationally known Jesse White Tumbling Team and has spent more than 50 years working with the team to help keep at-risk youth in school and drug free.

White earned his B.S. degree in 1957 from Alabama State College. He served our country as a paratrooper in the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division and as a member of the Illinois National Guard. He also played professional baseball with the Chicago Cubs organization, followed by a 33-year career as a teacher and administrator with Chicago public schools.

Secretary of State Jesse White was born in Alton in 1934 and now lives on Chicago's near-north side.