



JESSE WHITE

Secretary of State

Jesse White (Democrat), the first African-American to serve as Illinois Secretary of State, was first elected in 1998. He won landslide re-election campaigns in 2002 and 2006, and again on Nov. 2, 2010.

Secretary White has brought integrity and innovation to the office. He strengthened the Secretary of State Inspector General's office, giving it more investigative authority, and reformed the state's Commercial Driver's License program. In addition, White has cracked down on fraud and abuse in the Parking Program for Persons with Disabilities, enforced investor protection laws, streamlined operations to improve customer service, and continued to upgrade and expand the range of services available online.

Since becoming Secretary of State, White has introduced groundbreaking programs and legislative initiatives that have made Illinois a national leader in traffic safety and directly led to lives saved on Illinois roads. He chaired the Teen Driver Safety Task Force that strengthened the state's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program for young drivers. Since its new provisions were implemented in 2008, teen driving fatalities have dropped by nearly 60 percent. He also initiated a law banning texting while driving and, effective July 2014, a measure requiring 18- to 20-year-olds who skip driver's education to complete a six-hour driver training and education course before obtaining a driver's license.

Secretary White has fought continuously for tougher DUI laws, including stiffer penalties for repeat and high-BAC offenders and those who drive intoxicated with children in the vehicle. In 2009, White launched Illinois' cutting-edge Breath Alcohol Ignition Interlock Device (BAIID) program that requires DUI offenders to install a BAIID in their vehicles in order to maintain driving privileges. Since becoming just the second state to include first-time DUI offenders in the program, drunk-driving deaths in Illinois have dropped by 24 percent. His most recent measure, enacted in July 2013, strengthens accountability by requiring an in-car camera to accompany every BAIID installation.

The Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Program has received national acclaim and continues to serve as a model for other states. Illinois' donor registry, which makes a person's wishes to be a donor legally binding, has climbed to more than 5.4 million donors.

White is widely regarded for his commitment to improving young lives. He founded the internationally renowned Jesse White Tumbling Team in 1959 and continues to work with the team to help keep at-risk youth drug-free and in school. As State Librarian, Secretary White brought his innovative Project Next Generation program to public libraries across the state. Now in its 14th year, the program provides junior-high school students a mix of technology experiences and life skills to set them on the path to success.

Prior to becoming Secretary of State, White served in the General Assembly for 16 years and was Cook County Recorder of Deeds from 1992 to 1998. He 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 and earned his B.S. degree in 1957 from Alabama State College. He served as a paratrooper in the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division and as a member of the Illinois National Guard and Army Reserve. He lives on Chicago's near north side.

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