

Secretary of State Police, Joliet Police crack down on parking placard abuse

Secretary of State Police and the Joliet Police Department recently conducted stings at the Chicagoland Motor Speedway in Joliet to crack down on the abuse of parking placards and disability license plates. More than 130 tickets were issued and all placards being used illegally were confiscated.

After receiving numerous complaints about placard abuse at the Speedway, the Joliet Police Department and racetrack officials contacted the Secretary of State Senior & Community Services Department. A meeting was held with track officials to set up a plan of action.

First, a message about accessible parking appeared in the Speedway's newsletter sent to more than 75,000 race fans. The message reminded race attendees that law enforcement officials would be checking parking placards and plates to ensure the authorized holders were present when a vehicle was parked in the accessible lot. The message also was conveyed repeatedly on radio on race days.

On the day of the race, law enforcement officers asked drivers entering the lot if they were the authorized owners of the placards or plates or if the owner was in the vehicle. When a driver answered, "yes," the officer requested a driver's license and checked the placard or

plate number. If the authorized owner was not present, the driver of the vehicle was ticketed for unauthorized use of a parking placard or plates and the placard was confiscated.

All confiscated placards were reported to the Secretary of State's office, and the owners of the placards had their parking privileges suspended for 30 days until their court date. If found guilty, the holder of the placard was required to pay a \$100 fine plus court costs. Once the fine was paid, he or she could petition the Secretary of State to have the placard returned. A record of the conviction was entered into their file, and if further abuse continues, their placard privileges will be further suspended or revoked.

Many of the tickets issued were to persons using a family member's placard without the person with

the disability present. Motorists are reminded that placards are not transferable and the authorized holder must be present when parking in reserved spaces for persons with disabilities. By allowing others to use their placards when they are not present, placard holders risk having their parking privileges suspended or revoked.

For more information, please contact the Persons with Disabilities Placards/Plates Unit, 217-782-2709, or visit www.cyberdriveillinois.com.

"Placard abuse is a matter I take very seriously," said Secretary of State Jesse White. "My office has taken an active role in reducing the abuse of this vital program for persons with disabilities, and we will continue to work with law enforcement agencies and community groups across the state to address this issue."



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Make your home safe

- ✓ Install locks on all doors and windows.
- ✓ Don't hide keys in mailboxes, planters or under doormats. Instead, leave an extra set of keys with a neighbor or friend.
- ✓ Ask for a photo ID from service or delivery people before letting them in the house. If you are skeptical, call the company to verify.
- ✓ Be sure your street address number is large, clear of obstruction and well-lighted so emergency personnel can find your home quickly.
- ✓ Consider a home alarm system that provides emergency monitoring for burglary, fire and medical emergencies.

Be alert when out and about

- ✓ Go out with friends and family — not alone — especially at night.
- ✓ Carry your purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps; put your wallet in your inside coat pocket or front pants pocket.
- ✓ Don't carry credit cards you don't need or large amounts of cash.
- ✓ Keep your car doors locked. Be particularly alert in parking lots and garages, and park near an entrance.
- ✓ Sit close to the driver or near the exit when riding the bus, train or subway.
- ✓ If someone or something makes you uneasy, trust your instincts and leave the situation immediately.

SAVE
the date

Illinois State Fair

August 8-17

Veterans Day • Sunday, Aug. 10

Senior Day • Monday, Aug. 11

Secretary of State Antique Vehicle Show Saturday, September 6

Illinois State Fairgrounds

For more information, visit

www.cyberdriveillinois.com or call 217-557-5581.

Reduced-fee military license plates now available

Senior citizens and persons with disabilities who qualify for the state's Circuit Breaker Program are now eligible to purchase military license plates for a reduced-fee of \$24. Previously, the reduced fee was only available for regular passenger plates.

To be eligible for reduced-fee military plates, applicants must provide proof of military service. Upon renewal of reduced-fee military plates, \$2 will be added to the \$24 registration fee. The additional \$2 will be used to help purchase materials for libraries in Illinois Veteran Homes.

"This discount allows eligible vehicle owners a little relief in their budgets while continuing to enjoy the freedom that comes with ownership of a vehicle," said Secretary of State Jesse White. "I am pleased that we are now able to extend this special savings to current and former members of our armed forces."

To qualify for the Circuit Breaker Program and reduced-fee plates through the Secretary of State's office, you must:

- be age 65 or over, or at least age 16 and totally disabled, and
- have an annual household income of less than \$21,218 for an individual, less than \$28,480 for a two-person household, or less than \$35,740 for a household of three or more, and
- be an Illinois resident at the time of application.

For a Circuit Breaker application or more information on military license plates, please call the Secretary of State's toll-free Senior Hotline at 800-252-2904.

SECRETARY OF STATE
SENIOR HOTLINE
800-252-2904



Operators for the Secretary of State's 800 Senior Hotline are (standing, left to right) Lana Basden, Sheri Vaughan, Ed Kraus and (seated) Dave Jones.

Toll-free operators add personal touch

When you call the Secretary of State's toll-free Senior Hotline at 800-252-2904, you won't get an automated recording or be transferred to 10 different departments before you get the information you need. Instead, one of the office's four friendly operators will be on the other line ready to answer your questions.

"I want Illinois seniors to be able to call my office and not have to deal with an automated phone answering system," said Secretary of State Jesse White. "That personal touch is so important in this day of modern technology, which sometimes takes away that human element."

The operators are trained on all aspects of the Secretary of State's office. They answer an average of 5,000 to 6,000 calls monthly. Calls range from inquiries about the Circuit Breaker Program, where to sign up for a Rules of the Road Review Course and how to obtain veterans license plates to questions about disability license plates and placards and making referrals to other state and local agencies for additional assistance.

"We want our callers to know that they are very important to us, and we will do all we can to get them the information they need in a fast, courteous manner," said Secretary White. "If you have questions about a program or service provided by my office, please call 800-252-2904. One of these operators will be happy to assist you."

Talking Book & Braille Service

The goal of the Talking Book and Braille Service (TBBS) is to improve the quality of life for Illinois residents with visual or physical disabilities. The TBBS provides a broad range of free library services to people with vision problems or who are unable to hold a book or turn the pages.

The TBBS network includes the regional location in Springfield at 401 E. Washington St. and six Talking Book Centers in public libraries throughout the state. These libraries circulate unabridged books in audio format and offer more than 40,500 talking books, 15,400 Braille books, descriptive videos and more than 100 magazines. If an item is not available in Illinois, the TBBS staff can obtain it through interlibrary loan.

Funding for the program is provided by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Also through the TBBS, the Illinois Newsline® Network provides audio versions of more than 80 daily newspapers from across the country. A subscriber can call a toll-free number to access a newspaper at any time of day, which is read over the phone in computerized speech.

The Newsline® Network is a component of the National Network as established by the National Federation of the Blind. The service is funded by the Secretary of State/Illinois State Library and is a companion service to the Illinois Network of Libraries Serving the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

For an application for TBBS services, please contact Pat Salamon, psalamon@ilsos.net, 800-665-5576 (opt. 5), 217-782-9260, 217-558-0905 (TTY), or visit www.cyberdriveillinois.com.

ILLINOIS STATE LIBRARY TALKING BOOK AND BRAILLE SERVICE



JESSE WHITE • ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

Staying active

Staying active as you age will help keep you healthy as well as make you live longer and feel better. Now more than ever, seniors are getting involved in exercise and sports. Many are getting exercise through active pastimes such as biking, skiing and tennis. Others prefer walking, gardening or a round of golf.

Orthopedic surgeons say that by spending a little time each day doing some type of physical activity, you can enjoy a longer, healthier life, stronger bones, reduced joint and muscle pain, improved mobility and balance, reduced risk of falls, increased energy, improved sleep and slower loss of muscle mass.

So don't just sit there, get out and move and see what a difference it makes in your life.

Car accident prevention

Preventing car accidents is a matter of avoiding high-risk driving behavior. Statistics show the following behaviors to be the most high-risk:

- Driving between 11 p.m. and 4 a.m. (particularly on Fridays and Saturdays when the highest number of drunk drivers are on the road).
- Turning left at intersections — A very high number of fatalities are the result of drivers trying to cross traffic heading in the opposite direction.
- Driving in rain and snow — Reduce your speed to maintain control of your car.
- Being tired or under the influence of alcohol — If you are tired, get off the road and rest. If you have been drinking, don't drive. Use a designated driver, call a cab or call a friend to take you home.
- Driving distractions — Avoid smoking, eating, talking on the phone, tuning the stereo or reading a map while driving. Keep your eyes on the road.

Using common sense will pay large dividends when driving. Let other drivers know your intentions by signaling and always drive defensively. Safe Driving Classes are offered by the AARP. For more information, please call 888-227-7669.



The Outreach is a publication of Jesse White, Secretary of State; Mary Lou Kearns, Director, Senior & Community Services.

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To subscribe to *The Outreach*, please call 800-252-2904, Voice/TTY:

www.cyberdriveillinois.com

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