

Social Security online verification to protect against identity theft

Secretary of State Jesse White's office began verifying Social Security numbers for all driver's licenses and state ID cards in June to further protect the public against identity theft and fraud.

"State-issued driver's licenses and ID cards are the most widely used forms of identification in the country," said Secretary White. "That puts this office on the front lines of defense against identity theft and fraud."

About 96 percent of all records in the state's driver's license and ID card databases have been confirmed with the Social Security Administration (SSA). The 4 percent of motorists whose records did not match SSA records will receive a letter from the Secretary of State requesting documentation to verify their names, Social Security numbers and dates of birth. All driver's licenses and ID cards for first-time applicants are now being verified before they are issued.

"Identify theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States," said Secretary White. "We want to take every step possible to protect Illinois citizens and the integrity of our driver's licenses and ID cards. Verifying the Social Security numbers will help eliminate fraud at our facilities and protect consumers."

Motorists who receive a notice are urged to visit a Driver Services facility as soon as possible. Correcting records with the SSA can take up to four weeks, and driver's licenses and ID cards will not be issued until a Social Security number is verified.

"On average, a victim will spend 30 hours recovering from identity theft and consumer fraud," said Secretary White. "By taking the extra step to verify Social Security numbers at our facilities, we can save more people from that frustration and expense."

(more information on identity theft on page 2)



Secretary of State Jesse White announces his office's Social Security online verification initiative at a news conference in May.

Pictured with the Secretary are (left to right) Secretary of State Inspector General Jim Burns, state Rep. Ricca Slone and executive director of the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, Jack Pecoraro.

- ① Report the identity theft to the police. Ask for a copy of the report to show your creditors and financial institutions if necessary.
- ② Report the theft to the three major credit-reporting agencies below and request a “fraud alert” be placed on your file. Request reports from each agency and review them carefully.
Equifax • 800-525-6285
Experian • 888-397-3742
Trans Union • 800-680-7289
- ③ Call your creditors and financial institutions. Close all accounts that have been opened or accessed by identity thieves. Ask for passwords to secure new accounts.
- ④ Contact the Social Security Fraud Line at 800-269-0271.
- ⑤ File your complaint with the Federal Trade Commission, which maintains a database of identity theft cases used by law enforcement agencies.

History of the Purple Heart

During the American Revolution, European military tradition dictated that only officers could receive medals; it was unheard of to honor a common soldier for bravery. George Washington changed this practice on Aug. 7, 1782, when he ordered the creation of the Badge of Military Merit in the “figure of a heart in purple cloth or silk.” (Purple was traditionally the color reserved for royalty.) The medal was awarded for “any singularly meritorious action,” not necessarily for being wounded in action.

The medal fell into disuse for more than 150 years, but in 1932, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Washington’s birth, Gen. Douglas MacArthur revived the medal and gave it its current name — the Purple Heart.

New traffic laws for 2004

The following traffic laws became effective Jan. 1, 2004. These new laws serve as important tools to make our roads safer for drivers throughout the state and provide more protection for younger passengers.

- Drivers under age 18 may not drive with more than one person under age 20 in the vehicle for the first six months of their license or until they turn 18, whichever comes first. Exceptions are children, stepchildren, siblings and stepsiblings.
- When driving on a multi-lane highway, the left lane may only be used for passing and may not be used excessively.
- Children up to age 8 must be properly secured in an appropriate child restraint system. Children ages 4-8 must be restrained in a booster seat. Before, children up to only age 4 were required to be secured in child restraint seats or booster seats. Children ages 8 to 16 must be properly secured in safety belts.

In addition, motorists are reminded that effective last July, law enforcement officers have the authority to pull over and fine motorists solely for not wearing their seatbelts. Each of the above traffic violations carries a \$75 ticket.

Guide for Medical Professionals on disability parking program

A new brochure, *Parking Program for Persons with Disabilities—A Guide for Medical Professionals*, produced with the assistance of the Rush University Medical Center Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Task Force in Chicago, is available from the Secretary of State.

“This guide helps educate medical professionals about the provisions of the program to ensure that patients meet eligibility requirements before approving them for disability plates or parking placards,” said Secretary of State Jesse White. “The fraudulent use of parking placards and disability license plates is a serious problem, and I believe that by working with the medical community, together we can be part of the solution.”

When applying for disability plates or a parking placard, applicants are required to submit a medical certification form verifying disability signed by their physician. A study conducted by the Secretary of State’s office revealed that many medical professionals approve their patients without being aware of all the eligibility requirements and provisions of the program.

To request a copy of the brochure, contact the Senior & Community Services Department toll-free at 800-252-2904 (Voice), 888-261-5280 (TTY), or visit www.cyberdriveillinois.com.

Problem gambling on the rise

According to a study conducted for the National Gambling Impact Study Commission in 1999, an estimated 3 million adults in the U.S. are problem gamblers. Another 2 million are pathological gamblers.

The National Council on Problem Gambling defines problem gambling as gambling behavior that causes disruptions in any major area of life: psychological, physical, social or vocational. Problem gambling includes "pathological" or "compulsive" gambling. It is a progressive addiction characterized by increasing preoccupation with gambling; a need to bet more money more frequently; restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop; chasing losses; and loss of control.

For a growing number of seniors, gambling is a losing enterprise. More time and attention are needed as the gambler attempts to win back what he or she has lost. If the losses continue, the gambler may sell possessions or property to cover expenses, or seek risky or high-interest loans. Anxiety, depression and financial stress can lead to declining health. Seniors who have worked diligently to save for years for a comfortable retirement may find themselves broke as a result of excessive gambling.

If you feel you may have a problem with gambling or know someone who does, please call the Gambling Assistance Hotline at 800-522-4700.

Extra \$2 fee eliminated on most military plates

Effective Jan. 1, 2004, the additional \$2 fee for the renewal of several military license plates was eliminated. The additional fee helped fund materials for libraries at the four Illinois Veterans' Homes.

Secretary of State Jesse White has provided \$120,000 to the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs to help start up libraries in the veterans' homes. Veterans' Affairs continues to operate all the libraries at the four homes.

Two military plates still carry the \$2 fee — POW/MIA and West Point Bicentennial. For more information on military plates, please contact the Secretary of State's Non-Standard Plates Section at 217-785-4175 or visit www.cyberdriveillinois.com.

**SECRETARY OF STATE
SENIOR HOTLINE
800-252-2904**

Former Secretary of State employee memorialized with scholarship

Roger Giannini was always quick to greet Secretary of State employees and visitors who entered the Howlett and Archives Buildings on the State Capitol grounds in Springfield. He would strike up a conversation with anyone about the weather, sports or history. Roger was a security guard for the agency at the time of his death on July 25, 2003, at age 56.



Roger Giannini

In memory of his son, Jack L. Giannini, a retired lawyer and Air Force veteran from Belleville, recently established the Roger Giannini Memorial Scholarship at Southwestern Illinois College. Roger had attended Southwestern (formerly Belleville Area College) and graduated from SIU-Carbondale with a bachelor's degree in history. He also had served as a county fair coordinator for Region 12 for the Secretary of State's office and was an Air Force veteran.

The scholarship will be reserved for a returning college student(s) who is age 25 or older and has a financial need. Each year, either two scholarships of \$1,000 each or one \$2,000 scholarship will be awarded.

"I set up the criteria as a returning adult student who couldn't attend college without financial help because that's the person I want to help," said Jack Giannini.

For more information about the scholarship, visit Southwestern Illinois College's Web site at www.swicfoundation.com.

Secretary of State Antique Vehicle Show — Sept. 11

The 55th Secretary of State Antique Vehicle Show is Sept. 11, 2004, at the Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield. Antique vehicle enthusiasts are encouraged to enter their vehicles or come check out the fine display of antique cars, trucks and motorcycles.

New this year is an exhibit and demonstration of antique tractors, sponsored by the Vintage Agricultural Association of Menard County. The organization was formed in July 2001 to preserve our agricultural heritage through the preservation, restoration and education of vintage agricultural equipment.

This year, Buicks will be featured with a special Marque Award. Special event license plates featuring the Buick are available for \$20.

For more information, contact:
Secretary of State Antique Vehicle Show, 450A Howlett Bldg., Springfield, IL 62756, 217-557-5581, www.cyberdriveillinois.com.



History of the Secretary of State Antique Vehicle Show

During the 1930s, antique automobile clubs began forming throughout the United States. Many antique vehicles were driven in small town street fairs and centennial parades in the 1940s. After World War II in 1948, Robert Thayer formed the first Illinois club for antique automobiles in Rockford, named the Rockford Club.

In 1949, then Illinois Secretary of State Edward J. Barrett contacted Thayer and began planning the first state-sponsored antique auto meet. Secretary Barrett hosted the first "Horseless Carriage Meet" at the 1949 Illinois State Fair in Springfield on the infield of the racetrack. One of the vehicles in the meet was a 1907 Brush owned and driven by Secretary of State Barrett. The parade marshal, chosen by Secretary Barrett, was Rockford's Robert Thayer. Souvenir license plates were given to the owners of the cars exhibited in the event.

There was no auto show sponsored by the Secretary of State in 1950 or 1951. However, beginning in 1952, the meets have since been held annually at the Illinois State Fairgrounds on the first Saturday following Labor Day Weekend.

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