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Jesse White Unveils New Organ and Tissue Donation Campaign Featuring Donation Advocate Now in Need of Kidney—Kicks Off Donate Life Month

Secretary of State Jesse White urged all Illinoisans to join the state's organ and tissue donor registry, following the unveiling of an ad campaign featuring Vikki Tulcus, a long-time advocate of the organ/tissue donor program, who now finds herself in need of a kidney.

“This campaign shows that you never know when you or someone close to you may need for an organ transplant,” White said. “Vikki has been working with the organ donor program for almost 10 years, helping donor and recipient families as well as those who are waiting for transplants. Now Vikki finds herself in the same position as 5,000 others in Illinois who are waiting---she's waiting for the generosity of an organ donor to save her life.”

Currently there are more than five million people registered to become organ/tissue donors in Illinois, however more than 300 people die each year waiting for an organ transplant.

April is National Donate Life Month. Organizations will be working together to promote organ and tissue donor awareness throughout the state. Television and radio ads will air statewide throughout the month in English and Spanish. The ad will also be played on approximately 650 movie screens across the state.

In the ad, Vikki, who currently works for the Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor program, says, “Before my job depended on the organ donor program, now my life depends on it.” The spot features the song “I'll Stand by You” by the Pretenders.

The press conference was held at The University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences System. Secretary White was joined by Vikki, donor families, those waiting, as well as doctors from the hospital.

Illinoisans can register by visiting LifeGoesOn.com, calling the Illinois Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Program at 1-800-210-2106, or while obtaining or renewing an Illinois driver's license or state identification card at any state driver's license facility.

White will attend events throughout Illinois to encourage donation. Libraries are distributing organ and tissue donation materials and hosting donor drives. Donor drives and displays will be featured at health fairs, health clubs, schools, universities and hospitals statewide.

Donate Life Illinois partners include the American Liver Foundation-Illinois, Biological Resource Center of Illinois, Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network, Heartland Lions Eye Bank, Illinois Eye-Bank, Illinois Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Program, LifeSource, Mid-America Transplant Services Musculoskeletal Transplant Foundation, National Kidney Foundation of Illinois and the National Marrow Donor Program.

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