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**White Expands Organ/Tissue Donor Registry;
16- and 17-Year-Olds Can Become Donors as of Jan. 1**

Secretary of State Jesse White's legislation allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to register for the state's First Person Consent Organ/Tissue Donor Registry when they receive their driver's license or identification card will take effect on Jan. 1, 2018.

"Our main priority is to save lives," said White. "Thousands of Illinoisans are waiting for an organ. Those who are waiting are someone's mother, father, daughter or son. This new law is an important step in reducing the number of individuals on the waiting list."

Under current law, an individual must be at least 18 years old to join the First Person Consent Organ/Tissue Donor Registry. The legislation amends the Illinois Anatomical Gift Act allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to join the registry. Those who join the registry will receive a letter of thanks from the Secretary of State's office, and Secretary White encourages 16- and 17-year-olds to use this letter as a basis for discussing their choice with their parents.

By joining the First Person Consent Organ/Tissue Donor Registry, 16- and 17-year-olds will be giving consent to donate their organs and tissue at the time of their death with only the single limitation that the procurement organizations (Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Network and Mid-America Transplant) must make a reasonable effort to contact a parent or guardian to ensure they approve of the donation. The parent or guardian will then have the opportunity to overturn the child's decision. Once the 16- or 17-year-old turns 18, that decision would be considered legally binding without limitation.

There are 47 states that have enacted this legislation. In 2016, more than 350,000 16- and 17-year-olds in Illinois were issued driver's licenses and identification cards.

"Approximately 4,700 people are on the waiting list in Illinois and about 300 hundred people die each year waiting for an organ transplant," said White. "One person can improve the quality of life for up to 25 people. Currently, 6.3 million Illinoisans are registered with the state's registry."

Illinoisans can register with the Secretary of State's Organ/Tissue Donor Registry at LifeGoesOn.com, by calling 1-800-210-2106, or by visiting their local Driver Services facility.

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