



Daily Leader

Print this story

White offers congratulations

By John Faddoul, Staff Reporter

Secretary of State Jesse White made a stop in Pontiac Friday afternoon, congratulating the staff at the Pontiac Driver's Facility about organ and tissue donor registry numbers for the first quarter of the year.

White, in answering a reporter's question, said his office has not been affected by the state's financial situation, in which some agencies or programs have not received the funding they were allotted in the state's budget for the current fiscal year.

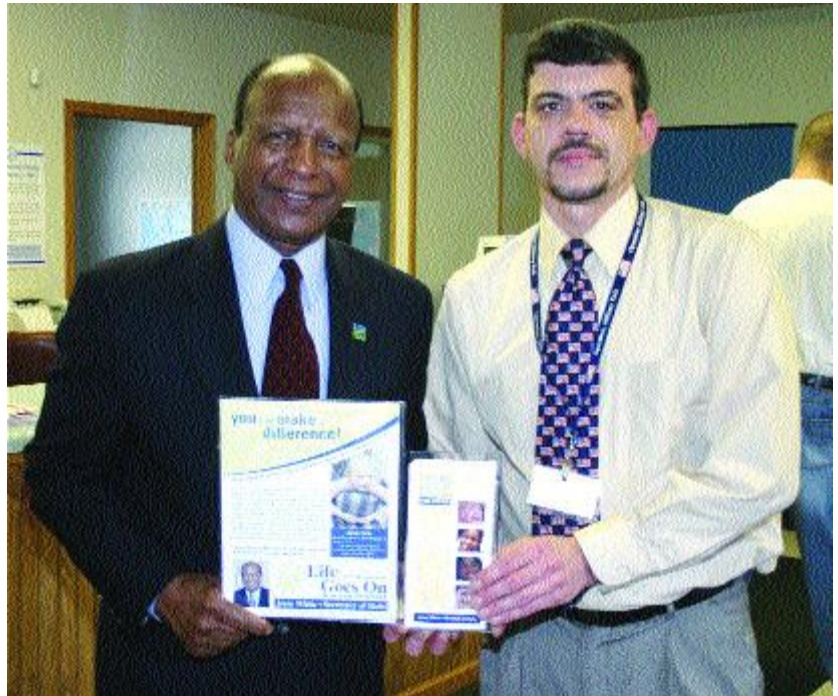
"None whatsoever," he said about his department. "For every dollar that has been appropriated to us, we generate five dollars." White also said he wanted to clear the record: "We cannot raise your fees or lower any fees by one penny." That's set by the Legislature. "I'm only the messenger," he added.

White said those with local agencies or programs that have been affected by Gov. Rod Blagojevich's budgetary actions should contact their state senator and state representative. "It falls within their arena to encourage the governor to do what is right, and that is to release those funds, so that the local governments can continue to provide those meaningful services to the people within their district," he said.

Staff at the Pontiac facility, at 507 N. Crane St., were congratulated by White for the numbers from January to March 31, when 51.69 percent of the transactions at Pontiac joined the organ and tissue registry. White said that was about the statewide average.

He has been touring the state during April, which is National Donate Life! month. Because of a change in law, anyone who registered with the program before Jan. 1, 2006, must re-register.

White said Illinois leads the nation, with 6.2 million people having become organ donors. The secretary personally helped sign up one of the newest ones, Mark Seabert, of Dwight. He had come to the Pontiac facility with his



Secretary of State Jesse White congratulates Pontiac Driver's Facility manager Jeff Roscow for organ and tissue donor registry numbers for the first four months of 2008. April is National Donate Life! month.

Secretary of State Jesse White congratulates Pontiac Driver's Facility manager Jeff Roscow for organ and tissue donor registry numbers for the first four months of 2008. April is National Donate Life! month.

girlfriend, Carrie Pittman, for her driver's license renewal, and was "quite surprised" to encounter the head of the department that runs all the driver's facilities in Illinois.

When they met, White asked Seabert if he was an organ donor, and he wasn't sure. "Come into my office," White said, taking Seabert to a table in the corner of the waiting area, where he filled out a donor registry form, while the two each enjoyed a piece of the "Be an Organ Donor" cake that people were offered during White's visit.

White told a reporter that there are 5,000 people on the waiting list for organs, and each year 300 die because organs are not available for them.

"I ask that when you're alive and well, give blood. When you're no longer here give organs, and when you've done those two things you've had a positive impact upon society, considering the fact that one person can provide quality life for 25 individuals" by being an organ donor, White said.

The Illinois donor law, as with similar laws in more than 40 other states, has been changed to allow first-person consent, which makes the decision to be an organ/tissue donor legally binding, with consent of additional witnesses or family no longer required to carry out a donor's wishes after death. "When you become an organ donor, we will respond to your wish," White said.

White said joining the new registry, for those needing to re-register, can be done by calling 800-210-2106, using the Web site www.lifegoeson.com, or by visiting any of the 136 facilities, like the one in Pontiac, and telling staff you want to become an organ donor.

"We're proud of the fact that here in Pontiac they've done a wonderful job in encouraging individuals to sign up to become organ donors," said White, who met with facility manager Jeff Roscow and other employees, as well as greeting the half dozen or so people who came there during his brief visit, including Elaine Gerber, of Dwight, who was re-registering a vehicle, and Jim Smith, of Chenoa, who was taking a driving test.

"You're the guy I just sent this to," Smith told White as they shook hands at the counter. "Want cash?"

White — whose sister Doris received a kidney transplant in 1991, one reason he became an advocate of organ donation — said Friday that "When you think in terms of heroes, you usually think of someone who has helped to extricate someone from an automobile, saved someone from drowning, rescued someone from a fire. Those are heroes, and we know that there are a lot of heroes here in Illinois" by registering to be an organ donor, adding "We don't want the organs now; we'll take them later."