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TRANSITION TO MODERN ELECTIONS

SPRINGFIELD, IL, November 1, 2006 – Preliminary reports indicate there have been very few early voting problems across the state, the State Board of Elections said today.

“This election year marks the transition to modern elections,” said Daniel W. White, executive director of the State Board of Elections. “Illinois joined 34 other states in allowing some form of early voting, plus a majority of voters who go to the polls on November 7 will utilize new technology in their precinct polling places.”

White urged voters to allow for additional time to familiarize themselves with the new voting equipment and in some instances, voters will use equipment upgraded since March. At least one million Illinois residents who did not vote in the primary are expected to vote in the general election.

“With any new technology,” White said, “there is a learning curve.”

Some of the state’s 110 election authorities had trouble in March transmitting unofficial precinct results to their centralized headquarters, but those authorities have told the State Board that improvements have been made in both the equipment and the reporting system.

“There were no allegations of incorrect vote counts or fraud,” White said. “State law requires that the new electronic voting machines have a paper trail so vote totals can be checked

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for accuracy. The equipment has been tested by the federal Independent Testing Authority and the State Board to insure they meet federal standards.

“Keep in mind that the vote totals reported on Election Night are unofficial. The election authorities in each county certify their results within three weeks after the election, and then submit them to the State Board which certifies the official results for state and district candidates on December 1.”

White also noted a new law approved during the spring session of the Illinois General Assembly requires election authorities to count absentee and early votes in a centralized location, thus simplifying the workload for election judges in the precincts.

“In meeting the requirements of the Help America Vote Act and implementing new changes in state laws, election authorities are administering more changes this election year than they have in decades,” White said.

In addition to early voting – which is conducted at designated locations until November 2 – eligible voters could have registered to vote during a two-week “grace period” after the traditional close of voter registration.

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), mandates that every polling place have voting equipment that allows persons with disabilities to vote independently, without assistance. Most election jurisdictions have two types of voting equipment, touch-screen equipment that can be used by all voters, and optical-scan equipment that reads paper ballots. For the most part, election authorities in each county are reimbursed for the cost of the equipment with HAVA grants.

The State Board of Elections is an independent state constitutional agency charged with the responsibility of having general supervision over the administration of election laws of the state. The Board works closely with election authorities in all regions of the State.

For more information on voting, contact the election authority in your county or visit www.elections.il.gov.

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