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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NO EXCUSE NEEDED TO VOTE ABSENTEE

SPRINGFIELD, IL, Dec. 22, 2009 – For the first time in Illinois, voters in the Feb. 2 primary election may request and vote an absentee ballot by mail without having to give a reason for wanting to vote absentee.

Previously, state law required that eligible voters meet at least one standard – such as being absent from the county on Election Day or being incapacitated – before they qualified for an absentee ballot.

The new law, Public Act, 96-0553, allows eligible voters to apply for an absentee ballot in late December. Registered voters must apply for an absentee ballot by contacting their election authority.

“No-excuse absentee voting gives voters yet another new option in voting,” said Daniel W. White, executive director of the State Board of Elections. “In-person early voting, which began four years ago, has proven to be a popular option.

“Nearly a million people, about one voter in six, went to an Early Voting Center to cast a ballot in the November general election. In some cases, the line to vote at an Early Voting Center was longer than the line to vote at a polling place on Election Day.”

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The primary election is Feb. 2, 2010. Voters may apply for an absentee ballot 40 days prior to an election.

Voters in this election will nominate candidates for governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, comptroller, U.S. Senate, representatives in Congress, state senators and representatives in the General Assembly, certain county offices and judges. Also, some political party officials will be elected.

The traditional deadline for registering to vote is Jan. 5. The registration requirements to be eligible to vote are: be a citizen of the United States; be at least 18 years old by Election Day; and have been a resident of the precinct at least 30 days prior to Election Day.

When registering to vote, two forms of identification are required – one must show the current address of the applicant. A new state law adds identification that is acceptable for registration. A lease or contract for a residence is now an acceptable form of proof of a voter’s residence. Also, a photo identification card issued by a university or college and mail addressed to the voter at the address of residence is acceptable proof.

Illinois residents may check their registration online by going to www.elections.il.gov and clicking “Voting and Elections” and then clicking “Am I Registered” at the top of the page.

In a primary election, an Illinois voter can vote for candidates of one party only. There are three established political parties in Illinois – Republican, Democratic and Green.

In some cases, nonpartisan candidates or referenda may be voted upon in a primary, and if a voter does not want to declare a party affiliation, he or she may request a nonpartisan ballot only.

The State Board of Elections is an independent state agency charged with the responsibility of having general supervision over the administration of election laws of the State.

Elections are administered locally by the State’s 110 election authorities.

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