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EARLY VOTING BEGINS MONDAY

SPRINGFIELD, IL, Jan. 7, 2010 – Voting by personal appearance at an Early Voting Center begins Monday, Jan. 11 for the Feb. 2 Illinois primary election.

Election authorities in each county in the state have announced the locations of Early Voting Centers that will be open through Jan. 28. Eligible voters will be able to vote at certain locations on two weekends during the early voting period and on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, Jan. 18.

In the less populous counties, the County Clerk's office often is the early voting location.

There will be approximately 200 Early Voting Centers throughout Chicago, suburban Cook County and populous counties in the metropolitan-Chicago area.

Approximately 16 percent of the Illinois vote in the November 2008 Presidential Election – nearly a million people – was cast at an Early Voting Center.

“Voting early by personal appearance, without having to give a reason for wanting to vote early, has proven to be a popular option for Illinois voters,” said Daniel W. White, executive director of the State Board of Elections. “Since it began in 2006, each election we have seen the popularity of early voting increase. Voters appreciate the convenience of going to the polls on their own schedule.”

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White said that another new provision, effective for the first time with this election expands the no excuse voting concept to absentee voting by mail. Now, absentee voters too, can vote without an excuse or reason.

Another new state law specifies that a permanent polling place for early voting must remain open on weekdays from 8:30 to 4:30 or from 9 to 5. The law also states that the permanent polling place for early voting be open at least eight hours on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and for at least 14 hours on the final weekend during the early voting period.

Early voting by personal appearance is one of three voting options – other than going to a polling place on Election Day –that are available to eligible voters. Absentee voting by mail is now available to all registered voters and Grace Period Voting is available to those eligible voters who register late.

Although the traditional voter registration deadline has passed for the primary, eligible voters may register or change their address during Grace Period Registration which runs through Jan. 26. Those people participating in Grace Period Registration must vote at the office of the election authority or by mail, at the discretion of the election authority. They are not eligible to vote at an Early Voting Center or at a polling place on Election Day.

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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