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FIRST PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WITH EARLY VOTING

SPRINGFIELD, IL, Sept. 16, 2008 – Eligible voters in Illinois may cast a ballot as early as Oct. 13 or 14 without having to provide a reason or an excuse for wanting to vote early.

Because Oct. 13 is a state holiday – Columbus Day – most early voting centers will not open until Oct. 14. Election authorities across the state will announce the locations of early voting centers and their hours of operation. The last day to vote at an early voting center is Thursday, Oct. 30.

“Since Presidential elections in November traditionally produce the largest turnout of voters, we expect an increase in the number of people taking advantage of the early voting option,” said Daniel W. White, executive director of the State Board of Elections. “Approximately 220,000 people cast ballots at early voting centers in the Illinois primary, and, counting absentee ballots, nearly 11 percent of the primary vote was cast prior to Election Day.”

“Based on early voting histories in other states, early voting becomes more popular with every election, especially when it is first introduced,” White said.

Approximately 20 percent of the national vote was cast early in the 2004 general election, according to the Early Voting Information Center at Reed College in Oregon.

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The early voting law in Illinois, which was approved in 2005, requires voters casting a ballot at an early voting center to display valid identification such as a current driver's license, a state-issued ID card or another government issued-ID with a photograph. The requirement of photo identification for an early voter is stricter than other identification requirements for people casting a ballot at their polling place on Election Day.

State law prohibits a person who voted at an early voting center from voting again on Election Day. The votes cast at early voting centers are not counted until Election Day.

Also, absentee voting laws remain in place. Persons who desire an absentee ballot should contact their local election authority for an application or for more information.

The traditional deadline for registering to vote in the Nov. 4 election is Oct. 7. To be eligible to register to vote, a person must:

- Be a citizen of the United States;
- Be at least 18 years of age by Election Day;
- Have been a resident of the precinct at least 30 days prior to Election Day.

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

For more information on early voting or other election laws and procedures, contact your election authority or visit the Board's website: www.elections.il.gov

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