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**Jesse White Joins Various Religious Organizations to Show Support for National Donor Sabbath**  
*Two sisters affected by donation featured in radio PSA also in attendance*

Secretary of State Jesse White joined with Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and Sikh faith leaders to show religious support for organ/tissue donation and recognize National Donor Sabbath, an interfaith campaign aimed at educating religious communities about donation.

“People often cite religious beliefs as a reason for not signing up for the state’s organ and tissue donor registry,” White said. “The faiths represented here show how many different religions support this lifesaving act.”

During the weekend of November 15-17, faith communities in Illinois and across the country recognize National Donor Sabbath. Faith leaders and congregations participate in services and events to increase awareness of this vital program. According to the United Network for Organ Sharing, nearly all major religious groups support organ and tissue donation including Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam and Judaism.

Currently, more than 118,000 people are waiting for organs nationally. In Illinois, there are approximately 5,000 people on the waiting list. Sadly, about 300 people die each year because organs are not available.

“So many people are touched by donation,” White said. “Many people are recipients or part of a donor family and can openly discuss their experience with donation during this time.”

White’s office produced a 60-second public service announcement on Donor Sabbath that was distributed to radio stations statewide. The PSA features two sisters, Gillian and Grace Irons. Nine-year-old Gillian received the lifesaving kidney she was in need of at 3 years old. Now her sister 4-year-old Grace needs a kidney and Gillian hopes the generosity of a donor will improve her sister’s health. The girls attended the press conference with their parents.

(more)

Faith leaders attending the event at the James R. Thompson Center included:

- Kye-Ile Hong is pastor of the Cosmopolitan United Methodist Church in Chicago. As a Christian, Hong fully supports organ and tissue donation, regarding it as an act of love in line with the example that Jesus set with his life.
- Reverend John Nicholas Kalomas is senior priest at St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Church and chaplain of the Orthodox Christian Fellowship and the Hellenic Student Association of Loyola University. Kalomas encourages organ/tissue donation in his church.
- Shiva Singh Khalsa is a Sikh minister and President and CEO of the Spirit Rising Foundation. His religious views support organ donation as being a selfless act.
- Kevin Marzalik, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Chicago, is representing Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I., Archbishop of Chicago, who was unable to attend. The Archdiocese of Chicago and Cardinal Francis George fully endorses the organ and tissue donation program, as Catholicism deems it one of the highest expressions of compassion and giving.
- Imam Matthew L. Ramadan is deputy executive director of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago. As an Islamic leader, Ramadan believes organ donation is in line with Muslim ideology.
- Hyeonseong Sunim is pastor of Bultasa Buddhist Temple of Chicago, affiliated with the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism. As a Buddhist, Hyeonsong believes in saving the lives of others and encourages both blood and organ donation.
- Apostle Carl White, Jr. is founder and Senior Pastor of Victory Christian International Ministries, Inc. located in Markham, Illinois. As a Christian, advocates for building healthy communities in every aspect of life including organ and tissue donation.
- Rabbi Michael R. Zedek of Emanuel Congregation of Chicago is a senior rabbi, scholar, teacher and civic activist. As a rabbi, he has approved of organ/tissue donation for countless parishioners.

For more information on organ/tissue donation or to register to become a donor visit [LifeGoesOn.com](http://LifeGoesOn.com), call the Secretary of State Organ/Tissue Donor Program at 1-800-210-2106, or visit a Driver Services facility.



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