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## Illinois to develop strategy to encourage civic engagement for seniors

### *Illinois one of six states chosen for the National Governors Association's Policy Academy*

**SPRINGFIELD** – Charles D. Johnson, director of the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA), today announced that Illinois has been selected to participate in the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices *Policy Academy on Civic Engagement of Older Adults*. An Illinois team, led by the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA), will develop strategies to increase the proportion of seniors who are employed or participate in volunteer activities in Illinois.

“This effort will expand our state’s progressive record to support older adults and their families,” said Director Johnson, who will serve as the Illinois team leader. “The groundwork for this program of civic engagement has been laid through programs that increase availability of prescription drugs to seniors and our efforts to support older adults in the community. It is our goal to support the health of our seniors, to encourage their access within their communities and to encourage their civic engagement in those communities.”

Illinois was chosen as one of six states to participate in this new statewide strategy that will help improve the lives of seniors. The Seniors Ride Free Program is just one example of how Illinois focuses on opportunities to benefit seniors. With IDoA at the table to set policy, Illinois strategies may become a model for other states.

As part of its inclusion in the Academy, the Illinois team, led by IDoA, will participate in a national policy meeting and develop a state action plan. Illinois will also receive customized technical assistance from the NGA throughout this project that continues through June 2009.

Other members of the Illinois leadership team are: Steven Guerra, deputy chief of staff in the Governor’s Office; Jane Angelis, director, Intergenerational Initiative, Southern Illinois University in Carbondale; Robert Gallo, state director, AARP; Marilyn Hennessy, president, Retirement Research Foundation; John Hosteny, Illinois director, Corporation for National and Community Service; Peggy Luce, vice president, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce; Senator Edward Maloney, chair, State Senate Higher Education Committee; Robert Mees, president, Illinois Community College Council of Presidents; Michael O’Donnell, executive director, East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging, and Bernarda Wong, director, Chinese American Service League.

Illinois is one of six state teams chosen for the NGA Center for Best Practices’ *Policy Academy on Civic Engagement of Older Adults*. The other states are Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania.

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