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Governor Blagojevich Announces New Tourism Web Site to Encourage Fans to Visit Locations of Movies Filmed Across the State

New Web Site Promotes Travel to the State and Complements Growing Illinois Film Business

CHICAGO – Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich announced today the debut of www.onscreenillinois.com, a new Illinois Bureau of Tourism (IBOT) film Web site created to entice tourists to visit Illinois and explore the locations of their favorite films. Designed to stimulate travel to and throughout the state, the Web site is loaded with unique information, including regional movie maps, movie getaway itineraries and a downloadable audio walking tour.

“More tourists are visiting Illinois than ever, and we have found an innovative way to attract even more people here while featuring another thriving industry in our state – film. This Web site is a great way for tourists from across the state, the country or the world to learn about all Illinois has to offer. Becoming a top tourist destination for dedicated movie fans is also going to keep our economy expanding and put more people to work,” Gov. Blagojevich said.

In 2005, travel to Illinois directly accounted for more than 300,000 Illinois jobs, including more than 400 new jobs in 2005, that generated nearly \$7.9 billion in payroll. The economic impact generated by travel spending in 2005 in Illinois grew to a record high \$26.2 billion, an increase of 6.8 percent, generating \$1.84 billion in state and local tax revenue, according to the Travel Industry Association of America. This added an additional \$74.2 million in state and local taxes in 2005.

While Chicago’s majestic skyscrapers and sparkling lakefront have often been top location choices for filmmakers, onscreenillinois.com visitors will learn that every region of Illinois has had a chance to shine on the silver screen. Travelers can discover Illinois landmarks such as Woodstock’s Town Square, which is prominently featured in *Groundhog Day*; the Illinois State Capitol in Springfield, a key location in *Legally Blonde 2: Red, White and Blonde*; and Mermet Springs in Mermet, showcased in *U.S. Marshals*.

“People are passionate about movies, and visiting Illinois film locations are a great way for fans to experience their favorite films,” said Illinois

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin. “We created the site and our Magnificent Movie Getaways to encourage visitors to combine travel with their favorite movies, and to explore Illinois’ destinations in a new way.”

Onscreenillinois.com features unique ways to explore Illinois’ movie locations, including:

An Illinois movie map, where visitors can click on various regions of the state to check out films made in that area. Plot synopses and photography from the filming sites will entertain movie fans of all ages.

A free downloadable audio tour of movie sites around Chicago and beyond. Narrated by Chicago broadcast legend Bill Kurtis, the walking tour explores Chicago landmarks on the silver screen and can be played on a personal MP3 player. From Chicago’s Hilton and Towers, where climactic scenes from *The Fugitive* were filmed, to the river boat cruises from *My Best Friend’s Wedding*, travelers can immerse themselves in the city’s best-known attractions and learn how filmmakers used them in the movies. The tour is accompanied by a downloadable PDF map.

Bookable Magnificent Movie Getaways, a set of five three-day itineraries that send travelers to movie filming sites across Illinois. Each getaway provides additional destinations and activities to round out a cinema-themed trip.

A Magnificent Movie Getaway Giveaway sweepstakes, where visitors to the site can enter to win a grand prize Chicago getaway that includes tickets to some of Chicago’s top attractions featured in movies.

A trivia page featuring little-known details and fun facts about movies made in Illinois.

Over the past year, a cross section of Hollywood studios have come to Illinois for the production and filming of film and TV hits, including *Prison Break* (FOX Television), *The Lake House* (Warner Bros.), *Stranger Than Fiction* (Mandate Pictures), *The Break-Up* (Universal Pictures), *Drunk Boat* (Magnificent Mile Productions, Ltd.) and *You Are Going to Prison* (Prison Pictures, LLC). Theater marquees have also been lit up with a variety of other recent movies filmed in Illinois, including *The Weather Man*, *The Ice Harvest*, *Ocean’s 12*, *Batman Begins*, *Derailed* and *Roll Bounce*.

Already in 2006, there are nine film and television productions currently filming or slated to film in Illinois. Productions include independent films

Grace is Gone starring John Cusack and Butterfly On a Wheel with Pierce Brosnan, Quebec with John C. Reilly and Seann William Scott (Dimension Films), Enemies (Touchstone Pictures television pilot), Prison Break (FOX Television), Judge Mathis (Warner Bros.), ER (Warner Bros.), Design on a Dime (HGTV) and Design to Sell (HGTV).

To build on the recent growth of the Illinois film industry, Gov. Blagojevich helped ensure the revitalization of movie and television production in Illinois continues by enhancing the successful film and television production tax credit. Last month, the Governor signed Senate Bill 2030 at the Chicago premiere of Universal Pictures' The Break-Up, a romantic comedy that was filmed last summer in Chicago starring Vince Vaughn and Jennifer Aniston. The primary change in the tax credit is to make it a 20 percent credit on total Illinois production spending, rather than Illinois film production wages.

"Our tourism industry is a tremendous asset, and through this new Web site that showcases Illinois' burgeoning film industry, Gov. Blagojevich is helping attract even more visitors, who will bring more dollars into the state's economy. I am certain that both of these critical industries will continue to grow in 2006," State Representative Ken Dunkin (D-Chicago) said.

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism makes it easy for travelers to visit the sites featured on www.onscreenillinois.com. Bookable 3-Day Getaways across Illinois can be found on the Bureau's Web site, www.enjoyillinois.com, with ideas for any type of trip, including arts and culture, family fun, NASCAR, girls' getaways, outdoor, Lincoln, golf and romance.