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## PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### IL Department on Aging Hosts its Annual Elder Rights Conference & Awards

#### *Conference & Awards coincides with Elder Abuse Awareness Campaign in IL*

**SCHAUMBURG – July 11, 2012.** Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) Director John K. Holton, Ph.D., today opened the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Elder Rights Conference, at the Chicago Marriott Schaumburg. Each year IDoA hosts the conference that gathers advocates, service providers, and other professionals to share information and learn the latest on the topic of elder rights. The conference, which runs through Friday, July 13, serves as official kickoff of the State's annual campaign to raise awareness about elder abuse and prevention.

During the opening session of the conference, Director Holton shared a proclamation by Governor Pat Quinn that July is *Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month*. (See the full proclamation following the press release.)

“This month marks the eighth year of the “Break the Silence” campaign. In 2005, the Department on Aging started this campaign to raise awareness and stress the importance of reporting suspected cases of elder abuse in Illinois,” said Director Holton. “Since starting this campaign the number of reported cases has increased. In the year prior to starting the campaign 8,584 reports of elder abuse were received. Last year there were almost 11,000 reports.”

It is difficult to say how many older adults are abused, neglected, or exploited, in large part because the problem remains greatly hidden. It is estimated as many as 100,000 older adults in Illinois are victims of elder abuse each year, but most incidents go unreported.

Part of the state's awareness campaign focuses on preventing financial exploitation which is the most commonly reported form of elder abuse. IDoA is inviting employees of banks and credit unions to attend *The Prevention of Elder Financial Fraud and Abuse* seminar to address the ways state and federal agencies can work together with financial institutions to protect consumers. The seminar is set for 1:30 p.m., on July 13 and features Hubert H. (“Skip”) Humphrey III, assistant director of the United States Office of Older Americans Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

At the conclusion of the conference, individuals from around the state will be recognized for their continued dedication and passion for elder rights. Winners of the *2012 Outstanding Elder Abuse Caseworker & Ombudsman Awards* will be announced during a luncheon on Friday.

For more about program services to assist older adults in Illinois, including information on how to detect and prevent elder abuse, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 or for TTY (hearing impaired use only) call 1-888-206-1327 or visit [www.state.il.us/aging](http://www.state.il.us/aging).

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The full text of the Governor's proclamation follows:

WHEREAS, according to the Illinois Department on Aging, between four and five percent of persons in the United States aged sixty and older are subject to some form of mistreatment or abuse, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as financial exploitation and neglect of basic care needs; and,

WHEREAS, Illinois has approximately two million citizens over the age of sixty, meaning that as many as 100,000 older adults in Illinois could currently be suffering from some form of abuse; and,

WHEREAS, it is the mission of the Illinois Department on Aging and its network of service providers to increase public awareness of this plight against our most vulnerable elderly; and to promote increased elder abuse reporting; and,

WHEREAS, the State of Illinois has strengthened protections against elder abuse, specifically in the area of financial exploitation against older adults; and,

WHEREAS, it is essential that the citizens of Illinois recognize the signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation, break the silence and report suspicions of abuse; and,

WHEREAS, it is imperative that each community in Illinois refuses to tolerate this offense against our older citizens by creating greater awareness of the prevalence and severity of elder abuse in hopes of eradicating it from society:

THEREFORE, I, Pat Quinn, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim July 2012 as **ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH** in Illinois, and encourage all citizens to recognize this crisis and join in working toward its prevention.