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WHITE ENCOURAGES STUDENT READERS TO ENTER “LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE” CONTEST

SPRINGFIELD – Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White is urging students in grades 4-12 to enter the 2011 “Letters About Literature” (LAL) contest, a national reading and writing contest sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and the Illinois Center for the Book in partnership with Target.

"Every year students across the nation write letters to authors, living or deceased, describing how a book positively impacted their life," said White. "Anyone who has read these letters can see how literature inspires and touches the lives of our young people. Students truly enjoy this contest, and I hope thousands of Illinois students will participate this year."

There are three levels of participation - Level I for grades 4, 5 & 6, Level II for grades 7 & 8 and Level III for grades 9 - 12. Each participating state will select a winning letter for each competition level. The three Illinois winners will receive a \$50 Target gift card, plaque and United States savings bond from the Illinois Center for the Book. They will also read their letters at a special reception hosted by Secretary White. Winners also advance to national competition, where two national winners and four national honorable mentions will be selected for each competition level.

The six national winners will receive a \$500 Target GiftCard, and each will secure a \$10,000 LAL Reading Promotion Grant in their name for his or her community or school library so that others can experience personal relationships with authors and the stories they tell. The twelve honorable mentions will each receive a \$100 Target GiftCard, and each will secure a \$1,000 LAL Reading Promotion Grant in their name for his or her community or school library.

The deadline to enter the competition is **December 10, 2010**. State winners will be announced in April 2011. For more information about the competition, contact Bonnie Matheis at 217-558-2065 or bmatheis@ilsos.net. Information can also be found at <http://illinoiscenterforthebook.org>.

Target sponsors “Letters About Literature” as part of its national reading initiative, "Ready. Sit. Read!," which is aimed at fostering a love of reading among children at an early age. Since opening its first store in 1962, Target has partnered with nonprofit organizations, guests and team members to help meet community needs.

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