

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

October 1, 2010

State Labor Department Director Highlights Law That Protects Victims of Domestic Violence in the Workplace

SPRINGFIELD—October 1, 2010. Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) Director Catherine Shannon spoke at a press conference earlier today highlighting the Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA), a law that provides workplace protections to victims of domestic or sexual violence. She explained that the law is designed to provide employed victims with the financial independence necessary to leave abusive situations by entitling them to up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period, without fear of losing their jobs, and added protections from workplace discrimination.

Many victims find that the domestic and sexual violence experienced at home follows them to the workplace. As a result, the employee may become less productive due to abuse-related stress or unable to work due to physical injuries. VESSA allows employees who are victims of domestic or sexual violence, or who have a family or household member who is a victim of such violence, to take unpaid leave to obtain medical attention, victim services, counseling, legal assistance and/or to relocate. VESSA also prohibits employers from discriminating against employees who are victims or who have a family or household member who is a victim of domestic or sexual violence.

Governor Quinn issued a proclamation establishing October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Illinois. Last year, the Governor signed legislation to expand protections under VESSA to cover more Illinois workers affected by domestic or sexual violence. The proclamation and more information on VESSA, is available www.state.il.us/agency/idol. People with questions about the program can call (312) 793-6797.

###