



Illinois
Department of
**Natural
Resources**

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Illinoisans invited to unite in service to celebrate the nation's 250th birthday throughout 2026

Volunteers can register with Serve Illinois to receive a commemorative certificate

SPRINGFIELD – In celebration of the founding of the United States 250 years ago, Governor JB Pritzker is inviting Illinoisans to unite in service by volunteering with organizations of their choice to foster community connection and build a legacy of giving back throughout 2026.

"Illinoisans throughout history have always come together to help their neighbors, and it's this deep sense of community that makes our state the best in the nation," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "As we celebrate America's 250th anniversary, I encourage Illinoisans from across the state to unite in service and give back to the place we all call home."

Illinois United in Service volunteers can [log their hours online](#) with [Serve Illinois](#), a program of the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), beginning Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Monday, Jan. 19. Volunteers who log hours will receive a special commemorative certificate for the nation's 250th anniversary.

"Serve Illinois is proud to celebrate America's 250th birthday by bringing people together in service to one another," **said Serve Illinois Executive Director Andres Fernandez**. "Volunteering and community service bring out the best of us, our communities, our state and our nation."

In addition, organizations statewide can [share volunteer events](#) and with Serve Illinois, enabling prospective volunteers to match with opportunities near them.

Illinoisans can expect to learn about future volunteer events throughout 2026. Illinois United in Service is an initiative of the [Illinois America 250 Commission](#) and [Serve Illinois](#).

Illinois United in Service is one of a series of signature initiatives organized by the commission to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The commission was established to lead an inclusive, statewide celebration that uplifts local stories, highlights significant places and programs, and showcases how Illinoisans bring the ideals of the Declaration of Independence to life.

Other signature programs forthcoming this spring include a limited-edition keepsake passport of historical, cultural and heritage sites around the state, as well as Illinois Voices 250, a project to record and preserve Illinoisans' reflections on the 250th anniversary in the Library of Congress. More information about these initiatives will be announced in the coming weeks.

“As we approach our nation’s 250th anniversary, Illinois United in Service is an invitation to reflect on the founding ideals of our country and put them into action,” said **Gabrielle Lyon, chair of the Illinois America 250 Commission and executive director of Illinois Humanities**. “Through acts of service, we can show up for one another in 2026, while connecting across communities and generations. These efforts can help Illinoisians shape a more just, inclusive, and hopeful future worthy of this historic milestone.”

“Volunteers are vital to carrying out the mission of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. We lean on our volunteer network to help us staff state parks, clear hiking trails of invasive species, teach hunter safety, welcome campers to our parks, serve as historical interpreters, and much more,” said **Natalie Phelps Finnie, director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources**, which provides support to the Illinois America 250 Commission. “IDNR looks forward to welcoming new volunteers to our ranks and further enhancing our sites and programs during this special national anniversary year.”

The official hub for Illinois America 250 can be found online at il250.org. There, Illinoisans can sign up to be a 250th partner; browse or submit events; access free educational and planning resources for schools, libraries, families and organizations; learn about or join local 250th communities and partners; and get updates on news and volunteer opportunities connected to Illinois America 250. Illinoisans who want to get involved in events near them can visit the community calendar at il250.org/events.

The Serve Illinois Commission is a 40-member bipartisan board appointed by the governor and administered by the IDHS. The enabling legislation of the Serve Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (Serve Illinois) promotes, partners and supports community service in public and private programs, while stimulating new volunteerism and community service initiatives to meet the needs of Illinois citizens. Within the IDHS, Serve Illinois is a resource advocate for community service agencies, volunteers and programs that utilize state and private volunteers.

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