



Illinois State Treasurer

**MICHAEL FRERICHS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 25, 2026

## **State Treasurer Michael Frerichs Presents Awards to Downstate Leaders in Honor of Black History Month**

*Springfield Lanphier High School Girls Basketball Coach, Award-Winning Children's Book Author from O'Fallon, President of NAACP Peoria, Carbondale Mayor Among Those Who Are Recognized for Their Contributions*

Video will be posted here: <https://cms.illinois.gov/agency/media/video/videos.html>

**SPRINGFIELD** – Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs today hosted a celebration to commemorate Black History Month and honor leaders in the African American community.

The event, held at the Illinois State Treasurer's Office in the Marine Bank Building in downtown Springfield, was an opportunity to reflect on the great achievements of Black leaders. The eight Downstate Illinois honorees included a Springfield dentist, the CEO and President of the Springfield Urban League, the superintendent of Decatur Public Schools, the mayor of Carbondale, a labor leader from Belleville, the head girls basketball coach at Lanphier High School in Springfield, an award-winning children's book author from O'Fallon, and the president of NAACP Peoria.

"We celebrate and acknowledge the great achievements and contributions of African Americans every day, not just in February," Frerichs said. "Today, we make a special point of honoring eight leaders who are dedicated to making our communities better places to live, work, and raise a family. These individuals make a difference by strengthening our state and our neighborhoods, educating and mentoring young people, and inspiring future leaders who someday will follow in their footsteps."

Black History Month is a national effort started 100 years ago — in 1926 — by University of Chicago graduate, author and educator Carter G. Woodson. In 1976, the annual celebration was expanded to a month.

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Treasurer Frerichs honored the following individuals for their outstanding commitment to the community:

**Outstanding Service in Business**

**Dr. Sean Crawford**

Owner | Crawford Dental Clinic, Springfield

**Outstanding Commitment to Community Service**

**Dr. Marcus Johnson**

President and CEO | Springfield Urban League

**Outstanding Commitment to Education**

**Dr. Rochelle Clark**

Superintendent | Decatur Public Schools

**Outstanding Commitment as an Elected Official**

**Honorable Carolin Harvey**

Mayor | City of Carbondale

**Outstanding Achievement in Workforce and Labor**

**James Franklin**

Trustee | Teamsters Local 916

**Outstanding Achievement in Sportsmanship**

**Doug Collins**

Head Girls Basketball Coach | Lanphier High School, Springfield

**Outstanding Achievement in Arts and Humanities**

**Katie Otey**

Publisher, Author, Poet, and Literary Advocate

**Jesse White Leadership Award**

**Pastor Marvin Hightower**

President | NAACP Peoria

Earlier this month, Treasurer Frerichs hosted a celebration in Chicago honoring Chicago-area Black leaders.

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### **About the Treasurer**

The Illinois State Treasurer's Office is a powerful economic engine that invests in people to drive prosperity, development and growth throughout the state. As State Treasurer, Michael Frerichs (FRAIR'iks) is the state's Chief Investment and Banking Officer and actively manages approximately \$60 billion. The investments help families pay for college and trade school; workers save for a dignified retirement; and local governments process bill payments more efficiently so they can pass along the savings to taxpayers. The office provides financial institutions with money to loan to farmers, small business owners, and qualified individuals at below-market rates because better jobs create stronger communities. The office operates the state's largest consumer-protection initiative, the missing money ICash program, which has returned a record-breaking \$2.4 billion since Frerichs was elected.

For more news about the State Treasurer's Office, please sign up for our [newsletter](#) and follow Treasurer Frerichs on Instagram at [IL Treasurer](#), Threads [@iltreasurer](#), [LinkedIn](#) and on Facebook at [Invested in You – Treasurer Michael Frerichs](#).

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