



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Illinoisans invited to join statewide storytelling initiative 'Illinois Voices 250' with Illinois Humanities and StoryCorps Studios

Time capsule of Illinois stories and reflections will honor nation's 250th birthday

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois America 250 Commission invites people from across Illinois to participate in Illinois Voices 250, a statewide effort to record conversations with residents as part of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Recorded conversations will be preserved at the U.S. Library of Congress.

The initiative is led by the [Illinois America 250 Commission](#) in partnership with [Illinois Humanities](#) and [StoryCorps Studios](#). Illinois Voices 250 is the most expansive effort yet to ensure Illinois' commemoration of the nation's birthday is inclusive, accessible and statewide.

People can participate in public community recording events happening around the state or use the do-it-yourself option online at il250.org/il-voices. There is no fee to participate.

"The story of America isn't complete without the story of Illinois. Our people's diverse perspectives, reflections and personal narratives deserve to be shared and preserved for generations to come," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "I encourage Illinoisans of all backgrounds to tell their unique stories as the nation marks 250 years of history and resilience."

"Illinois Voices 250 is an opportunity to honor the full story of our state by lifting up voices from every corner of Illinois," **said Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton**. "When we take the time to listen to one another, we build stronger communities and a deeper understanding of who we are and where we're going. I encourage everyone to take part and share their story as we commemorate this historic milestone."

Community recording dates [will be posted online](#).

"Illinois Voices 250 is an invitation for all Illinoisians from every corner of the state to share, in their own words, what matters the most to them about our nation's 250th birthday," **said State Senator Doris Turner** of Springfield, who is a member of the Illinois America 250 Commission. "From all 102 counties, we're creating one statewide archive, and this collection of stories will carry us forward into America's next 250 years."

[StoryCorps](#) is an independent, nonprofit organization that shares select stories with the public through weekly broadcasts, a podcast, animated shorts, digital platforms and best-selling books. The organization is committed to the idea that everyone has an important story to tell and that everyone's story matters.

Founded in 2003, StoryCorps has helped more than 700,000 people across the country have meaningful conversations about their lives. These recordings are curated in the [U.S. Library of Congress](#) and in StoryCorps' online archive, which is now the largest single collection of human voices ever gathered.

"This partnership with Illinois Humanities reminds us that everyone's stories matter, which is the foundation of StoryCorps," said **StoryCorps CEO Sandra Clark**.

Illinois Humanities is a statewide nonprofit organization that provides grants to community-based history, heritage and cultural organizations and free public humanities programs to help residents be creative, connected, and in community.

Illinois Humanities is grounding its 2026 programming in the belief that "history belongs to all of us." The organization's work around the semiquincentennial invites Illinoisans in small towns, rural communities, suburbs and cities to reflect on the ideals at the heart of the Declaration of Independence and consider what democracy, belonging and civic participation mean today.

"From now through August, Illinois Humanities will travel across the state to record conversations with people from all 102 counties. Thanks to our collaboration with StoryCorps Studios, we will archive the stories in the Library of Congress," said **Robert White, senior director of programs at Illinois Humanities**. "We're excited to invite all residents to contribute to this extraordinary time capsule of voices being preserved for future generations."

The [Illinois America 250 Commission](#) was established by state law to organize an inclusive, statewide celebration that uplifts local stories, highlights significant places and programs, and showcases how Illinoisans bring to life the ideals of the Declaration. The [Illinois Department of Natural Resources](#), which manages [state historic sites](#) and the [Illinois State Museum](#), provides administrative support to the commission.

Other [signature Illinois programs](#) for the 250th commemoration include limited-edition keepsake [tourism passports](#), available currently at libraries and visitors' bureaus around the state; [Illinois United in Service](#), a statewide call to action sponsored by Serve Illinois to encourage meaningful volunteer work; and public art grants to organizations across the state for public art installations.

"'We the People' has always been an unfinished story – one that grows stronger every time a new voice is heard," said **Gabrielle Lyon, chair of the Illinois America 250 Commission and executive director of Illinois Humanities**. "Illinois Voices 250 is yet another way we are ensuring we put Illinoisians and their contributions at the center of our commemoration of the 250th anniversary of America."

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