Illinois Department of Natural Resources
JB Pritzker, Governor • Natalie Phelps Finnie, Director
One Natural Resources Way • Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
www.dnr.illinois.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Media contact: dnr.pio@illinois.gov

Make your story part of history: Illinois Voices 250 hosting community recording sessions to chronicle personal stories in celebration of America's 250th birthday

SPRINGFIELD – Illinoisans are invited to chronicle their stories, memories and reflections in audio recordings that will be permanently archived at the U.S. Library of Congress during a series of community recording sessions scheduled for this summer.

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

A community recording day is a free public event where members of a community pair up with a conversation partner and record a short story about their life, their memories, or their hopes for the future. People can participate in public community recording events happening around the state or consider using the do-it-yourself option available online at il250.org/il-voices.

Participants will be invited to respond to such questions as:

- "What's a story from your family that you want to be remembered?"
- "When have you felt most proud – or most conflicted – about this country?"
- "What kind of future do you hope to see by the country's 300th anniversary?"

"No matter what part of the state you're in, participating in Illinois Voices 250 is meaningful, fun and easy," **said Gabrielle Lyon, chair of the Illinois America 250 Commission and executive director of Illinois Humanities**. "We're excited to invite Illinoisans to share their wisdom, experiences, stories and hopes for America to inspire future generations as we mark 250 years of the United States."

New community recording opportunities are regularly added to the schedule. Currently scheduled recording days include:

Thursday, June 25
Little Village Public Library | Cook County
2311 S. Kedzie Ave., Chicago
11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Friday, June 26
Washington Park near the Washington Theater | Adams County
427 Hampshire St., Quincy
5-7 p.m. during the Quincy Blues in the District event

Saturday, June 27
Washington Park near the Washington Theater | Adams County
427 Hampshire St., Quincy
8 a.m. to 1 p.m. during the Quincy Farmers Market

Wednesday, July 8
Peoria Riverfront Museum | Peoria County
222 SW Washington St., Peoria
1-4 p.m. during the "What, to the Country, is Illinois?" event

Aug. 13-22
Illinois State Fair | Sangamon County
Illinois State Fairgrounds, 801 Sangamon Ave., Springfield
1-4 p.m. daily

Saturday, Aug. 15
Project XV Museum | Woodford County
1 W. Front St., El Paso
4-8 p.m. during the Hidden Histories Festival

Additional community recording sessions will be added to the Illinois America 250 event calendar online. For questions or more information about scheduling a community recording session, contact robert.white@ilhumanities.org.

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.

###

About IDNR
The Illinois Department of Natural Resources was established in 1925 as the Illinois Department of Conservation, bringing under one umbrella oversight of fish and game, forestry, public works, and lakes. Today, IDNR's work encompasses management of about 400 sites across Illinois, including state parks and historic sites; wildlife, fisheries, forestry, and natural heritage; Lake Michigan water allocation and coastal management; conservation police; mines and minerals; oil and gas; issuance of licenses, permits, and numerous grants; the World Shooting and Recreational Complex in Sparta; and the Illinois State Museum. Visit https://dnr.illinois.gov and follow us on Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn.