



OFFICE OF ILLINOIS STATE TREASURER
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Treasurer Michael Frerichs Visits Sterling to Help Workers Retire with Dignity

Secure Choice Makes Saving Easy, Tops 100,000 Members

520 workers Saved \$524,000 in Lee, Whiteside Counties

STERLING – The innovative plan to create a mobile retirement savings account that travels with the worker visited Smoked on 3rd BBQ Bistro today to celebrate the 100,000-enrollment milestone, Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs said.

Frerichs set up the Secure Choice retirement savings program to combat the retirement savings crisis in Illinois and across the country. Illinois is a national leader in offering an auto-enroll IRA program. Workers in Illinois began saving through Secure Choice in July, 2018.

“A retirement savings tool that travels from job-to-job with the worker makes it easier to save, allows a worker to retire with dignity, and saves taxpayer money by reducing the need for publicly funded safety-net programs,” Frerichs said.

Today, more than 100,000 workers and 6,400 employers participate in Secure Choice, with \$82 million already saved. None of this was possible without Secure Choice. The 100,000 milestone was surpassed in the first quarter of this year.

In Lee and Whiteside counties, 520 workers with 31 employers have saved \$524,000 with Secure Choice.

“Secure Choice is a wonderful benefit, especially in the restaurant industry, where employees such as servers, bartenders and kitchen help typically do not have an opportunity to save for retirement at work,” Smoked on 3rd owner Michelle Burns said. “Given how hard the restaurant industry has been hit recently, being able to offer staff an easy way to save for their retirement has been an important benefit.”

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The General Assembly required employers to either offer a retirement savings plan or participate in Secure Choice, which is overseen by a seven-person board chaired by Frerichs. Secure Choice investments are

managed by a private-sector financial services firm and kept in a trust outside of state government and its finances.

Key to passing legislation that created Secure Choice was the assurance that employers would not be financially liable for plan administration and would not be legally liable for investment changes. Employees can opt-out of the program at any time.

Enrollment began in 2018 with companies at least two years old and with 500 or more employees. Smaller companies enrolled in phases thereafter to ensure a smooth transition. The success was so strong that most business groups initially neutral or opposed to Secure Choice did not oppose the legislation passed by the General Assembly in 2021 to expand the program. That legislation requires employers with at least five employees to provide a retirement vehicle, or access to Secure Choice, by November, 2023.

The access is critical:

- Nearly half of all working-age families have nothing saved for retirement.
- Although Social Security is not intended to be the sole source of retirement income, 23 percent of Illinois retirees rely on Social Security for at least 90 percent of their retirement income.
- Workers are 15 times more likely to save for retirement if they can do so at work.
- However, 40 percent of Illinois private-sector employees work for a business that does not offer a retirement savings plan.

About Illinois Secure Choice

Illinois Secure Choice is managed by Ascensus, a private-sector financial services firm responsible for all recordkeeping and day-to-day aspects. Fund options include BlackRock, Charles Schwab, and State Street Global Advisors. Participants are enrolled in a default target-date Roth IRA with a five percent contribution rate. Participants can choose to change their contribution level or fund option at any time. More information can be found at www.ilsecurechoice.com.

About the Illinois Treasurer

As Illinois State Treasurer, Michael Frerichs is the state's Chief Investment and Banking Officer and actively manages approximately \$52 billion. The portfolio includes \$26 billion in state funds, \$17 billion in retirement and college savings plans and \$9 billion on behalf of local and state governments. Frerichs' office protects consumers by safeguarding more than \$3.5 billion in unclaimed property, encouraging savings plans for college or trade school, increasing financial education among all ages, assisting people with disabilities to save without losing government benefits, and removing barriers to a secure retirement. The Treasurer's Office predates Illinois incorporation in 1818. Voters in 1848 chose to make it an elected office.

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