



# OFFICE OF ILLINOIS STATE TREASURER

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## **Treasurer Frerichs Presents Awards to Downstate Leaders In Honor of Black History Month**

*Celebration to Recognize Great Achievements of African Americans*

**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 Office of the Illinois State Treasurer in the Marine Bank Building at 1 East Old State Capitol Plaza, was an opportunity to reflect on the great achievements of Black leaders. The honorees included a dentist, a mentor and service-provider to young people, a retired pastor, a high school principal, two members of the Illinois Senate, a trades and labor advocate, a youth sports advocate, and an artist and art gallery owner.

“It is important that we acknowledge the great achievements and contributions of African Americans every day, not only during the month of February,” Frerichs said. “These leaders are serving others, making a difference in the lives of our youth, and fighting for a more equitable Illinois. We celebrate their dedication to making our communities a better place to live, work, and raise a family.”

Black History Month is a national effort. In 1926, University of Chicago graduate, author and educator Carter G. Woodson created Negro History Week. In 1976, the annual celebration was expanded to a month.

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

### **Outstanding Service in Business**

**Dr. Jaya Nelson**

Dentist | Danville Family Dental Care  
Danville

### **Outstanding Service in Leadership**

**Samuel P. Banks**

CEO and Executive Director | Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club  
Champaign

**-MORE-**

**Outstanding Commitment in Education**

**Eric Alan Thomas**

Principal | Knoxville Center for Student Success  
Peoria

**Outstanding Commitment in Community Service**

**Bishop King James Underwood**

Founder and Retired Pastor | New Free Will Baptist Church  
Champaign

**Outstanding Commitment as an Elected Official\***

**Honorable Mattie Hunter**

Illinois State Senator and Assistant Majority Leader | 3rd District  
*\*Chicago Black History Month Awardee*

**Outstanding Commitment as an Elected Official**

**Honorable Christopher Belt**

Illinois State Senator | 57th District  
East St. Louis

**Outstanding Achievement in Workforce and Labor**

**Lamarcus Williams**

President | Decatur Trades and Labor Assembly  
Decatur

**Outstanding Achievement in Sportsmanship**

**Justin Lorenzo Dentmon**

Founder and Owner | Justin Dentmon Athletic Center  
Carbondale

**Outstanding Achievement in Arts and Humanities**

**Jonathon Romain**

Artist and Owner | Romain Arts and Culture Center  
Peoria

Earlier this month, Frerichs held a Black History Month celebration in Chicago honoring northern Illinois Black leaders.

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