



# OFFICE OF ILLINOIS STATE TREASURER

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MICHAEL W. FRERICHS

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## **Last Call: State Treasurer Michael Frerichs Reminds Illinois Students to Submit Photos for 2023 Cream of the Crop Contest by June 12**

### **Winners Will Receive Scholarship Prize Money**

**SPRINGFIELD** – State Treasurer Michael Frerichs reminds young Illinois photographers, ages 8 to 18, to submit their best work for the 2023 *Cream of the Crop Photo Contest* by the deadline of **June 12**. The students who earn first, second or third place in each of three age categories will receive up to \$1,000 in scholarship prize money, Frerichs said.

The contest is designed to encourage young people to share their vision of Illinois agriculture through photography.

“Our Cream of the Crop Photo Contest offers a wonderful way for students to explore and share their creativity while helping others to appreciate the beauty and diversity of Illinois’ rich agricultural landscape,” Frerichs said. “In addition, the contest provides students with an opportunity to win Bright Start scholarship funds for college or other post-secondary education. We look forward to seeing the amazing images that students are certain to submit for the contest.”

Submissions for the *Cream of the Crop Photo Contest* should be sent electronically to the Treasurer’s Office at [www.CreamoftheCropContest.com](http://www.CreamoftheCropContest.com). Top photographs will be chosen in three age-based categories: ages 8-10, 11-14 and 15-18. Each student may submit up to two photos by **June 12, 2023**.

A panel of judges will select the most outstanding photos, and Bright Start scholarship funds will be awarded to the young photographers who submit the best work in each of the three age categories. First-place winners will receive \$1,000, second-place winners will receive \$500, and third-place winners will receive \$250.

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Treasurer Frerichs administers Bright Start, the Illinois direct-sold 529 program that provides families with a tax-advantaged investment vehicle to help save for future education expenses at a university or college, community college, trade school or apprenticeship. For more information about the Treasurer's Office College Savings programs, visit [ILCollegeSavings.com](http://ILCollegeSavings.com) or call 877.432.7444.

In addition to receiving scholarship funds, winners in the 2023 Cream of the Crop contest will have their photographs featured in Ag Invest marketing material, including the 2023-2024 Ag Invest calendar, and at the Illinois State Fair in August.

The contest, now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year, offers Illinois students an avenue for showcasing their most innovative or scenic pictures that depict their vision of agriculture in our state. More than 500 students have participated in the contest since its debut in 2013, and they have submitted nearly 1,000 photos.

The *Cream of the Crop Photo Contest* is part of the Illinois State Treasurer's Ag Invest program, which is marking its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Ag Invest is an agriculture-focused impact investment program providing loan opportunities for Illinois farmers and agri-businesses to start, expand or add value to their farm operations. Ag Invest offers affordable financing through two options: the Ag Invest Agriculture Operating Line of Credit and the Long-Term Ag & Value-Added Ag program. The Treasurer's Office partners with eligible financial institutions in Illinois to provide low-interest loans to Illinois farmers. The loans provided by the financial institution can be used for the purchase of farm equipment, purchase of land, construction-related expenses, operating lines of credit or other costs related to conventional or sustainable farming.

Since 2015, when Frerichs became treasurer, the program has supported more than 5,000 agriculture borrowers and partnered with more than 35 financial institutions.

To read the rules, terms, and legal conditions associated with the *Cream of the Crop Photo Contest*, visit our website at [www.CreamoftheCropContest.com](http://www.CreamoftheCropContest.com) or contact Teri Whitfield at 217.900.0075. To learn more about the Ag Invest program, go to [Ag Invest](#).

### **About the Illinois Treasurer**

As Illinois State Treasurer, Michael Frerichs (FRAIR'-iks) 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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