



Illinois State Treasurer

MICHAEL FRERICHS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 12, 2026

Treasurer Michael Frerichs Presents Awards to Eight Illinois Leaders in Honor of Women's History Month

Grammy-Nominated Violinist, CEOs of Feeding America and Northern Illinois Food Bank, Retired Illinois State Superintendent of Education, Special Olympics Athlete Among Those Who Are Recognized for Their Contributions

Video will be posted here: <https://cms.illinois.gov/agency/media/video/videos.html>

Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs today hosted a celebration to commemorate Women's History Month and pay tribute to the enduring impact of women in shaping history and benefitting society.

The event, held in the Illinois Room at 555 W. Monroe St. in Chicago, was an opportunity to reflect on the great achievements and ongoing contributions of women leaders in Illinois. The eight honorees included a senior vice president at Old National Bank, the CEO of Feeding America, the president and CEO of Northern Illinois Food Bank, a retired Illinois State Superintendent of Education, an Illinois state lawmaker, the director of the Workforce Center of Will County, a Special Olympics athlete who specializes in snowshoeing, and a Grammy-nominated violinist and educator.

"We celebrate these eight individuals who are dedicated to helping others through education, mentorship, and service," Frerichs said. "Through the years, women have made essential contributions to our state, and they are still doing that today. Illinois history is rich with women activists, including those who fought more than 100 years ago for women's right to vote and those who today continue to work tirelessly toward the goals of equity, equality, and justice. Thank you all for making our state and our communities better places to live, work, and raise a family."

The origins of Women's History Month go back more than 100 years. In 1911, the U.S. first participated in International Women's History Day. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first presidential proclamation declaring National Women's History Week. Seven years later, Congress declared March as National Women's History Month.

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Treasurer Frerichs honored the following individuals for their outstanding commitment:

Outstanding Service in Business

Nadine Johnson

Senior Vice President and Specialty Banking Relationship Manager | Old National Bank

Outstanding Service in Leadership

Claire Babineaux-Fontenot

Chief Executive Officer | Feeding America

Outstanding Commitment to Community Service

Julie Yurko

President and CEO | Northern Illinois Food Bank

Outstanding Commitment to Education

Dr. Carmen Ayala

Educational Consultant, Former Illinois State Superintendent of Education

Outstanding Commitment as an Elected Official

Honorable Diane Blair-Sherlock

Illinois State Representative | 46th District

Outstanding Achievement in Workforce and Labor

Michelle Stiff

Director | Workforce Center of Will County

Outstanding Achievement in Sportsmanship

Mallory Marvin

Athlete and Athlete Leader Spokesperson | Special Olympics Illinois

Outstanding Achievement in Arts and Humanities

Desirée Ruhstrat

Violinist, Soloist, Lincoln Trio, Adjunct Professor of Violin | Northwestern University Bienen School of Music

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About the Treasurer

The Illinois State Treasurer's Office is a powerful economic engine that invests in people to drive prosperity, development and growth throughout the state. As State Treasurer, Michael Frerichs (FRAIR'iks) is the state's Chief Investment and Banking Officer and actively manages approximately \$60 billion. The investments help families pay for college and trade school; workers save for a dignified retirement; and local governments process bill payments more efficiently so they can pass along the savings to taxpayers. The office provides financial institutions with money to loan to farmers, small business owners, and qualified individuals at below-market rates because better jobs create stronger communities. The office operates the state's largest consumer-protection initiative, the missing money ICash program, which has returned a record-breaking \$2.4 billion since Frerichs was elected.

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