



Illinois State Treasurer

MICHAEL FRERICHS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Naperville Central, Neuqua Valley High Schools Take Top Spots in Statewide Financial Literacy Contest, Win Bright Start College Savings Scholarships

Treasurer Michael Frerichs Hosts 2026 Illinois Personal Finance Challenge

VIDEO is available here: <https://youtu.be/KdiWlo-V2LU>

Additional video available here: <https://cms.illinois.gov/agency/media/video/videos.html>

Key Points:

- Ten teams from Illinois high schools tested their financial literacy by competing in the finals of the Illinois Personal Finance Challenge.
- The first-place team from Naperville Central High School now advances to the National Personal Finance Challenge finals in Atlanta, Ga. Each student on the team received a \$1,500 Bright Start college savings scholarship.
- Each student on the second-place team from Neuqua Valley High School received a \$1,000 Bright Start college savings scholarship.
- A total of 579 students from all over Illinois participated in the statewide competition.

A team of four students from Naperville Central High School will compete in the National Personal Finance Challenge in Atlanta, Georgia, on May 31-June 1 after winning a statewide financial literacy contest sponsored by Illinois Treasurer Michael Frerichs.

Naperville Central students Harsh Patel, Krish Patel, Taran Nathan and Rohan Jain outscored nine other teams in the finals of the Illinois Personal Finance Challenge. The contest is designed to provide students with an opportunity to build, apply, and demonstrate their financial knowledge in areas like earning income, spending, saving, managing credit, investing, and managing risk. Naperville Central teacher Michael Borge coached the team.

As members of the first-place team, each of the four Naperville Central students received a \$1,500 Bright Start college savings scholarship.

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Members of the second-place team, from Neuqua Valley High School, each received a \$1,000 Bright Start scholarship.

Students from all over Illinois competed in the finals, which took place April 14 at Treasurer Frerichs' Springfield office.

Ten teams, consisting of a total of 37 students, qualified for the finals by performing well on an online exam about financial literacy. A total of 169 teams, consisting of 579 students, took the online exam earlier in the school year.

At the state finals, the top 10 teams took part in a case study, and judges then selected the top four teams to participate in a quiz bowl. The quiz bowl teams represented Naperville Central High School, Neuqua Valley High School, the Illinois Math and Science Academy, and Monticello High School.

Students said they enjoyed competing in the state finals and learning about personal finance.

Andrew Bledsoe, a student at Monticello High School, said the Personal Finance Challenge is “a great time for students to get to know each other and really engage on something that will be able to impact them in the future.” He added that the knowledge he has gained about topics such as investment strategies and managing debt will help him deal with his own money in the future.

Laila Jaoko, a student at Collinsville High School, encourages other students to participate in the annual contest.

“Personal finance is a big thing,” she said. “It affects you a lot as you grow up. I think it’s beneficial, it’s fun, and something you’ll use later on.”

The 10 schools participating in the state finals of the Illinois Personal Finance Challenge were:

- Naperville Central High School
- Neuqua Valley High School in Naperville
- Illinois Math and Science Academy in Aurora
- Monticello High School
- Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire
- Collinsville High School
- Moline Senior High School
- University High School – Illinois State University Lab Schools in Normal
- West Chicago Community High School
- William Fremd High School in Palatine

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Illinois Treasurer Michael Frerichs believes in the value of financial literacy for people of all ages and at different stages of life. Illinois residents have access to free resources on topics like saving for an emergency, saving for retirement, planning for a child's education, managing debt, and buying a home at the [Financial Wellness Hub](#) website.

"I believe in giving people the tools they need to invest in themselves," Frerichs said. "We wish the team from Naperville Central the best of luck in Atlanta."

Media Contacts

Eric Krol 312.814.1252

Adriana Colindres 217.558.1920

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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