



OFFICE OF ILLINOIS STATE TREASURER

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Treasurer Frerichs Presents Awards to Downstate Leaders in Honor of Black History Month

*Jesse White, artist Preston Jackson, educator Ed Hightower, lawmaker Doris Turner,
former NBA player A.J. Guyton among those recognized*

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 Marine Bank Building at 1 E. Old State Capitol Plaza, was an opportunity to reflect on the great achievements of Black leaders. The eight honorees included a businessman and director of vocational services at a Springfield nonprofit, a former Illinois secretary of state, a former Metro East mayor, a retired Edwardsville school superintendent and college basketball referee, a state senator, a Marion community leader, a Peoria school administrator and former professional basketball player, and a sculptor and art educator.

“We acknowledge the great achievements and contributions of African Americans every day, not only during the month of February,” Frerichs said. “These leaders are making a difference in the lives of our youth, fighting for a more equitable Illinois, and educating students for a bright future. We applaud their dedication to making our communities a better place to live, work, and raise a family.”

Black History Month is a national effort started in 1926 by University of Chicago graduate, author and educator Carter G. Woodson. In 1976, the annual celebration was expanded to a month. This year’s Black History Month theme is “African Americans and Labor.”

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

Outstanding Service in Business

Jeremy Bell

Co-Owner | Bells’ Finest BBQ, Springfield, and Director of Vocational Services at Sparc

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Outstanding Service in Leadership

Jesse White

Former Illinois Secretary of State | Founder, Jesse White Tumblers

Outstanding Commitment in Education

Dr. Ed Hightower

Vice Chair | Southern Illinois University System Board of Trustees, Retired Superintendent for Edwardsville Community Unit School District #7, Retired NCAA Basketball Referee

Outstanding Commitment in Community Service

Riley L. Owens III

Former Mayor | City of Centreville

Outstanding Commitment as an Elected Official

Hon. Doris Turner

Illinois State Senator | 48th District

Outstanding Achievement in Workforce and Labor

Terance Henry

Chair | Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board

Outstanding Achievement in Sportsmanship

A.J. Guyton

Retired NBA Player | Director of Athletics for Peoria Public Schools District 150

Outstanding Achievement in Arts and Humanities

Preston Jackson

Sculptor, Art Educator, Gallery Owner | Professor Emeritus, School of the Art Institute

Earlier this month, Frerichs held a celebration in Chicago honoring Chicago-area Black leaders.

About the Illinois 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 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 unclaimed property I-Cash program, which has returned a record-breaking \$2.2 billion since Frerichs was elected.

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