

# ILLINOIS STATE SOCIETY



Fellow Illinoisans,

It is my pleasure as President to report a successful eighteen months have passed since our last Illinois State Society of Washington, D.C., Annual Meeting in 2017 and much has been accomplished thanks to the participation and active leadership of so many of our members. I'm proud of what we have accomplished in contributing to Illinois' strong role in our Nation's Capitol.

Our organization is based on our role as a social organization established to highlight the contributions of Illinoisans to our Nation as well as to celebrate our State's culture and unique history as the 21st State. Illinois' Bicentennial of 200 years of Statehood has given us an opportunity to celebrate so much with a series of activities and events. Just this past week we celebrated Illinois' Statehood day on December 3, 2018.

I particularly want to salute those who have served as officers and board members during this term. All have made great contributions and I'm grateful for everyone's contribution of ideas, time and volunteerism towards our overall agenda of activities. We've had a great team and much has been accomplished.

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/photos/a.1622372284453983/1622372414453970/?type=3&theater>

Our leadership team worked hard to celebrate Illinois' diversity and accomplishments. We continued our efforts to diversify the ILSS membership and board to include a wider set of communities and continue to boost our ILSS Young Professionals program to attract a younger crowd to join in ILSS activities and events.

We continue to be a non-partisan organization and enjoy the active participation of the Illinois Congressional Delegation. It was an honor to have Congressman Darin Lahood and Raja Krishnamoorthi as our Honorary Congressional Co-Chairs. Both

demonstrated great commitment by attending almost every one of our events over the past term. Some photos here

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/photos/a.513304845360738/1569263213098224/?type=3&theater>

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/videos/1669745356383342/>

A full calendar of events, activities and community service have highlighted the role of Illinois and let me cite several key initiatives since June, 2017:

The Annual Illinois Congressional Delegation Receptions held in July of each year have always been a highlight of our calendar and the participation of almost all Members of the Delegation usually attracts our biggest attendance of the year. We typically have had well over 250 attendees join the Delegation for a fun evening of networking on Capitol Hill. You can get a feel for this event here:

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/videos/2063254227032451/>

The ILSS Congressional Intern Scholarship Awards are also announced at our annual Congressional Delegation reception and we awarded 33 scholarships in 2017 for a total of \$19,500 and 21 scholarships in 2018 for a total of \$11,950. This program has benefited many young people from Illinois who have the opportunity to learn about Capitol Hill through an internship but struggle financially to afford the experience.

Here's some video from one of our presentations

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/videos/1663286993695845/>

In September of 2017, we hosted our first every All Illinois Alumni Homecoming Tailgate Party and enlisted Illinois Universities and Colleges to join in cosponsoring this very successful and informal event modeled after college football tailgate parties. It was an enjoyable evening of college fight songs in an atmosphere created by festive college banners, logos and sportswear with over 150 attendees. Some video to view here:

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/videos/1739904956034048/>

The Society went into high gear to kick-off 200 years of Illinois statehood with a program of "Bicentennial Reflections" at the National Press Club. Attendees heard from renowned journalists Clarence Page of the Chicago Tribune and Lynn Sweet of the Chicago Sun-Times about Illinois' impact on Washington, D.C. Ellen Shearer of Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism moderated. We were delighted that this was an official event of Illinois Bicentennial Commission and that the Illinois Channel and CSPAN are airing this event repeatedly over the coming year. See the program on our

website at

<http://ilstatesociety.com/2017/12/04/video-illinois-bicentennial-reflections-11-28-17/>

We also continued our role recognizing Illinois' great Presidents and their births by placing wreaths at the Lincoln Memorial and at Ronald Reagan National Airport in February, 2018. Like all four Presidents from Illinois, both Lincoln and Reagan contributed so much to building our Nation and we honor them every year with this recognition. Some video footage can be viewed here

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/videos/1885762768114932/>

ILSS celebrated Black History Month with a special event noting the contribution of the "Great Migration" of African Americans from the South to the Chicago area in the 20th Century. Illinois' own Cong Danny Davis of Chicago's own Family were participants in this migration to Chicago and he shared with attendees his own personal memories and observations at our special Black History event in February, 2018. You can view the program here:

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/videos/1893805830643959/>

We continued our active involvement in the Annual Cherry Blossom Festival and were well represented by our 2018 Princess, Morgan Doggett. She enjoyed the opportunity to participate in the many activities around the Cherry Blossom Festival and made many new friends for ILSS. Here's a photo:

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/photos/a.513304845360738/1953156698042205/?type=3&theater>

In March, 2018, the Illinois State Society partnered with the National Archives and the Lincoln Group of Washington, DC, to join in cosponsoring an Incredible presentation at the National Archives involving Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass and Stephen Douglas reenacting Debates that could have been based on correspondence and references to great speeches by each of the three. Watch on youtube as well as see the details at:

<https://www.archives.gov/calendar/event/the-lincoln-douglass-debates-known-and-unknown>

President Ulysses S. Grant joined the Illinois State Society in celebration of his 196th birthday on Capitol Hill in May, 2018. Everyone enjoyed meeting and having personal conversation with the President who remained "in character" the entire evening. While President Grant is most remembered for his role in the Union's final victory in the Civil War, his contributions to proper treatment of Native Americans as well as creating the

Department of Justice were singled out at the well-attended event on Capitol Hill. The program can be found here:

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/videos/1961762820514926/>

The Illinois State Society always recognizes Memorial Day and this year joined with representatives of the Armed Forces Retirement Home and President Lincoln's Cottage in a wreath-laying at the Logan Mausoleum. Later in the day the Society took part in a similar service sponsored by the Logan Circle Community Association.: Memorial Day's founder, John A. Logan, was a native-son of Illinois whose name in the 19th century truly meant something. The Illinois state song refers to only three individuals – Lincoln, Grant and Logan. Here is a photo

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/photos/a.1982220358469172/1982576261766915/?type=3&theater>

Consistent with our goals of highlighting the unique contributions of great Illinoisans, we noted that Senator Everett Dirksen was not only known for his key role in enactment of monumental Civil Rights legislation but he was also known as "Mr. Marigold" for advocating that the Marigold be officially designated the official "National Flower" by Congress. While his Marigold efforts were unsuccessful, the ILSS convinced the Architect of the Capitol to plant Marigolds around the Dirksen Senate Office Building in celebration of Illinois' Bicentennial. A brief June, 2018, program was conducted outside the Dirksen Building

here <https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/videos/1993510720673469/>

Our Young Professionals had an active program of receptions and activities including well attended Winery Tour , Cubs -Nats Game as well as organizing the ILSS Team participating in the National Conference of State Societies Annual Softball Tournament. Many of our ILSS Board Members are active in the ILSS YPs which is for members under the age of 30; many of who work on Capitol Hill or off the Hill.

Here's a photo from the pre-game reception from the Cubs game

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/photos/a.898956013462284/2137887406235799/?type=3&theater>

Community service is a big component of the ILSS' agenda and we encourage our members to participate in support of the Washington area community. This year ILSS volunteers pitched in on Earth Day Cleanup along the Anacostia River and with DC

Scores, a soccer oriented charity providing sports events for area children in need.

Here's one of our enthusiastic volunteers

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/photos/a.513304845360738/1940118229346052/?type=3&theater>

ILSS also initiated an effort to partner with the twelve other Midwestern State Societies in collaboration as well as sharing of best practices for serving our respective memberships. This effort is working towards a joint annual event in anticipation of the every four year Inaugural Ball we hope to jointly host and sponsor for attendees from the Midwest. The Illinois led group meets monthly

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/photos/pcb.2046453255379215/2046446898713184/?type=3&theater>

Labor has played a key role in Illinois' history; digging our canals and coal mines and building our State's landmarks and iconic architecture. ILSS chose to note this rich history by honoring General President Eric Dean of the International Union of Ironworkers in October with a special 2018 Special Recognition Award in honor of the rich history and heritage of the labor movement in Illinois. Three of the International Union Presidents are from Illinois this year. Here a video of the event:

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/videos/2315493471997518/>

We also wanted to leave a lasting gift to the Washington area community and chose to create an Illinois Bicentennial Grove of Illinois' official tree; the White Oak in Anacostia National Park near RFK Stadium. Our Congressional Co-Chairs, Congressmen Darin LaHood (R-IL) and Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL) introduced legislation to designate an area within the River Terrace Area of Anacostia Park in Washington, D.C. as the "Illinois Bicentennial Grove," where four White Oak trees have been planted this week. As the state tree of Illinois, these trees have been planted in honor of four prominent abolitionists from the Land of Lincoln—Edward Coles, Mary Brown Davis, and Elijah and Owen Lovejoy. The legislation allows for additional trees up to 21 to be planted in the Bicentennial Grove in the coming years. Here's a photo

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/photos/pcb.2168292196528653/2168292166528656/?type=3&theater>

To conclude our Bicentennial Calendar of activities, we sponsored our signature event for the Bicentennial during Statehood Week with our first ever Taste of Illinois featuring Chicago and Illinois foods such as ballpark dogs, deep dish pizza, Illinois beers and foods. Net proceeds from this event contribute to our Congressional Intern Scholarship Fund. An estimated 350 attendees enjoyed great food, networking and dancing to

Chicago themed music. Many attendees left urging that the Taste of Illinois become an annual event to be sponsored by ILSS. Here's a photo from the event noting the Four Illinois Presidents who attended; Lincoln, Grant, Reagan and Obama:

<https://www.facebook.com/ILStateSociety/videos/vl.153218678696612/1685570801548938/?type=1>

It's fair to say, we've had a successful and productive 18 months and leave the Illinois State Society of Washington, DC, in a better position to move forward during our beloved State's third century. We've reduced our operating costs, our finances are sound and I note we were able to effectively generate record amounts of financial sponsorships during a "non-inaugural" year. Our membership continues to grow and become more diverse and we continue to be creative in organizing fun and well attended events and activities in celebration of Illinois' contribution to our Nation.

It's been my pleasure to serve as President over the past 18 months and I'm proud to submit this report to our ILSS Annual Meeting on December 8, 2018.

With best regards,

*Jerry Weller*

Hon. Jerry Weller

President

Illinois State Society of Washington, DC