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Michael W. Frerichs

ILLINOIS STATE TREASURER

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IL ABLE

Treasurer's Note

June 10, 2025

Becoming a Father Changed Me for the Better


During my first run for office, I remember knocking on a door in Sidney, a small town southeast of Champaign, and introducing myself. Before I could finish my pitch, the man interrupted and asked me if I had children. I replied that I did not.

"Then I won't be voting for you," he replied.

I tried to change his mind, pointing out that I was a godfather and had a brother 10 years younger. My mother used to watch kids in our house. I had been around kids and helped care for kids much of my life.

"Unless you have your own, you just don't get it," he replied, and shut the door.

I was shocked and a bit offended. Years later, after my daughter was born, it made a little more sense.



This is the girl who changed my life more than any other.


I vividly remember seeing her for the first time as she took her first breaths. She was beautiful, and it hit me like a two-by-four: I am now responsible for this human for at least the next 18 years, and I'll always be looking out for her as long as I live.

It wasn't long after that I remembered that brief conversation on the man's porch. Having your own children does change you. I see the world differently as a parent.

I don't believe, though, that you must have kids to serve in elected office. I think it is good to have representation in government of people at different stages of life and with different goals and backgrounds.

With Father's Day this coming Sunday, I have been thinking a lot about how fatherhood has changed me and its impact on how I run my office.

When I was younger, I was much more focused on myself and the present. When I was much younger, I had a much higher tolerance for risk. Now, as a parent, I find myself thinking much more about my kids and their future. I take much less risk, not because I am scared for myself, but for what it would mean to my kids to lose their father.



Ella gave me this shirt for Father's Day several years ago. It shows the year that my life changed for the better.

When we make investments in the Illinois Treasurer's Office, we are less concerned about the next quarter than we are about the next quarter century. Too often, it seems like some public officials are just concerned about the next election. I worry about the next generation.

That's why we have put so much effort into our [college savings plans](#). Money saved today doesn't have an immediate impact on our state's economy. But helping more kids get more degrees, enhanced skills, and certifications will help us in the future. Employers look to locate around an educated and trained workforce.

This is also why we set up our [Illinois Secure Choice](#) retirement program. Taking money out of paychecks today can bring a little short-term pain. But setting people up for a retirement with dignity means we will be opening up jobs for future workers, and our seniors will be less reliant on social safety net programs that we all pay for.

Many parents today are helping their children who are living with disabilities, and our [IL ABLE accounts](#) provide a way to continue helping people living with disabilities, even after their parents are gone.


Our [investments in Illinois entrepreneurs](#) don't pay off immediately. Over the last eight years, we have seen great returns in income to the state and jobs created for our citizens from investments we have made. And as these companies continue to grow, they will be hiring more Illinoisans for years to come.

We apply this philosophy throughout all of our programs.

Becoming a father helped me to think less about myself and more long term. I know that it has made me a better person, and I hope that future generations of Illinoisans will have better lives because of it as well.

Sincerely,
Michael

Learn about IL ABLE at Chicago Abilities Expo



abilities
expo
CHICAGO
June 20-22, 2025
Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center


Join us June 20-22 at the [Chicago Abilities Expo](#) to learn how [Illinois ABLE](#) accounts can help people with disabilities and their families achieve greater financial independence while preserving benefits.

Staff from Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs' office will be on hand at Booth #916 to share information about the program. They also will present a workshop on IL ABLE at 11:15 a.m. Saturday, June 21, as part of the Expo.

Funds in an IL ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) savings and investment account can be used for a wide range of expenses that help people living with disabilities to maintain and improve health, quality of life, and independence — expenses such as therapy, education and job training, and even everyday expenses like groceries and rent.

The Chicago Abilities Expo is a consumer show for the disability community, showcasing interactive experiences (such as adaptive rock climbing), speakers and workshops, and hundreds of life-enhancing products and services. The Abilities Expo is free to attend and will take place at the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center, 1551 Thoreau Drive North, in Schaumburg.

THE MAILBAG



Q. I pay my water bill online every month. It is quick, easy, and reliable, and I see your face when I log on to the site. When I received a parking ticket from a neighboring community, I was surprised to find out I had to mail a check to pay it. I thought your office handled electronic payments for all governments. Why can't I pay with my credit card for that other town? —**Anonymous**

A. Thank you for reaching out. We offer the [ePAY](#) payment processing service to all units of local government in the state, but they are not required to use us. Some take advantage of it, some use other providers, and others don't offer any online option.

Our ePAY system is simple for governments to implement and is designed to make paying bills, like a parking ticket, easy. We're here to assist any community officials if they would like to use ePAY or have questions on how to get started. If your local government doesn't use our system and you would like them to, feel free to reach out and let them know that we are happy to work with them, too. [Share](#) the ePAY website for them to learn more.

The Mailbag is your opportunity to ask Treasurer Frerichs about our programs, state government functions, or other Illinois issues that interest you. We can't promise that we will run every question, but we will read them all and try to respond. When you write us, please let us know if we can use your name, or if you'd prefer to be anonymous. You can drop us a line [here](#).

Email Your Questions

Illinois State Treasurer Michael W. Frerichs

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Contact Us

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