



THE PILLAR

The official newsletter of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus and Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation

WINTER 2025

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LETTER FROM OUR NEW JOINT CHAIRWOMAN

**State Sen. Lakesia Collins
(D-5)**

As Joint Chairwoman, I am honored to lead this historic body in the fight for policies that uplift, protect, and empower our people.

Our mission is clear: to build a more just and equitable Illinois...
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A CELEBRATION OF OUR "RELENTLESS POWER"

**The 2025 ILBC
"ENDGAME" Soiree**

Our 2025 Soiree transported the motherland to Springfield! This year's Soiree theme was **ENDGAME: Relentless Power** and when we tell you the room was filled with an energy that will not be forgotten, believe it. Under the leadership of ILBC Joint Chairwoman State Senator Lakesia Collins, Senate Chair Senator Willie Preston, House Chair Representative Justin Slaughter, the evening was full of community, love, and the...*continues on page 17*

WELCOMING ILBC JOINT CHAIRWOMAN, STATE SENATOR LAKESIA COLLINS (D-5)

Joint Chairwoman Senator Collins' vision for building a more just and equitable Illinois.

The Illinois Legislative Black Caucus (ILBC) stands as a pillar of advocacy and progress, dedicated to ensuring that Black communities across our state have the resources and opportunities necessary to thrive. As Joint Chairwoman, I am honored to lead this historic body in the fight for policies that uplift, protect, and empower our people.

We know that when Black communities prosper, our entire state benefits.

Our mission is clear: to build a more just and equitable Illinois. This means **expanding economic opportunities, improving access to quality education, advocating for healthcare equity, and ensuring fairness in our criminal justice system.** We know that when Black communities prosper, our entire state benefits.

Equity in education is not just a goal—it is a necessity. Every child in Illinois deserves a strong foundation and the tools to reach their full potential. We will work to **eliminate barriers** to academic success and ensure that our schools are equipped to support the next generation of leaders.

At the core of our efforts is a commitment to social justice.

Economic justice is central to our work. We are committed to fostering an environment where Black businesses can flourish, workers have access to good-paying jobs, and families can build generational wealth. By investing in entrepreneurship, workforce development, and equitable economic policies, we can **create pathways to lasting financial stability.**

At the core of our efforts is a commitment to social justice. We will continue pushing for **reforms that address systemic inequalities, protect civil rights, and create opportunities** for those who have been historically marginalized. Our communities deserve fairness, dignity, and a government that works for them.

The work ahead is not easy, but **together, we are powerful.** The ILBC will continue to be a force for change, using our collective strength to break down barriers and build a future that reflects the values of equity, opportunity, and justice for all. ►



In Solidarity,

Sen. Lakesia Collins
5th District
Joint Chairwoman
Illinois Legislative Black Caucus

THE NEXT ERA OF LEADERSHIP IN THE ILBC

On January 8th, we celebrated the swearing in of the 104th General Assembly.

WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS



Dr. Mike Crawford (IL-31) & Lisa Davis (IL-32) won their recent 2024 general election to become the State Representatives of Illinois District 31 and Illinois District 32. Dr. Crawford has decades of experience in the education space, most recently serving as the Dean of The Chicago School. Lisa Davis has experience in the public service sector, being a Cook County public defender and AFSCME Union Member. Welcome to the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus, Representative Crawford and Representative Davis! ►

ILBC NEW LEADERSHIP



SEN. LAKESIA COLLINS
ILBC Joint Chairwoman



REP. RITA MAYFIELD
ILBC Joint Vice-Chairwoman



SEN. WILLIE PRESTON
ILBC Senate Chair



REP. JUSTIN SLAUGHTER
ILBC House Chair



SEN. ADRIANE JOHNSON
ILBC Treasurer



REP. KIMBERLY DU BUCLET
ILBC Secretary



REP. WILLIAM "WILL" DAVIS
ILBC Sergeant at Arms

ILBC MEMBERS IN LEADERSHIP

Congratulations to all our ILBC Members who are leaders within their respective chambers.

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LEADER KAM BUCKNER
Speaker Pro-Tempore & Co-Budgeteer



LEADER JEHAN GORDON BOOTH
Assistant Majority Leader



LEADER CAMILLE LILLY
Assistant Majority Leader



LEADER CURTIS J. TARVER II
Assistant Majority Leader



LEADER MAURICE WEST
Assistant Majority Leader



LEADER MARCUS EVANS JR.
Assistant Majority Leader



LEADER NICHOLAS SMITH
Majority Officer & Sergeant at Arms



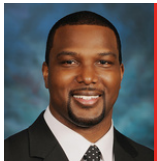
LEADER KIMBERLY LIGHTFORD
Majority Leader



LEADER MATTIE HUNTER
Assistant Majority Leader



LEADER ROBERT PETERS
Majority Caucus Whip



LEADER NAPOLEON HARRIS III
Assistant Majority Leader



LEADER ELGIE SIMS, JR.
Majority Caucus Appropriations Leader

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HIGHLIGHTS THROUGHOUT THE CAUCUS

ILBC Members stepping into new, and returning, positions of leadership.

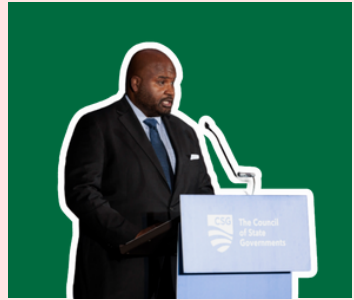
SPEAKER EMANUEL "CHRIS" WELCH RE-ELECTED



Congratulations to **Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch** for being re-elected as Speaker of the **Illinois House of Representatives of the 104th General Assembly**. Speaker Welch was sworn in by his wife, Judge ShawnTe Raines-Welch, as his children were by his side. Speaker Welch continues to blaze the trail of power for Black Illinois as one of the seven Black speakers of the State House's across the United States. ►

SENATOR SIMS ELECTED AS CHAIR OF COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Congratulations to **Leader Sims** for being elected as Chair of **Council of State Governments (CSG)**! The Council of State Governments (CSG) is the nation's largest nonpartisan organization serving all three branches of state elected and appointed officials. The mission of the group is to champion excellence in state government. As chair, Sims is responsible for hosting the CSG national conference – which will be held in Chicago Dec. 9-13, 2025. Sims has chosen to focus on improving civility in our public discourse as his Chair's Initiative for 2025. ►



LEADER EVANS ELECTED PRESIDENT-ELECT OF NCSL



Congratulations to **Leader Evans** for being elected to serve as President-Elect of the **National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)**, then President in August 2025! Its mission is to advance the effectiveness, independence and integrity of legislatures and to foster interstate cooperation and facilitate the exchange of information among legislatures. NCSL also represents legislatures in dealing with the federal government, especially in support of state sovereignty and state flexibility and protection from unfunded federal mandates and unwarranted federal preemption. ►

REP. HARPER ELECTED NATIONAL VP FOR NOBEL WOMEN



Congratulations to **Rep. Harper** for being elected as **National Vice-President for the National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women (NOBEL Women)**! NOBEL Women mission is committed to identifying, educating, cultivating and elevating that next generation of Black women leaders. Since its inception in 2002, the NOBEL Women Leadership Training and Educational Development Institute has achieved national prominence and is heralded as a premiere educational forum that provides leadership, public policy and campaign training to prepare Black women to run for public office, seek board appointments and advance in careers in the public, corporate and community sector. ►

COMMUNITY VOICES

A LETTER FROM LORETTO HOSPITAL'S TESA ANEWISHKI

ILBC Members stepping into new, and returning, positions of leadership.

These treasured institutions of faith, hope and expertise contribute to improved health outcomes in the communities that we serve.

As the CEO of a safety net hospital, I know the importance of safety net care facilities from both a healthcare and economic perspective. Safety net hospitals provide healthcare to people regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. **We treat and save the most vulnerable and most at-risk** in our communities.

These treasured institutions of faith, hope and expertise contribute to improved health outcomes in the communities that we serve. We save the lives of the forgotten, the disinherited and the disadvantaged.

Loretto Hospital resides on the west side of Chicago; a city that is ranked 22 on a global economic scale and is the third largest economy in the United States. We are **pleading with this city**, this state and this nation to reimagine and recognize the critical role of safety net



hospitals and make them a priority in budgetary decisions.

Loretto and many safety net hospitals are the crown jewels in their local communities. **We are the difference in many cases between precious life and premature death.** We provide life sustaining services including emergency care, primary care, and specialty care.

SAFEGUARDING THE SAFETY-NET SYSTEM (CONT.)

By: Tesa Anewishki, President & CEO, Loretto Hospital

We provide **women's health services** to the aunt or the grandmother that never escaped poverty. We treat her diabetes; we screen her for breast cancer, pelvic cancer and remove fibroids. We treat the uncle that has turned to drugs as anesthesia for his pain. **We don't judge** him; we support and treat him. We provide treatment for his substance use disorder and the trauma he has experienced that may have been the original cause. We screen the senior citizen for vision and hearing impairments and colon cancer.

Safety net hospitals stimulate and sustain local economies by serving as a major source of economic activity.

Leadership in all forms must use its collective power and political courage to ensure that safety net hospitals are properly funded so that they can continue to **save lives and provide care** to individuals no matter race, ethnicity or economic status. Investment in safety nets would significantly reduce the strain on federal, state and local budgets by mitigating healthcare costs through more utilization of preventive care services and a reduction in the overuse of unnecessary, expensive emergency services.

In addition to saving lives, safety net hospitals are **powerful economic engines**. Safety net hospitals stimulate and sustain local economies by serving as a major source of economic activity, contributing hundreds of millions of dollars to the local tax base and supporting local retail and commercial businesses.

Oftentimes we are the anchor institutional investors and bridge to economic and employment opportunity in the areas that we reside.

In most cases, safety net hospitals are the largest employer in the community they serve. We employ a significant number of people from the community by **providing jobs in various sectors including healthcare, administration and other support services**.

We believe everyone on our team deserves access to growth and prosperity. In many cases we have contributed to generational transformation through investing in our workforce. Some team members have taken advantage of our professional development and benefit opportunities that have allowed them to be a 'first' in their families; the first to graduate college, the first to become a nurse, the first to buy a car or house, etc.

Currently, safety net hospitals rely on government funding formulas and equipment and facilities that are antiquated and inefficient. In this new age of technological advancement, we must fund and equip safety net hospitals with the ability to build capacity and sustainability. Through transformative investment, safety net hospitals can be the **foundation and cornerstone of hope in a new and improved healthy society**. After all, what good is a safety net, if it is not designed to 'catch'?

Through transformative investment, safety net hospitals can be the foundation and cornerstone of hope.

It is my sincere trust this message be received in the heartfelt spirit it is communicated. ►

THE ILBCF & PROJECT CURE JOIN FORCES

Nearly \$500,000 in medical supplies donated to Accra, Ghana.

In 2023, the ILBCF took a delegation of leaders to Accra, Ghana. The delegation met with several leaders during their visit, including the Mayor of Accra. The Mayor discussed amongst various items the **issue of premature babies dying for lack of access to incubators**. Upon returning to the States, the Foundation contacted local supporters and was able to secure incubators for donation. This led to another partnership with Project CURE.

The ILBCF and Project CURE partnered to send close to half of a million dollars in medical supplies to Accra, Ghana.

Project CURE, founded in 1987, addresses the staggering shortage of medical resources around the world. As of 2025, Project CURE has become the world's largest supplier of donated medical supplies, equipment, and services to doctors and nurses serving the sick and dying in more than **135 countries**.

The ILBCF and Project CURE partnered to send close to half of a million dollars in medical supplies to Accra, Ghana. We are proud to report that this 2-year project has finally culminated in

Project CURE has become the world's largest supplier of donated medical supplies, equipment

the delivery of those medical supplies to **Mamprobi Hospital in Ghana**. The Foundation was extremely proud to be part of this impactful work to hopefully save the next generation. ►



Ghana Medical Supplies



Ghana Project Cure Group Photo



ILBCF Leaders Meet with Hon. Elizabeth K. T. Sackey, Mayor of Accra

BRINGING IN THE NEW YEAR, TOGETHER

Leaders from every level of Illinois government gather for an All Black Affair.

The Illinois Legislative Black Caucus started the New Year right at The Red Door as ILBC Members and Black community leaders gathered to enjoy classic sounds and pay tribute to legendary artists that shaped America's cultural landscape. Attendees were legends in their own right as they belted karaoke beats to the tune of Michael Jackson, Prince and other Black musical powerhouses. Special guests from the night included **Mayor Brandon Johnson, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County Commissioner Tara Stamps, Cook County Clerk Monica Gordon, and ILBC members Sen. Lakesia Collins, Sen. Willie Preston, and Rep. Mike Crawford.** ►



ILBC JOINT INAUGURAL CELEBRATION OF THE 104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (JAN 8, 2025)



To celebrate our continued legacy of Black Power, the ILBC hosted a joint inauguration celebration.

On January 8, members of the 104th Illinois General Assembly were officially sworn in Springfield. Including two new members of the ILBC, **Representative Mike Crawford (IL-31)** and **Rep. Lisa Davis (IL-32)**, the ILBC remains 34 members strong! To celebrate our continued legacy to Black Power, the ILBC hosted a joint inauguration celebration at the Wyndham

Springfield after the swearing-in.

Statewide leaders, such as **Governor JB Pritzker, Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton, Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias, Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch**, and constituents of various Illinois communities join to celebrate. ►

REFLECTING ON THE "INFINITE HOPE" POLICY SUMMIT

Leaders from every level of Illinois government gather for an All Black Affair.

The 2024 Infinite Hope Policy Summit & Brunch showed the **collective power of the Black community** from across the Midwest! **Thank you** to our sponsors for helping make this event possible. Nearly 300 attendees, including Nike, filled the Swissotel to engage in 26 informational, inspirational, and powerhouse sessions based on the 4 pillars of the ILBC, which aims to end racism in Illinois. Sessions included critical topics impacting Black people such as maternal health, voting rights & voter apathy, homeownership, the Black Church, Diasporic immigration, and more. Parallel panels for Black Men Only focused on toxic masculinity, male mentorship, and Black Woman Only, a financial empowerment discussion for Black women (with Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton & Chicago Treasurer Melissa Conyers-Erving).



Saturday hosted our second Black Mayor's Roundtable and our Black Elected Officials meeting, where leaders addressed and discussed the challenges facing Black Illinoisans. ►



REFLECTING ON THE "INFINITE HOPE" POLICY SUMMIT

(Cont.)

Saturday also hosted our **Bedazzled "Fearless" Blues Brunch**, with entertainment by powerhouse singer **Simone Green** and a Keynote Address featuring **Illinois House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch**. Speaker Welch brought true power at the conclusion of the Brunch by donating \$50,000 to the ILBCF from **Black Excellence in Bleu**. Black Excellence in Bleu is committed to promoting civic engagement, community outreach, and the advancement of sound fiscal, educational, and economic policies for the common good and welfare of our communities. **Thank you!**



A LIST OF THE 26 PANELS

Pillar 1: Criminal Justice Reform

The Supreme Play
The Choir is Singing, but the Masses are not
How Many More Names in the Wake of Sonya Massey

Pillar 2: Education and Workforce Development

The Labor, The Apprentice, & The Future
Who got the Code?
The World Before
Higher Learning: Education is Life itself

Pillar 3: Economic Access, Equity and Opportunity Pillar

This Road to Equity
Getting to the Coin
All on Board
What's to Eat
The Affordability of The Block

Set the Atmosphere
Who's Playing Games Now?
No More Band-Aids: Repair our Justice System
Power Up
The Promise: Open Doors, Global Floors

Pillar 4: Health Care and Human Service

Unprotected: - The Crisis of HIV/AIDS Among Black Women
Where's my Hospital at?
Get Your Hands off my Uterus, sir

Additional Panel Discussions:

When Black People are too
For Black Men Only (For Brothers Only)
For Black Women Only (Femconomics)
Father Can You Hear Me?
Keynote luncheon - When Fat Meat is Greasy, After the Morning After

ATTENDEE FEEDBACK #1: DR. MILA K. MARSHALL

Chicago News Weekly, Clean Water Advocate - Sierra Club Illinois



"In the 2022 ILBCF Policy Summit, I had the pleasure of sitting on a panel focused on water. There were less than half a dozen people in the audience. At this year's 2024 Infinite Hope Policy Summit, I was inspired to again join the environmental panel (Panel: Set the Atmosphere). This time, the room had over 30 audience members listening on a range of topics that threaten Black health and wealth. As an environmental professional there are times I am unsure if the message of climate change, lead in water and air quality are connecting deeply with our community. This years' policy summit showed the growth in environmental policy priorities and legislative solutions. Thank you Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation." ►

The conversation between panels really drove home the importance of coalition building, sovereignty, and the growing trust that comes from meeting citizens where they're at with resources, dignity, and empathy.

ATTENDEE FEEDBACK #2: JAYNA MCGRUDER

University of Illinois - Urbana Champaign, Student: Major | Political Science

"I enjoyed how the panels showcased the historical space we are in with so many Black people in positions of power and influence, especially being a young organizer building power in my own southside community. Subject matters like education, health and wellness, and criminal justice were not only relevant and purposeful, but intersected in a way that presented transformative avenues between governing and civic engagement. The conversation between panels really drove home the importance of coalition building, sovereignty, and the growing trust that comes from meeting citizens where they're at with resources, dignity, and empathy. This Infinite Hope Policy Summit left me feeling inspired and equipped to continue creating and building as a Black community advocate!" ►



A CELEBRATION OF OUR "RELENTLESS POWER"

The 2025 "ENDGAME"-themed Soiree transported the motherland to Springfield!

2025 SOIREE | ENDGAME: RELENTLESS POWER

Our 2025 Soiree transported the motherland to Springfield! This year's Soiree theme was **ENDGAME: Relentless Power** and when we tell you the room was filled with an energy that will not be forgotten, believe it. Under the leadership of ILBC Joint Chairwoman State Senator Lakesia Collins, Senate Chair Senator Willie Preston, House Chair Representative Justin Slaughter, the evening was full of community, love, and the **POWER** to continue to **LIFT EVERY VOICE** for **EQUITY**.

The evening was full of community, love, and the POWER to continue to LIFT EVERY VOICE for EQUITY.



The 34 members of the ILBC with their collective Superpowers stood poised as they welcomed words from **Governor JB Pritzker**, **Senate President Don Harmon**, **Former members Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton** and **Attorney General Kwame Raoul**, along with their own member

Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch, the first African American Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives. From the Muntu Dance Troop, to Theresa tha SONGBIRD, Dr. Sandra LeConte, State Representative Maurice West and the DJs Gucci Roxx, Q. Mac, Pharris, and King Farley - a time was had.

It was also a time to honor Black Excellence across the state with Award Recipients:

- **(The Newhouse Award)** - The Honorable Congressman **Danny Davis**



2025 SOIREE | ENDGAME: RELENTLESS POWER (CONT.)

- (The Billie Paige Award) - First Lady Iris Reed
- (The Generation Next Award) Ja'mal Green,
- (Younge Award) - The Honorable LaToya N. Greenwood
- (Acknowledgement of Impeccable Service) Mr. Clayton Harris III
 - the First African American Chief of Staff for a Speaker of the House.

It is 2025. We are in the Endgame now. Step into unleashing your Relentless Power. ►



2025 SOIREE FEEDBACK: COMMUNITY LEADER

From Honorable Rep. Arthur Turner Sr.

Established in 2002, the ILBCF was formed to be the civic and philanthropic arm of the Black Caucus. With Caucus members hard at work, fighting for justice in the chambers of the Capitol and alongside constituents in their districts, the ILBCF bolstered the ideals, mission, and change spurred by Black Illinois leadership. Amongst all the hard work, members realized that a critical part of this tireless service was to celebrate the wins! Henceforth, giving birth to the Black History Month Soiree.

The annual ILBCF BHM Soiree is, and has been, a bastion of Black excellence. Over the years it has outgrown its venues, from the original location at the Governor's Mansion to the Abraham Lincoln Museum. This year was the largest event yet, with the ILBCF taking over the Bank of Springfield with 700+ guests in joyous celebration. From kente cloth ties to headdresses dazzling with jewels, attendees showed up and showed out, representing Black beauty and pride across Illinois.

“When my colleagues and I established the Foundation, we imagined a standalone entity that could stand for the values of the Black Caucus – and over 20 years later, traditions like the Soiree are still alive, where we proudly share and celebrate our culture with our colleagues.”



2025 SOIREE FEEDBACK: COMMUNITY MEMBER

From Lakeshia Buckner-Smith

My day in Springfield IL started with attending Governor Pritzker's State of the State address on behalf of not one but two nonprofits in Chicago where I serve as an executive board member of both. My board colleague Nate Winston suggested that I also attend the ILBCF Soiree. As a first time attendee who has known about this annual event for sometime, I wasn't sure what to expect.

**I walked into an event
planned intentionally,
I walked into Black history,
I walked into power.**

The sounds of African drums, in particular, felt like such a deep connection to heritage, serving not only as a call to action but as a reminder of the power and unity that music has always represented within Black communities. The music, accompanied by the comfort and decadence of soul food held space for those things that are uniquely and unapologetically Black.

**Although soul food was born
out of struggle and survival,
this year's theme
"ENDGAME: RELENTLESS
POWER" reminded me that
as a people our elevation is
unlimited and our time to
thrive is now.**

The ILBCF soiree echoed that sentiment throughout the program. It's a rarity to be able to attend this type of event especially during



Black History Month—one that beautifully balances reflection with celebration. Honoring those who are shaping the present and future of Black culture and leadership is such a meaningful way to not only remember history but to also actively participate in the creation of it.

It's wonderful that each honoree was celebrated for their achievements and contributions; their stories truly added even more depth and energy to the atmosphere.

**There's something incredibly powerful
about witnessing those stories being
shared, especially when you're in the
midst of a community that's collectively
uplifting each other.**

After attending this year's soiree, I certainly felt compelled to increase my public facing efforts by taking a more active role in my home State of Illinois to help continue creating change.

This year's Soiree was a profound and moving experience. ►

**Congratulations Illinois
Legislative Black Caucus
Foundation - you delivered
Black excellence.**

SIP & CHEW NIGHTLIFE

24 W Main Belleville IL | M-S | 618.941.9400

JOIN US FOR GREAT FOOD AND GREAT TIMES!



Sip & Chew Nightlife offers delicious food, craft cocktails, thrilling slots, and versatile event hosting. Experience exceptional service and unforgettable moments, all under one roof. **Join us for great food, vibrant entertainment, and memorable fun!** ➤



SITTING DOWN WITH REV AL SAMPSON

A Q&A with Reverend Sampson, ordained by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King

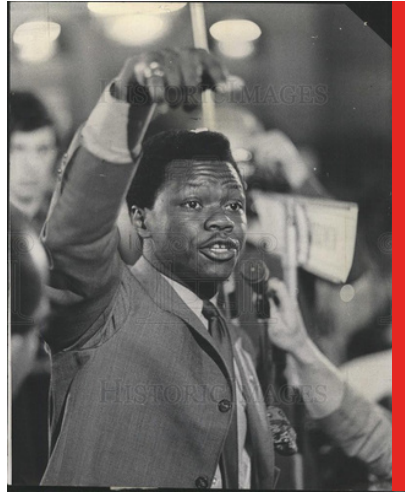
Q: Reverend Dr. Al Sampson, thank you so much for agreeing to share your story with the ILBCF. Can you share a bit about your origin story?

A: Well, over the years I've been many things, but what's most important is that I was called to preach. On my journey of becoming a Minister, I was getting more involved with not just the churches, but the leaders fighting for Civil Rights. Churches were where we organized and spoke to the souls of our people.

As Dr. King was planning to move from Georgia to Chicago to launch the Chicago Freedom Movement, I walked right into his office and told him I'd join him.

When I got to Atlanta, Georgia, I was able to organize with Dr. King for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. As Dr. King was planning to move from Georgia to Chicago to launch the Chicago Freedom Movement, I walked right into his office and told him I'd join him. That my devotion to my calling to preach was as unwavering as my commitment to being his disciple. And that same day, in 1966, at Ebenezer Baptist Church, I became 1 of 3 people ordained by Dr. King himself.

We went ahead to the West Side of Chicago and lived together to draw attention to the poor living conditions in the Black neighborhoods of Chicago, and little did I know, this experience would make Chicago my home.



Q: What did you learn from your time with Dr. King in you all's time together?

A: Two lessons; Legacy and courage. See, Dr. King knew he was going to be assassinated. But he knew his calling and his purpose too. I remember we had a meeting one year before the assassination took our leader's life, and he told us that the FBI made it clear that if he didn't back down, he would be taken out.

But Dr. King had a legacy fueling him and making his purpose clear. He came from a long line of preaching folk, his Daddy was a leader in the National Baptist Convention and his Granddaddy was a leader in the NAACP. He knew that his purpose was tied to his legacy, and that, even under the risk of death, he was still to move

SITTING DOWN WITH REV. AL SAMPSON (CONT.)

forward in purpose versus backward out of fear.

Q: In your years of organizing, what were some impactful moments of youth being civically engaged?

A: Absolutely! In fact, it was a civic engagement program that led to myself and Reverend Jesse Jackson staging some of the first sit-in's.

In North Carolina, Jesse Jackson went to North Carolina A&T and I studied at Shaw University. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was founded on my campus, and there was a "Legislators for a Week" program, where Black and white students alike would propose and debate legislation. Jesse and I were legislators together, and we were passing legislation to desegregate not only lunch counters, but hotels and restaurants too. Wow, it was messing with white folks' heads!

We saw the impact of this legislation, but knew direct action was more clearly attainable, and next thing we knew, we were working together to spur the Civil Rights Movement in North Carolina, organizing alongside the Freedom Riders. That's where we became who we are today.

Q: What lessons did you learn about non-violence in your years organizing?

A: We used to say "it's either non-violence, or non-existence." See, we studied that there were 6 steps to non-violence; Information gathering, education, personal commitment, negotiation, direct action, and reconciliation.

One way we took direct action, for example, was through fasting. "Thou shall not eat."

After we were all jailed for our sit-in's at the lunch counters, we didn't eat any of the prison food. They turned the heat on high, gave us laxatives and all, but we would not eat. It was gruesome conditions, and we were hungry. But see, it was an illicit relationship in those cells. If we ate their food, we were participating in it. However, if we did not, we were shutting that economy down, because they would buy less food, and the machine would halt.

It's important that we think about the systems we are a part of and recognize the power we have to stop them...

It's important that we think about the systems we are a part of and recognize the power we have to stop them, especially in the direct action that we can choose to take.

Q: What advice do you have for the next generation stepping up into leadership?

A: "Your integrity is your highest commodity." Keep your word, write your history, and maintain your integrity. It's worth more than gold. ►



RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS

The ILBC Response to the Governor J.B. Pritzker State of the State & Budget Address

JOINT CHAIRWOMAN OF THE ILBC, STATE SENATOR LAKESIA COLLINS (D-5) RESPONDS

February 19th, 2025

Governor Pritzker's budget proposal outlines important investments in our state, while the Governor has been a great partner in addressing the inequities, I still remain deeply concerned about the issues that continue to hold Black communities back. Budgets are moral documents, and they must reflect the values and priorities of all Illinoisans—especially those who have historically been left behind.

Budgets are moral documents, and they must reflect the values and priorities of all Illinoisans.

As Chairwoman of the Joint Black Caucus (ILBC), I am committed to ensuring that this budget works for our communities. That means we continue to build on the foundation of our 4 Pillars to end systemic racism:

- 1. Education Equity:** We must see greater investments in our schools, ensuring Black students receive the resources and opportunities they deserve to thrive. This includes supporting increased enrollments, expanding university access, for math and STEM education to better equip our students for future success.
- 2. Economic Development:** Our communities contribute significantly to Illinois' economy, yet



we continue to see disparities in funding for workforce development, small business support, and economic opportunity.

- 3. Housing:** We need to prioritize housing initiatives that can create generational wealth for Black families. By making homeownership more accessible, we can break down barriers that have historically kept Black communities from building wealth. Housing programs that create opportunities for long-term stability and ownership are key to closing the wealth gap.
- 4. Public Safety & Violence Prevention:** We need a budget that prioritizes real solutions to the violence plaguing our neighborhoods, including increased investment in community-based violence intervention programs. ➤

CALLING ALL ILLINOIS HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS & COLLEGE STUDENTS!

APPLY FOR THE ILBCF 2025 EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

Growing our \$1.5 million in scholarship support for the next generation of leaders.

Our 2025 ILBCF educational scholarship is open from **March 1-May 31, 2025**. In 2024, we gave 150 scholarships to deserving students. We are proud to continue this tradition. It is through an educated and dedicated populace that we build community with a quality of life all of us would be proud to call home. Communities need education to promote social responsibility. We hope our scholarship recipients will pay it forward through committed efforts in their careers and civic engagement. **To date, we have successfully awarded over \$1,500,000 in scholarship support.**



APPLY NOW

Applications are open through May 31st, 2025.

SCHOLARSHIP LETTER OF GRATITUDE - ANTHONY LOTT

My name is Anthony T. Lott, Jr. and I am very honored to be chosen as an Illinois Legislative **Black Caucus Foundation scholarship recipient**. I sincerely thank you for your generous contributions to furthering my education and career aspirations at Morehouse College. It is inspiring that scholarships like this are available to students like me to **pursue our dreams**. The Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation

Scholarship Award will allow me to **attend my dream school** and gain the necessary knowledge and connections that will further my ambitions to become an educated and effective leader in my community. This scholarship will put me in a position that will allow me to give back to others just as so many have done for me. The ILBCF has been a beacon of hope for many young African Americans who want to pursue **higher education and a career in Law**; one day, I want to do the same for the next generation. I do not take the privilege of receiving scholarships and attending college lightly, especially one as prestigious as Morehouse, being able to do so with financial assistance will alleviate a lot of financial burden on my family. Financial constraints often hinder bright students like me from achieving their life goals. Thanks to this scholarship, I would be put in a position where I'll be able to not only give back to my **family** who has sacrificed so much for me to get to college in the first place, but I'll also be able to give back to my **community** just like the generous donors at the ILBCF. ➤



CLASS OF 2024

ILBC SPONSORED KEY LEGISLATION

Legislation supporting the ILBC's 4 Pillars hits the floor of the 2025 Spring Session

PILLAR 1: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

PILLAR 2: EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



PILLAR 3: ECONOMIC ACCESS, EQUITY, & OPPORTUNITY

PILLAR 4: HEALTH CARE & HUMAN SERVICES

ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 3463

Updates the Juvenile Court Act and requires judges to schedule automatic expungement when a minor's sentence ends or they're sent to the Department of Juvenile Justice. Minors will be notified but don't have to go to court. If not eligible, the court will set a new date.

ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 3771

Removes the residency rule for grant applicants. Starting 2025, exonerated individuals can share unused grant benefits with dependents. Total aid can't exceed the original amount, and exonerated individuals may get priority if funds are limited.

ILLINOIS HOUSE RESOLUTION 942

Affirms the importance of the Minority Teachers of Illinois scholarship in increasing teacher diversity. It urges continued support to grow diversity and improve student outcomes.

ILLINOIS HOUSE BILL 255

The Youth and Young Adult Conservation Education Act creates a program for job training and education while preserving Illinois' natural resources. The Department of Natural Resources will run it with state and federal funding.

ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 462

Changes the Public Higher Education Act and stops public colleges from using an applicant's family connections to alumni or donors as a factor in admissions. Effective immediately.

ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 3807

Raises small business loan limits for minorities, veterans, women, and people with disabilities to \$2 million. Allows refinancing under certain conditions.

ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 3219

Allows the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to offer grants for equipment upgrades at farmer-owned grocery stores or markets, subject to funding.

ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 2442

Stops hospitals from billing uninsured patients if they qualify for free care. If the patient is eligible for insurance, the hospital must help them apply.

ILLINOIS HOUSE BILL 4758

Requires the Department of Children and Family Services to include in its reports the number of youth placed overnight in unauthorized spaces due to lack of proper placement. The report must include details like age, stay length, and reason for the temporary placement. It tracks both the number of youth and episodes. This change takes effect immediately.

ILLINOIS HOUSE BILL 4261

This update makes several changes to task force deadlines and requirements. It extends the reporting deadlines for the Holistic Mental Health Care for Youth in Care Task Force, the Community Land Trust Task Force, and the Alternative Protein Innovation Task Force to 2025. It also adds two police officers to the Task Force on Missing and Murdered Chicago Women. The Illinois Flag Commission and Teacher Performance Assessment Task Force also have revised reporting deadlines. Other changes include adjustments to the Rental Housing Support Program and the State's Attorney's Appellate Prosecutor Act. These updates take effect immediately.

VETO SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

DELTA 8 HEMP BILL

Governor Pritzker pushed for a rushed hemp regulation bill, HB 4293, framing it as a way to ensure consumer safety. It passed the Senate in 2024, but didn't get a vote in the House. Some Democratic Representatives and Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson opposed it, arguing it would favor large marijuana companies and hurt small businesses. Critics also said it wouldn't address issues like online sales or sales to minors. The debate over hemp regulation sparked conversations about racial inequality in marijuana licensing, but these issues were not resolved in the Session. ►

LOOMING BUDGET DEFICIT

Governor Pritzker's projected \$3.2B budget deficit for FY26 dominated the Veto Session, with little formal voting or proposals. Both Republican and Democratic lawmakers focused on the upcoming budget cycle, with 65% of state spending already required for essential services. The main discussion revolved around balancing the budget, through increasing revenue or making cuts. ►

CARBON CAPTURE BILL

Legislation sponsored by Senator Faraci and Representative Ammons to ban carbon capture and sequestration in the Mahomet Aquifer failed to get a vote in the Senate. The Executive Committee did not act on the bill, leaving it unresolved during the 103rd General Assembly. The bill has since been reintroduced, as the threat to the Mahomet Aquifer—vital to nearly a million people in central Illinois—remains a key issue for many lawmakers. ►

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WINTER 2025

EQUALITY IN ACTION

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