



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM

INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

July 21, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Janet Mathis, Executive Director

jmathis@tdccconsult.com

309-945-5621



Edgar Fellows Program welcomes 13th class

Forty-one leaders from across Illinois to meet in Champaign, August 3 through 7

URBANA, IL — In a highly competitive process, forty-one public policy leaders from across Illinois have been selected for the 2025 class of the Edgar Fellows Program. The group will meet for the first time at their Executive Leadership Training Program held August 3 through 7 at the I-Hotel and Conference Center on the University of Illinois (U of I) campus in Urbana-Champaign. The Illinois State Medical Society is the Presenting Sponsor of the 2025 leadership training week.

Established in 2012, the Edgar Fellows Program is a leadership initiative designed by former Illinois Gov. Jim Edgar to inspire respectful collaboration in addressing the state's major challenges. The Fellows selected for the class of 2025 reflect Illinois' political, racial, ethnic, and geographic diversity. They include elected and appointed officials from all levels of government; leaders of non-profit and labor organizations; and individuals who are influencing public policy in the business world.

"Each year, the Edgar Fellows Program brings together a group of leaders with different backgrounds and different politics from across Illinois," Gov. Edgar said. "Though they each have their own unique life experiences, they find out that they have more in common than they have that separates them."

"With each class, it has been gratifying to watch people who were strangers on Sunday become good friends by Thursday. It's what the Edgar Fellows program is all about, finding common ground and respect, so that our Fellows can work together to help shape a better Illinois."

During their time in Champaign, the new Fellows will engage with exceptional leaders and experienced public policy practitioners who are experts in issues that include restorative justice, Illinois' electric capacity, immigration, workforce development, philanthropies, Medicaid, and the state budget. More importantly, they will learn from each other and begin building relationships that will last throughout their careers.

The 2025 class will bring the number of Fellows who are part of the program to more than 500. After completing the initial training seminar, Fellows continue to meet at alumni gatherings designed to increase their knowledge and help build their professional networks. The next time they will have this opportunity to gather is at the Edgar Fellows' annual fundraiser in Chicago on September 9 at the Hyatt Regency. This event is open to the general public. More information about the dinner, including how to sponsor the event or purchase individual tickets can be found at www.edgarfellows.org.

In addition to the Illinois State Medical Society, donors to the Edgar Fellows Program include individuals, corporations, foundations, labor organizations, and others who are interested in promoting competent, ethical and solution-oriented leadership in Illinois. The independent Edgar Fellows 501(c)(3) non-profit board is led by Chair Tom Livingston, Vice President Governmental Affairs of CSX Transportation and a former senior member of the Edgar Administration. A separate advisory board is led by Chair Allen Grosboll, former senior policy advisor to Governor Edgar. Other board and advisory board members are Fellows and long-time supporters of the program who, between them, have decades of experience in Illinois public policy.

Administered and funded through the efforts of the Edgar Fellows 501(c)(3) non-profit, the Edgar Fellows Program was started by Gov. Jim Edgar while a distinguished fellow at the U of I System's Institute of Government and Public Affairs in Urbana.

The Edgar Fellows Class of 2025 is listed below. Photos are available upon request.

- Representative Harry Benton, Plainfield
- Jennifer Bruzan Taylor, Naperville, former Naperville City Council Member
- Representative Mary Beth Canty, Arlington Heights
- Alex Carmona, Peoria, City Council Member
- Courtney Carson, Decatur, Vice President of External Affairs and EnRich at Richland Community College
- Lucy Chang-Evans, Naperville, DuPage County Board Member
- Katherine Coyle, Peoria, District Director for Congressman Darin LaHood
- Ruth Cruz, Chicago, Alderman in 30th Ward
- Rachel Dame, Chicago, Senior Manager, State and Local Government Affairs for American Airlines
- James Dodge, Mayor of Orland Park
- Joseph Duffy, Chicago, Executive Director of Climate Jobs Illinois
- Senator Mary Edly-Allen, Grayslake
- Cynthia Flores, Chicago, Deputy General Counsel and Deputy Chief Compliance Officer in the office of the Governor of Illinois
- Gabriela Garza, Springfield, Director of Government Affairs at Illinois Manufacturers' Association and appointed to Business Enterprise Council of Illinois
- Senator Suzy Glowiak Hilton, Western Springs
- Brett Grimm, Morton, Chairman of Tazewell County Board
- Chris Guy, Maryville, Madison County Board Member and Senior Director of Business Development and Government Affairs at Illinois American Water
- Clayton Harris III, Chicago, Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor to the Illinois Speaker of the House
- Tiffany Hightower, Chicago, Executive Director of Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation
- Senator Darby Hills, Barrington Hills
- Nicholas Klitzing, Winnetka, Partner and Co-Founder of Validus, former White House intern, and former Executive Director of Illinois Republican Party
- Timmy Knudsen, Chicago, Alderman in 43rd Ward
- Maria Virginia Martinez, Chicago, Senior Government Relations Director at Point of Difference Strategies at Croke Fairchild Duarte & Beres law firm
- Melissa Neddermeyer, Mayor of Willow Springs
- Christina Neitzke-Troike, Mayor of Homer Glen
- Anthony Ortiz, Elgin, City Council Member At-Large and Director of Operations for Kane County's State's Attorney's office
- David Pileski, Mayor of Roselle, and Senior Manager of Purchasing Operations and Automation Technology Solutions at W. W. Grainger
- Tyler Power, Milan, Director of Government Relations for Hy-Vee, Inc.
- Matthew Prochaska, Oswego, Clerk of the Circuit Court in Kendall County
- Dulce Quintero, Chicago, Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services
- Mark Revis, Plainfield, Will County Board Member
- Lou Sandoval, Chicago, President and CEO of Illinois Chamber of Commerce
- Representative Brandun Schweizer, Danville
- Danielle Stanley, Chicago, Senior Government Affairs Manager for Partnership for College Completion
- Representative Nabeela Syed, Palatine
- Tricia Teague, Danville, Alderman
- Vanessa Uribe, Chicago, Senior Advisor, Operational Strategy for The Chicago Community Trust
- Amanda Vinicky, Chicago, Director of Communications at Intersect Illinois
- Senator Craig Wilcox, Woodstock
- DeShawn Williams, Mayor of Urbana
- Brad Wilson, Benton, Franklin County Board Member and President of District 47 School Board

About the University of Illinois System's Institute of Government and Public Affairs

Since 1947, the Institute of Government and Public Affairs (IGPA) has connected scholars across the University of Illinois System with legislators, civil servants, and key decision-makers in Springfield, throughout the Land of Lincoln, and beyond. As the only U of I System-level institute dedicated to policy engagement, we connect world-class research with the needs of the state and the nation—and we support policymakers in pursuing research-driven solutions.