



Treasurer's Note

**Fighting for You**

Sometimes the most significant battles never make the headlines. Such is the case with a little-known bankruptcy filing in New York, Manhattan, to be specific. Home of Wall Street.

Inside a quiet federal bankruptcy courtroom, attorneys for the king of sub-prime mortgage lenders—Ditech—tried to keep more than \$500,000 that belonged to Illinois taxpayers and instead use the money to pay the bankruptcy bills.

Ditech tried to keep money it should have returned to people chasing their American dream. Hard working families relied upon Ditech's promises when they pursued initial home loans or mortgage refinancing. They did not expect Ditech would keep their money. They did not believe their trust in the company would be so easily discarded.

It's not that Ditech's attorneys argued that Illinois taxpayers didn't deserve the money. Rather, they argued, the specific Illinois taxpayers could not be found. As a result, their money should be used to pay other bills.

I could not believe it. Ditech actually argued that someone else's money should be used to pay its own, neglected bills. It defies common sense.

So, we fought. We argued that the Illinois State Treasurer's Office is supremely capable to return money to its owners. We explained that our unclaimed property program, also known as I-Cash, is among the best in the country. Since becoming treasurer, we have returned a record-shattering \$1.5 billion to 1 million people. We advise other states on how to make their program better.

(Do we have money for you? Search [our I-Cash site](#).)

Unclaimed property refers to money or accounts within financial institutions or companies in which there has been no activity for several years. Unclaimed property includes forgotten bank accounts, unpaid life insurance benefits, the contents of safe deposit boxes, and other items. Unclaimed property is based on a principle as old as the ages: If it is not yours, you must give it back.

This is a significant, precedent-setting case. We are working with 13 other states and the District of Columbia to make sure that this does not happen again.

We have to stand together and fight for each other. That is what we did in this bankruptcy case, in Manhattan, against Wall Street lawyers who wanted to use your money to pay their bills.

We must stand with each other, especially when the news doesn't make the headlines.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Frerichs

Illinois State Treasurer

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"Treasurer Frerichs has helped me quickly recover and return hundreds of thousands of dollars to my nonprofit clients. As an attorney, I've worked with many government agencies, and I've never worked with anyone more helpful than Mike Frerichs and his team." — Dawn Moody, Keough & Moody



## Illinois Secure Choice Retirement Savings Program

Free Seminar Monday, Sept. 26

**Learn More about Secure Choice**

**Secure Choice** is a retirement savings vehicle that travels with the worker. Illinois lawmakers created Secure Choice to combat the retirement savings crisis gripping the nation. Employers who have been in business for at least two years and had 16 or more Illinois-based employees in 2021 must offer their own retirement plan or participate in Secure Choice.

Employers can learn more about the program through an Employer Overview webinar at noon on Monday, Sept. 26. The webinar highlights how Secure Choice makes saving for retirement easier and what employers need to know. You can [register](#) for the webinar now.

Through Secure Choice, workers save a portion of their paycheck into their own Individual Retirement Account (IRA). Workers control the account. Employers facilitating the program pay no fees and have no fiduciary liability.

Secure Choice is overseen by a seven-member public board and administered by a private financial services firm. Participant investments are managed by professional investment managers.

Since Illinois Secure Choice launched in 2018, more than 108,000 Illinois workers have saved more than \$92 million for their retirement. More than 7,000 employers have registered for the program, and there are participating employers in every county in Illinois.



FAFSA

**Paying for College**

October is a great month. It offers the chance to enjoy the fall, caramel apples, Halloween and FAFSA.

Wait... FAFSA?

FAFSA stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid. After opening a 529 Bright Start account when your child was young, FAFSA is the next most important step to pay for college. The application window begins Oct. 1.

You can begin the FAFSA journey at the U.S. Department of Education's [Federal Student Aid site](#). Many high schools offer free seminars to guide families through the process. Once the information is completed, families can electronically send the FAFSA application to colleges across the country.

Most colleges require the application as part of their financial aid requests and use the information to offer additional financial support or scholarships, regardless of need. Parents and children have separate accounts so personal financial information is not needlessly shared.

An adult's most recent tax returns are automatically available. Total value of assets and investments also will be needed. The value of your 529 plan also is considered, but at a significantly discounted rate.

Not considered: the value of your home.

Once completed, each family will understand how much federal financial aid will be available. This determination is based on need, and it will not cover the entire cost of college.

Inspired by this [column](#) from Terry Savage, a nationally recognized expert on personal finance.



National Preparedness Month

**Build an Emergency Kit**

Emergencies happen. The best way to weather an emergency is to have a plan. September is National Preparedness Month and an excellent reminder to plan and have an emergency kit.

First, build your plan with your family in mind. Make sure to communicate the plan with your family. Start with the basics. For example, should there be an emergency at your home, such as a fire, make sure your family knows the best way to escape and pick a gathering space, such as a neighbor's home or the tree across the street, so you know everyone is safe.

Also, build an emergency kit and have it ready to go.

Some elements seem obvious, such as water and non-perishable food. Other items are so common that they often are overlooked, such as prescription medicine, personal care supplies such as contact lens solution, and money. Don't forget a flashlight with extra batteries, a cell phone charger, hand sanitizer and a waterproof bag or container.

For further guidance and examples, check out these resources from the State of Illinois: a [family communications plan](#) and an [emergency supply checklist](#).

**Did You Know?**

Illinois' 529 Bright Start college savings program is one of the best in the nation, according to independent analyst Morningstar.

Bright Start went from worst-to-best. As a result:

- Grew funded plans from 387,000 valued at \$7 billion to 824,000 valued at \$16 billion.
- Cut fees to save families more than \$100 million.
- Worked to expand the list of trade schools that accept these college savings funds.
- Independent analyst Morningstar has rated our plans among the best in the country five consecutive years.

Do you need information on saving for college or trade school? Our [website](#) can help.

If you would like to contact the Office of the Illinois State Treasurer, please visit our [Contact Us](#) page.

To modify your e-mail options or opt out of receiving the Office of the Illinois State Treasurer's electronic communications, please [click here](#).

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