



Illinois State Treasurer

**MICHAEL FRERICHS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 24, 2026

## **Treasurer Michael Frerichs Opens 2026 Cream of the Crop Photography Contest for Young Illinois Residents**

*Top Winners Will Receive \$1,000 Bright Start College Savings Scholarships*

### **Key Points:**

- Young people ages 8 to 18 are eligible for the photo contest, which focuses on Illinois agriculture.
- First-, second-, and third-place winners in each of three age categories will receive Bright Start scholarships of up to \$1,000.
- Entry deadline is June 12, 2026.

Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs is calling on young Illinois photographers to submit their agriculture-related photos for the 2026 *Cream of the Crop Photography Contest*. Winners in three different age categories will be awarded Bright Start college savings account scholarships ranging from \$250 to \$1,000.

The contest entry deadline is **June 12, 2026**. The competition, now in its 14<sup>th</sup> year, provides students ages 8 to 18 with a creative opportunity to share their vision of agriculture in our state.

“I enjoy hosting this contest each year because it inspires students to go out and explore the beauty of Illinois agriculture while also displaying their creative talents,” Frerichs said. “Illinois is home to skilled and dedicated farmers, millions of acres of fertile farmland, and a diverse range of products, all of which make us a leader in the agricultural industry.”

The Treasurer’s Office is now accepting electronic submissions for the *Cream of the Crop Photo Contest* at [this link](#). Each participating student may submit up to two photos by **June 12, 2026**.

A panel of outside judges will choose the top photographs in three age-based categories: ages 8-10, 11-14 and 15-18. Bright Start scholarships of \$1,000, \$500 and \$250 will be awarded to students who place first, second or third in each of the three categories.

**-MORE-**



Illinois State Treasurer  
**MICHAEL FRERICHS**

To read the rules, terms, and legal conditions associated with this contest, go to [this link](#) at the Illinois State Treasurer's Office website or contact Teri Whitfield at 217.900.0075.

Now in its 14<sup>th</sup> year, the photo contest offers Illinois students an opportunity to showcase their most innovative or scenic pictures that depict their vision of agriculture in our state. Nearly 900 students have participated in the contest since it debuted in 2013, and they have submitted almost 1,600 photos.

The *Cream of the Crop Photo Contest* is part of the Illinois State Treasurer's [Ag Invest program](#). Winning photos will be featured in Ag Invest marketing material and next year's Cream of the Crop calendar, as well as at the 2026 Illinois State Fair.

Ag Invest is one of the nation's largest agricultural linked deposit programs, celebrating 43 years in 2026. It helps hundreds of Illinois farmers and agriculture professionals. The Treasurer's Office, through Ag Invest, partners with eligible financial institutions to offer farmers and ag businesses operating lines of credit and long-term, low-interest loans which can be used for operating costs, equipment purchases, construction-related expenses and livestock purchases.

**Media Contacts**

**Eric Krol** 312.814.1252

**Adriana Colindres** 217.558.1920

**-MORE-**



Illinois State Treasurer

**MICHAEL FRERICHS**

### **About the Treasurer**

The Illinois State Treasurer's Office is a powerful economic engine that invests in people to drive prosperity, development and growth throughout the state. As State Treasurer, Michael Frerichs (FRAIR'iks) is the state's Chief Investment and Banking Officer and actively manages approximately \$60 billion. The investments help families pay for college and trade school; workers save for a dignified retirement; and local governments process bill payments more efficiently so they can pass along the savings to taxpayers. The office provides financial institutions with money to loan to farmers, small business owners, and qualified individuals at below-market rates because better jobs create stronger communities. The office operates the state's largest consumer-protection initiative, the missing money ICash program, which has returned a record-breaking \$2.4 billion since Frerichs was elected.

For more news about the State Treasurer's Office, please sign up for our [newsletter](#) and follow Treasurer Frerichs on Instagram at [IL Treasurer](#), Threads [@iltreasurer](#), [LinkedIn](#) and on Facebook at [Invested in You – Treasurer Michael Frerichs](#).

**-END-**