



# OFFICE OF ILLINOIS STATE TREASURER

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## Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs Seeks Additional Help with Operation Purple Heart

*10 Purple Hearts Returned in Unprecedented Mission  
To Honor Soldiers and Bring Closure to Families*

Four Additional Purple Hearts Turned Over for Safekeeping  
Until They Can Be Returned

Video of news conference will be available here:

<https://cms.illinois.gov/agency/media/video/videos.html>

**CHICAGO** - As Memorial Day approaches, Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs is urging people to help with Operation Purple Heart, an unprecedented mission to return Purple Heart medals to their rightful owners.

The military honors were submitted to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office for safekeeping and return as part of the Unclaimed Property program, also known as I-Cash or missing money.

"These medals personify honor, sacrifice, duty. We call today on the citizens of Illinois to help us return these medals into the loving care of their families," Frerichs said.

The Treasurer's Office hopes upcoming remembrances to honor Memorial Day will spark a memory or provide a clue so that these medals can be returned. Frerichs' office has an unparalleled record in returning military honors, especially 10 Purple Heart medals. Four additional medals have been received by the office. (A full list is below and available [online](#).)

"Our ask is simple. If you recognize a name, then reach out to them or their family because maybe we have their Purple Heart," Frerichs said. "You also can reach out to my office through [operationpurpleheart.org](http://operationpurpleheart.org)."

Military medals are among the most difficult items to return because neither the Armed Forces nor the federal government maintains a comprehensive list of awardees.

In an effort to find the rightful owners, the Illinois State Treasurer's Office is releasing additional information that the owners or their relatives might recognize. A thorough vetting of inquiries will occur once an electronic claim is made at [www.illinoistreasurer.gov/icash](http://www.illinoistreasurer.gov/icash).

Each of the Purple Heart medals was inside a bank safe deposit box. Banks determined the safe deposit box was abandoned because the owner(s) of the box had not touched it in several years. As a result, the contents of each safe deposit box were turned over to the State Treasurer's Office.

In most cases, the conflict in which the Purple Heart was awarded, such as World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam or Desert Storm, is unclear or unknown.

The names below are the names associated with the bank safe deposit box and might not be the name of the awardee, unless noted otherwise. The dates below correspond to when the contents of the bank safe deposit box containing the Purple Heart were inventoried at the treasurer's office, not when it was earned or awarded:

#### **Four New Medals To Be Returned:**

**Jerome A. Even** of Park Ridge earned a Purple Heart, possibly during the attack on Pearl Harbor, while serving in the U.S. Army Air Corps. He was discharged from service as a Master Sergeant on June 13, 1945. It is believed he passed away in 2014 and was married to Germaine, who preceded him in death. It is believed the couple banked at First Midwest Bank.

**John Ustasewski**, submitted to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office in 2010. In addition to the Purple Heart, there also is a Bronze Star and a World War II campaign ribbon. It is believed that John lived in Chicago and banked at TCF National Bank in Chicago.

**Nancy Johnston**, submitted to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office in 2021. There also was a Good Conduct medal and an Air Force Medal. Nancy apparently lived in Frankfort and likely banked at Old Plank Trail Community Bank in Frankfort.

**James R. Bennett**, submitted to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office in 2022. It was in a safe deposit box in the name of Ann Bennett, who lived in Oak Lawn and banked with Fifth Third Bank. Also included in the safe deposit box are references to a Susan Bennett.

#### **Existing Medals To Be Returned**

**Robert Cawthon**, submitted to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office Nov. 1, 1992, from 5/3<sup>rd</sup> Bank in Oak Park. There is conflicting information where Robert lived. Information suggests the awardee was in the infantry.

**Raymond Wilson**, submitted to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office Nov. 13, 1995. Raymond lived in Chicago and banked with Chicago Community Bank, which subsequently was sold.

**Lawrence M. Burns**, submitted to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office Nov. 5, 1997. Lawrence lived in Homewood and banked with Advanced Bank in Homewood. Information also suggests a financial relationship with Homewood Federal Savings and Loan. Today, there is information to suggest Mr. Burns chooses to live in a remote area in California.

**Linda K. Moore**, submitted to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office Oct. 17, 2001. Linda lived in Peoria and banked with National City Bank in Peoria, which subsequently was sold. Information suggests a relationship with John L. Moore.

**Bernice Smith**, submitted to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office Nov. 18, 2002. Bernice lived in Oak Park and banked with MB Financial Bank in Oak Park. The bank subsequently was sold.

**David Gorski**, submitted to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office Oct. 30, 2003. David lived in Darien and banked with Hinsbrook Bank & Trust. Contents suggesting a relationship with WWII also were present, although it is difficult to determine if that is when the Purple Heart was earned.

**Vincent G. Tuttle**, submitted to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office Oct. 25, 2018. Vincent lived in Decatur and banked with Busey Bank in Pekin. Information suggests Mr. Tuttle's father, Delbert Gleason Tuttle, is believed to be the Purple Heart recipient. Vincent might be experiencing unsecure housing. Years ago, he frequented House of Miracles Pentecostal Church in Decatur.

**Michelle Steward or Patricia VanHasselaere**, submitted to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office, Oct. 31, 2018. It is believed they lived in Round Lake. A will for Patricia also was in the safe deposit box.

Treasurer Frerichs has successfully reunited 10 Purple Hearts with their owners or family, the most by any administration in Illinois. The Treasurer's Office did so through an internal investigatory process. The office is required by law to try to return unclaimed property no matter how long it takes. Private entities holding abandoned or misplaced property are not compelled to try to identify nor locate the owner.

The Illinois State Treasurer's Office safeguards \$5 billion in unclaimed property. Typically, a bank account, investment product, or contents of a safe deposit box is turned over to the treasurer's office if there is no activity for several years. Unclaimed property is submitted twice each year; financial institutions in the fall and non-financial institutions, such as business associations, utilities and life insurance companies, in the spring.

***Misrepresenting oneself in an effort to recover unclaimed property is a crime, will not be tolerated, and the state treasurer's office will seek prosecution to the fullest extent of the law, especially with regard to military honors.***

### **Returned Purple Hearts and other medals under Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs**

**December 13, 2016 (Springfield) – Korean War** – Returned *Purple Heart and Combat Infantryman Badge* to Barbara Ann Reynolds, daughter of Korean War Veteran Corporal John W. Naylor of Springfield. Cpl. Naylor served in the Army.

**April 5, 2017 (Chicago) – Vietnam** – Returned *Purple Heart, Vietnam Service Medal, and National Defense Medal* to Vietnam Veteran Specialist Harold J. Walker (of Vicksburg, Mississippi, formerly of Chicago). SPC Walker served in the Army (1969-70) in the 23rd Infantry Division.

**May 22, 2017 (Peoria) – World War II** – Returned *Purple Heart* to Constance Barr, daughter of World War II Veteran Corporal Edward H. Dunn of Peoria. Cpl. Dunn served in the Army (1943-45) as part of Battery A of the 808<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion in Europe where he was a Scout (reconnaissance) and Rifle Sharpshooter.

**November 6, 2017 (East St. Louis) – Vietnam** – Returned *Purple Heart* to Tommie Turner, brother-in-law of Vietnam Veteran Specialist Willie G. Riley, formerly of East St. Louis. SPC Riley served in the Army

(1967-69). The medal then was presented to his widow, Lori, and children at Calverton National Cemetery in New York on Veterans Day.

**December 19, 2017 (Springfield) – Vietnam** – Returned Purple Heart to Bertha Richard, niece of Vietnam Veteran Private First-Class Andrew Gust Richard of Elkhart. PFC Richard served in the Marine Corps (1968) in B Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Marines, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Amphibious Force as a Rifleman. He was killed in action (KIA) 6/19/68 (age 21) in Quang Nam Province, South Vietnam at Bac Dong Ban, Go Noi Island while participating in Operation Allen Brook. His tour in Vietnam began on 2/26/68. He is buried at Camp Butler National Cemetery outside of Springfield.

**June 28, 2018 (Chicago) – Vietnam** – Returned Purple Heart to Phyllis Furlough, daughter, and Kenneth Furlough, grandson, of Vietnam Veteran Private First-Class Phillip Allen Morris of Harvey. PFC Morris served in the Army (1964-67) in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, A Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry (when received Purple Heart) as an Armor Crewman and Armor Intelligence Specialist and in the Army Reserves (1967-70). He was wounded in battle on January 13, 1966. PFC Morris passed away in 1997.

**March 11, 2019 (Joliet) – World War II** – Returned Purple Heart to Barbara Martens, niece of First Lieutenant Walter B. Ingledew Jr. The Chicago native enlisted in the Army Air Forces in 1942 and served in the 428<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 474<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group, Ninth Army Air Force as a Fighter Pilot. He was active over Normandy on D-Day and received his Purple Heart after he was killed in action when his plane was shot down over France on August 14, 1944. He was 23 years old.

**October 15, 2021 (Springfield) – World War II** – Returned Purple Heart to family of Vincent Shayer, an Army veteran. After his service, he was a CTA bus driver for 30 years, a member of the Amalgamated Transit Workers Union and member of the American Legion, Edison Park Post #541. He died in 2007 at the age of 87.

**March 5, 2023 (Springfield) – Vietnam** – Returned Purple Heart to children of Army Specialist Kenneth R. Wiest. Specialist Wiest earned the Purple Heart while serving in Vietnam. He died in O'Fallon, Illinois, in 1998 at age 48.

**August 20, 2023 (Elwood, Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery) – World War II** – Returned Purple Heart to daughter of Marine Corps Private First-Class Charles John Alexander. The announcement was made later, on Nov. 6, 2023. The Marseilles, Ill, native was an infantryman during the Mariana and Palau Islands campaign, also known as Operation Forager, in the Pacific Theater during World War II. A bullet ripped through his knee and he walked with a limp for the rest of his life. He returned home, worked for the Illinois Department of Transportation and was a life-long member of the Disabled American Veterans. He died at home in 1988.

### **About Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs**

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 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 I-Cash program, which has returned a record-breaking \$1.9 billion since Frerichs was elected.

For more news about the State Treasurer's Office, please follow Treasurer Frerichs on X (formerly Twitter) at [@ILTreasurer](#), Threads [@iltreasurer](#), Instagram at [ILTreasurer](#), [LinkedIn](#) and on Facebook at [Invested in You – Treasurer Michael Frerichs](#).

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