



Gov. Rauner will begin search for new poet laureate

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SPRINGFIELD – Illinois Poet Laureate Kevin Stein has announced he is stepping away from the position effective Dec. 1, 2017.

“I am grateful for the opportunity to have served as Illinois Poet Laureate,” said Stein, a Caterpillar Professor of English at Bradley University in Peoria. “It has been an honor, as well as a challenge, proffering surprising rewards. The role not only deepened my understanding of poetry’s sustaining gifts but also enriched my appreciation of our state’s diverse citizenry ranging from Chicago to Cairo, Decatur to Moline, and all locales in between.”

Appointed in December 2003, Stein engaged the state’s residents through nearly 250 presentations, poetry readings, school visits and judging activities. One of Stein’s most notable endeavors was the Poetry Now project, in which he presented his work at more than 50 libraries in Illinois and donated funds to these libraries for the purchase of collections written by Illinois poets.

Stein collaborated with Secretary of State Jesse White, the Illinois State Library, and the Center for the Book to fund and cosponsor the Gwendolyn Brooks Emerging Poets Contest for 13 years. Several winners from that contest have since gone on to publish full-length collections of verse. Stein is a teacher and advocate for poetry, as is demonstrated through his time as Illinois Poet Laureate.

Gov. Bruce Rauner will establish a search committee to initiate the laureate selection process. The new Illinois Poet Laureate will be announced in the coming months.