

# Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs Launches Operation Purple Heart

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SPRINGFIELD – Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs today launched Operation Purple Heart, an unprecedented mission to return 11 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, and duty,” Frerichs said. “They belong in the loving care of families rather than hidden inside our cold basement vault.”

The treasurer’s office hopes attention to the upcoming Veterans Day celebrations and tributes 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 the Purple Heart. (A full list is below.)

Military medals are among the most difficult items to return because the name under which the honor was submitted as unclaimed property might not correspond to the name of the honoree. Further, neither the Armed Forces nor the federal government maintains a comprehensive list of awardees. Finally, it is possible that the military honor under which the medal was submitted is not related to the awardee.

In an effort to find the rightful owners, the Illinois State Treasurer's Office is releasing a limited amount of 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).

***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.***

**Last names and last known cities connected to the family that rented the safe deposit box containing the Purple Heart medal:**

Cawthon, Received, Nov. 1, 1992, Portland, Oregon

Wilson, Received, Nov. 13, 1995, Chicago

Burns, Received, Nov. 5, 1997, Homewood

Moore, Received, Oct. 17, 2001, Peoria

Smith, Received, Nov. 18, 2002, Oak Park

Gorski, Received, Oct. 30, 2003, Darien

Tuttle, Received, Oct. 25, 2018, Decatur

Alexander, Received, Oct. 26, 2018, Channahon

Isbell or Shayer, Received, Oct. 31, 2018, Chicago

Steward or VanHasselaere, Received, Oct. 31, 2018, Round Lake

Wiest, Received, Oct. 23, 2019, O'Fallon

“Our ask is simple. If you recognize a name, and you know they lived in the city, then reach out to them because maybe we have their Purple Heart,” Frerichs said.

These honors were secured in a bank safe deposit box and untouched for several years before being submitted to the Illinois State Treasurer's Office. Also, given mergers and acquisitions, it is possible the name of the bank changed throughout the years.

Since 2015, the Illinois State Treasurer's Office has successfully reunited seven Purple Hearts with their owners or heirs. It did so through an internal investigatory process and 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 \$3.5 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 three 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.

### **Returned Purple Hearts and other medals**

**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 Veteran's 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 in 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.

### ***About the Illinois Treasurer***

*As Illinois State Treasurer, Michael Frerichs is the state's Chief Investment and Banking Officer and actively manages approximately \$52 billion. The portfolio includes \$27 billion in state funds, \$16 billion in retirement and college savings plans and \$9 billion on behalf of local and state governments. Frerichs' office protects consumers by safeguarding more than \$3.5 billion in unclaimed property, encouraging savings plans for college or trade school, increasing financial education among all ages, assisting people with disabilities save without losing government benefits, and removing barriers to a secure retirement. The Treasurer's Office predates Illinois incorporation in 1818. Voters in 1848 chose to make it an elected office.*