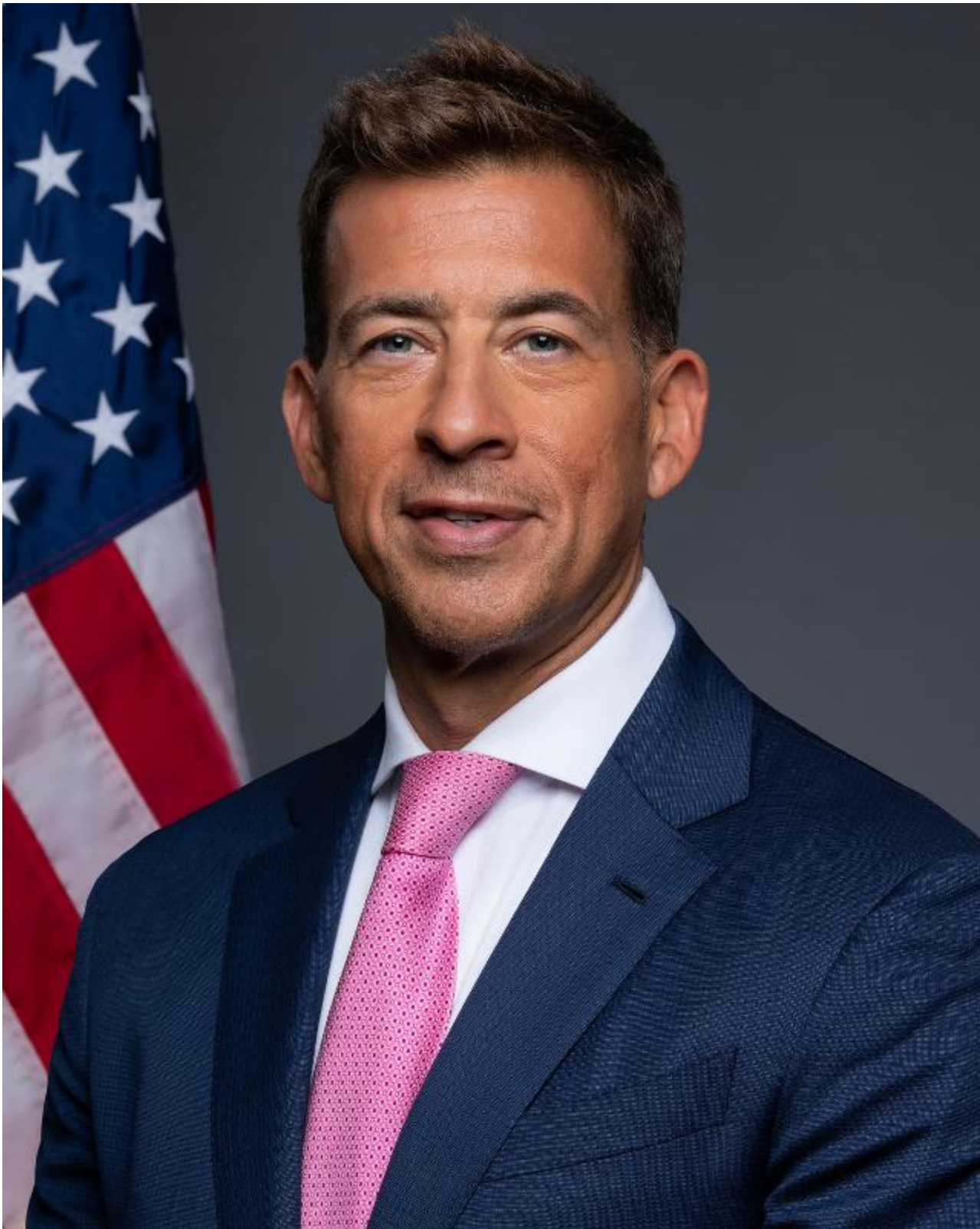




# **Giannoulas Announces \$420,000 in Grants to Support 28 Prison Libraries Program**

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SPRINGFIELD - Secretary of State and State Librarian Alexi Giannoulias is awarding more than \$400,000 to the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) to support 28 prison libraries throughout the state, in a first-of-its-kind partnership.

The funding provides each correctional facility library with \$15,000 to purchase reading materials – such as books, magazines and newspapers – or library supplies. The Secretary had provided grants to IDOC facilities decades ago, but the program was eliminated during the 1980s.

“Access to books, educational materials and informative technology offers individuals the opportunity to empower themselves by acquiring new skills and broadening their horizons,” Giannoulas said. “By giving themselves the opportunity to prepare for a better life, a changed life, outside of the prison system, we’re helping individuals break free from the cycle of recidivism.”

“IDOC is pleased to receive this generous grant from Secretary Giannoulas to expand our library collections with more current reading materials, restore and maintain books, and enhance circulation in facilities across the state,” said IDOC Acting Director Latoya Hughes. “This much-needed funding will allow library staff to improve service to our population and promote access to information and resources that support literacy and education, resulting in more successful community reentry.”

“As a former inmate librarian at Statesville and a current senior teaching fellow at Bard College’s College Behind Bars program in Upstate New York, I fully understand the importance of supporting libraries in our correctional facilities. This cannot be misunderstood nor understated,” said former Congressman Bobby Rush, who approached Giannoulas with the idea to fund the libraries. “The grants distributed by Secretary Giannoulas’ office will make an impact at facilities throughout the state and provide invaluable resources to individuals who view them as a lifeline. I thank Secretary Giannoulas for supporting reentry efforts and positively impacting the lives of countless people.”

“On behalf of Safer Foundation, I extend my sincere gratitude to Illinois Secretary Giannoulas for championing the Right to Read for every Illinoisan,” said Sodiq Williams, Senior Vice President of Reentry Services at Safer Foundation. “Our mission is to advocate for a road to reentry through opportunity, education, and empowerment, ensuring seamless community reintegration. These grants for correctional facility libraries are a crucial step in that direction.”

Following national trends, Illinois correctional facilities libraries have seen diminishing library collection budgets, dropping from \$750,000 budgeted for books in the early 2000s to \$264,000 in 2005. As of 2017, there were no specific state appropriations for reading materials in Illinois correctional facilities.

The Secretary of State's office awarded grants using federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds.

Under Secretary Giannoulas, the office has created and expanded programs to help incarcerated individuals with other invaluable services that include:

Issuing free state identification cards upon release, which are critical to securing housing, employment, education/training, and benefits when reentering society. In 2023, more than 2,000 state identification cards have been issued to individuals released from IDOC facilities.

Dispatching mobile units across Illinois to facilitate Secretary of State Services to correctional facilities.

Partnering with public defenders, administrative hearings officers and judges for reinstatement expos to provide information on how to reinstate driving privileges.