



OFFICE *of the* SECRETARY *of* STATE

Alexi Giannoulas • Secretary of State

October 10, 2024

Giannoulas' Office Accepting John Lewis Youth Leadership Award Nominations *Award Recognizes Illinoisans Championing Late Congressman and Civil Rights Icon*

The Illinois Secretary of State's office is accepting applications for the 2024 John Lewis Youth Leadership Award (JLYLA), Secretary Alexi Giannoulas announced. The award celebrates the efforts of young Illinoisans between the ages of 18 to 25 who have made exceptional civic contributions to their communities.

The John Lewis Leadership Award, established by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), honors the late Congressman John Lewis' impact and extraordinary accomplishments throughout his career. Lewis advocated for civil and voting rights and consistently encouraged young people to actively participate in the democratic process. In his youth, Lewis was integral to the Civil Rights Movement as chairman of the Student Nonviolence Coordinating Committee (SNCC), one of the original 13 Freedom Riders and one of the lead organizers of the March on Washington.

"John Lewis dedicated his life to bringing equality, freedom and justice to everyone and altered the course of history for the better," Giannoulas said. "In partnership with the National Association of Secretaries of State, I could not be more excited to recognize a young Illinoisan who has been inspired to carry on the mission and legacy of this iconic freedom fighter."

Dasha Pates, last year's inaugural recipient, earned the award through her work improving access to legal services in Kane County. Working with JusticeCorps, she provided disenfranchised residents of Kane County with legal information and procedural guidance at the Kane County Law Library & Self-Help Legal Center.

"Receiving the inaugural John Lewis Youth Leadership Award has been a life-changing experience for me," Pates said.

The influence of the John Lewis Youth Leadership Award extends far beyond the recipients themselves. The award inspires other young individuals to get involved and make a difference in their communities by acknowledging and celebrating youth activism. It also sends a powerful message that age is not a barrier to creating change and that every voice matters in shaping the future of America.

Any member of the public can nominate a young Illinois leader, whether they are a student, coworker, neighbor, parent, fellow volunteer or community member.

Interested applicants or nominators can access the application at www.ilsos.gov/JohnLewisAward.

Application Process

1. A successful applicant to Illinois' JLYLA process must include:
 - a. **Nominator Form:** The Nominator Form must be completed by an adult who can speak with knowledge regarding the nominee's social justice work.
 - b. **Nominee Form:** The nominee must complete the Nominee Form, explaining in their own words the social justice work they have conducted.
 - c. **Exhibits:** At least two and up to 10 exhibits must be attached to showcase the nominee's social justice work. Exhibits can include photos, posters, data analytics, support letters and any other material substantiating the nominee's work.
2. All applications, including both forms and exhibits, must be submitted electronically to jlyouthaward@ilsos.gov by Monday, Nov. 11, 2024, at 5 p.m.
3. Nominees must be Illinois residents between the ages of 18 and 25 as of Monday, Nov. 11, 2024.
4. The winner will be announced at a ceremony hosted by Secretary Giannoulis in December.
5. Successful nominees will demonstrate committed advocacy efforts in support of civil and human rights, such as the right to vote, fair access to resources and opportunities, and freedom from discrimination and prejudice. Nominees must demonstrate empathy, the ability to influence others and the courage to confront challenges. Successful nominees will showcase work that increases awareness of social problems while identifying and promoting solutions.

For questions regarding the 2024 ILSOS John Lewis Youth Leadership Award, please email jlyouthaward@ilsos.gov or call (312) 814-1148.

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