

Will County Speaker Winfrey Aims for NACo Leadership Role

Will County Board Speaker Denise Winfrey is in the running for 2nd Vice President of the National Association of Counties (NACo) and is seeking the support of Illinois county officials. As 2nd Vice president, Winfrey would be in line to become the president of NACo in 2022. If elected, Winfrey would be one of three NACo presidents to come out of Illinois and would be only the second woman of color to ever hold the position.

"I am honored to be running for this prestigious post of our national governing organization," Winfrey said. "But most importantly, this position will shine a spotlight on Illinois and all of the wonderful things that our diverse counties embody. As a life-long resident of Illinois, it is my goal to showcase all of the economic, cultural, and historic amenities that our state has to offer from Alexander County to Jo Daviess County and everywhere in-between."

Winfrey has been an active member of NACo since 2009 and has served in multiple leadership roles during that time, including serving as a NACo Ambassador, Vice Chair of Community Economic and Workforce Development, and a member of the Healthy Counties Advisory Committee, among other roles. Winfrey was also a leading champion for the creation of the Illinois State Association of Counties (ISACO).

DuPage County Board Member and ISACO Vice-President Jim Healy said Winfrey's election to the national post would bring benefits to the entire state of Illinois. "I cannot think of a more qualified and better equipped leader than Denise Winfrey to hold a leadership position at NACo," Healy said.

At their December 2019 meeting, the Will County Board passed a resolution

unanimously endorsing Speaker Denise Winfrey for the position as NACo 2nd Vice President. Will County is a unique microcosm of Illinois in that the county is comprised of both sparsely populated rural areas and densely populated urban areas. Winfrey says Will County's diversity helps her understand the importance of inclusion.

"Everyone needs a seat at the table," said Winfrey. "My platform is one of inclusion because every voice counts regardless of whether someone is from a rural, suburban or urban area and without regard to their racial and ethnic background or religious belief. Everyone's input is valuable to creating vibrant communities throughout our state." Speaker Winfrey's conviction about inclusiveness is also a core theme for ISACO.

As 2nd Vice President, Winfrey would be eligible to host a NACo Board Meeting in Will County, with possible events in other surrounding counties. This is an opportunity to change the narrative that people hear about Illinois.

"Illinois is a great state full of wonderful, diverse people, and lots of great opportunities for recreation and business," said Winfrey.

With a population of over 700,000 residents, Will County is the fourth largest county in Illinois and created nearly 6,000 new jobs in 2019 while generating more than \$2 billion in investments. Will County is also home to the largest inland port in North America and has played a major role in shipping and logistics for nearly two centuries since the completion of the Illinois & Michigan Canal, sections of which have been preserved because of its historical significance.



Denise Winfrey, Will County Board Speaker

"I've come to know Denise Winfrey as a true champion of counties in Illinois," said ISACO Executive Director Joe McCoy. "She understands the unique needs of county government and she knows how to affect the kind of change that can improve economies, which leads to stronger services delivered to constituents."