



NEWS

from the Illinois Senate

State Senator Jacqueline Y. Collins

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Collins top Illinois lawmaker for racial equity

Collins named to the honor roll on the Applied Research Center's 2007-08 legislative report card

SPRINGFIELD, IL – State Senator Jacqueline Y. Collins (D - 16th District) this week received the highest grade among Illinois lawmakers for her work to promote racial equity and close the state's racial divide.

Collins received an 'A' grade in the Applied Research Center's annual report, "Facing Race: Illinois Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity 2007-2008." Her numerical score of 111 was five points higher than that of any other legislator, and 35 points higher than the average score among state senators.

"I am honored to be recognized by the Applied Research Center for my work addressing racial disparities in Illinois," Collins said. "Every citizen, regardless of race, deserves equal access to basic needs such as healthcare, education and affordable housing. As a member of the state senate, it is incumbent upon me to continue the fight for social, economic and political justice for all residents."

The Applied Research Center is a public policy institute advancing racial justice through research, advocacy and journalism. The center's report this year found widening racial gaps in areas such as income, health and education:

- The median net worth of white households is now six times greater than the median net worth of households of color: \$111,750 as compared to \$18,160.
- The state's hourly wage gap between white and Latino workers increased by 21 percent between 1980 and 2005. The gap between white and black workers widened by 143 percent.
- And the health insurance coverage gap between black and white residents grew by 17 percent between 2005 and 2006.

"Illinois' racial divide is deepening and it is going to take above average leadership to work towards solutions," said Josina Morita, senior research associate for the Applied Research Center and author of the report. "While racial disparities are pervasive here, they need not be permanent. Overcoming institutional racism involves restructuring the distribution of rights and resources in this state."

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Collins has already established herself as a leader in the senate on issues of racial equity. She secured desperately needed funds to help combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in minority communities, passed legislation to protect homebuyers seeking subprime loans, and sponsored a bill raising the state's Earned Income Tax Credit for hard-working, low-income families.

This year Collins is working on legislation to provide equitable education funding statewide, increase support for parents of at-risk children, strengthen consumer protections against payday loans and end the practice of steering homebuyers into subprime loans.

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