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State Journal-Register editorial highlights need for stable funding of the Illinois Innocence Project

The capital city's newspaper has strongly endorsed stable, ongoing funding of the Project, following announcement last week of the posthumous exoneration of our client, Grover Thompson. We thank the SJR for recognizing the need for the state of Illinois to invest in our efforts to achieve justice through education, advocacy and system reform. State funding — and the continued generosity of the University of Illinois Springfield and you, our supporters — will ensure we can continue bringing justice to the innocent and wrongfully imprisoned in Illinois.

Editorial excerpt ...

"The Illinois Innocence Project is a jewel for UIS and Illinois. Its work has saved millions for the state. The project estimates that if the 11 people it has helped free had to serve their full prison terms, it would have cost \$16 million, based on the \$44,000 annual cost of housing an inmate. The wrongful imprisonment of those 11 people had already cost taxpayers about \$9.2 million. The IIP has the additional benefit of providing invaluable educational experience for its student workers.

And it accomplishes this without the resources enjoyed by the two other innocence projects in Illinois, which are at private universities that have extensive private funding sources. The IIP relies heavily on federal grants to keep doing its vital work, but grants are not a path to a sustainable program. UIS has graciously provided support where it can, but like all public universities in Illinois, the two-year budget impasse left many demands on its discretionary income. A push last year for \$1.5 million in state funding — with the hope of making it an annual appropriation — was not successful.

With Gov. J.B. Pritzker and Attorney General Kwame Raoul both advocating for criminal justice reform, there is an opportunity to help the IIP continue and expand its vital work. Keeping innocent people out of jail, and working to get justice for those who have been wrongfully imprisoned, should be a priority for anyone who says criminal justice reform is needed in our state.

The Illinois Innocence Project has shown why that is important. Imagine what it could do if it were better funded: Bringing justice to people who were wrongly convicted is hard to quantify with a price tag — but it's undoubtedly an investment society should make."

Full editorial — [Our View: Case highlights the value of justice](#)

**Get your seats for the 12th annual
Defenders of the Innocent Event on March 30!**