

Former Illinois Governor Jim Edgar and John Shaw, director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute, will announce a new annual award that celebrates exceptional leadership in Illinois.

Governor Edgar and Director Shaw will describe the new award in a conversation via Zoom at 10 a.m. Monday November 16. This online program is free and open to the public but registration is required.

The purpose of the Paul Simon-Jim Edgar Prairie State Statesmanship Award is to honor exceptional leadership in Illinois by state and local government officials. The award will go to leaders--statesmen and stateswomen--who display unusual vision, courage, compassion, civility, effectiveness, and bipartisanship in their work for their communities and the state of Illinois.

This annual award will be determined each summer by Governor Edgar and the director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute after conferring with an advisory panel.

The award will be announced at the August meeting of the Edgar Fellows Program. The recipient will be recognized and invited to give remarks at that meeting as well as the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute's annual Youth Government Day in Springfield and the Institute's annual Renewing Illinois Summit in Carbondale.

"This award will show that effective leadership is not a partisan issue. We hope this award can help bridge the partisan divide that is evident across the United States and Illinois. We also hope it will highlight and inspire exceptional public service in Illinois," Edgar said.

"At a time when our nation and our country are sharply polarized and partisan tensions are running high, this award will draw from, and affirm the best traditions of both parties. It will identify exceptional leadership and confirm that statesmanship can be found among Republicans, Democrats, and Independents," Edgar added.

"The Institute is delighted to work with Governor Edgar in creating this important award. It will reflect the significant legacies of Senator Simon and Governor Edgar, both strong and independent leaders determined to advance policies that look to the future," said Shaw, the Institute's director.

Shaw praised Governor Edgar's "highly effective" two terms in office and his important contribution to Illinois in creating the Edgar Fellows Program at the University of Illinois to foster a new generation of visionary and practical leaders in the state.

"When we think of statesmanship we often think of towering figures operating on a global stage. However, statesmanship can occur on smaller stages and without the notice of the media—as mayors craft bold and imaginative plans for their cities and take political risks to bring their dreams to fruition; city planners prepare creative and sound long-term strategies for their communities; and state legislators break from party orthodoxy and political comfort zones and advance proposals to solve problems that will improve the lives of future generations of Illinoisans," Shaw said.