



National Lieutenant Governors Association

CONTACT: Kellie Rittershausen, NLGA Director
859-283-1400 | kritters@nlga.us

Illinois Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton Recognized Nationally as 2024 Winner of the “STEM Spark Award” from the National Lieutenant Governors Association

August 1, 2024, Detroit, Michigan – Illinois Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton was recognized today as the 2024 winner of the “STEM Spark Award,” presented by the National Lieutenant Governors Association (NLGA) in partnership with Sapphire Gas Solutions. The award is presented annually to a lieutenant governor or second-in-command in state government who demonstrates a commitment to support, promote, and/or advance the opportunities for learning or engaging in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in education, skills training, and/or the workforce.



“As the world around us shifts, we have a responsibility to equip our children with the education and resources they will need to navigate increasingly complex challenges. This evolving landscape provides an opportunity to make space at the STEM table for all voices,” said Lieutenant Governor Stratton. “I am honored to receive the STEM Spark Award and grateful to both the NLGA and Sapphire Gas Solutions for recognizing the value of STEM opportunities. Together, we can foster innovation in future generations and empower the dreams of every young mind.”

Under Lt. Governor Stratton’s chairship at NLGA, the STEM pillar of work at NLGA was founded, including a national STEM Scholarship Program for schools and a twice-annually STEM Service Project providing donations to local youth. As lieutenant governor, she has worked to reach communities often deprived of resources with NLGA’s scholarship opportunities, supporting a school-based summer STEM program with a scholarship. Lt. Governor Stratton was a vocal advocate for the creation of the SMASH Illinois consortium, a free three-year STEM-intensive residential college prep program for underrepresented high school students of color. She also heads the #AgConnectsUsAll

initiative to promote the science of agriculture and agricultural STEM education, and has hosted the national Farm Progress days with a focus on burgeoning technologies to improve agricultural practice and science. And, Lt. Governor Stratton chairs the Illinois Riverways Coordinating Council working with STEM leaders to address watershed and water resource concerns and to encourage strategies that protect, restore, and expand critical habitats, soil conservation, and water quality practices.

“Lt. Governor Stratton is a national leader in driving intentionality in increasing diversity in STEM opportunities, and has purposefully and effectively spearheaded efforts across multiple silos to support and promote STEM in Illinois,” said Sam Thigpen, CEO of Sapphire Gas Solutions. “Sapphire is proud to recognize Lt. Governor Stratton with the 2024 STEM Spark Award.”

The award was presented to Lt. Governor Stratton on August 1, 2024, at the NLGA Annual Meeting in Detroit, Michigan.

###