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For immediate release

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3 named Public Officials of the Year:

Senator Tony Munoz, Congressman Darin LaHood, Coroner Richard Jorgensen

The Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police has named three people as its Public Officials of the Year for 2015. They will be honored Wednesday, April 13, during the association's annual legislative reception in Springfield.

The three are: Senator Tony Munoz, D-Chicago; Congressman Darin LaHood, R-Peoria; and Dr. Richard Jorgensen, DuPage County Coroner.

"Our legislative and policy-making activities are important to the safety and well-being of Illinois citizens, and it's great to have outstanding public officials so dedicated to issues of deep concern to us," said Frank Kaminski, ILACP president and chief of police in Park Ridge, Illinois.

Munoz, a former Chicago police officer, has been one of law enforcement's longtime champions in the General Assembly. He has supported many initiatives endorsed by the Illinois chiefs, and he effectively communicates the concerns of police chiefs to other legislators. His understanding not only of law enforcement issues, but also of issues that affect good public policy has allowed him to make informed decisions that benefit all the residents of Illinois.

"Munoz uses his law enforcement background to reach out to discuss public policy issues with those practitioners in the field to get the best solutions, while refraining from kneejerk solutions on public safety issues," said Chief Pat O'Connor of Moraine Valley Community College, who is co-chair of the association's Legislative Committee.

"As a former police officer, I understand the difficulties that law enforcement face, especially in today's world," Munoz said. "It's important that we keep working toward keeping our officers safe as they work to keep our communities safe. I'm committed to supporting our police officers, and I'm grateful for their constant sacrifice."

Congressman LaHood was the state senator from Peoria before winning a vacant congressional seat from that area in 2015. As a state senator, he was a staunch supporter of ILACP and all law enforcement agencies, especially in the Central Illinois area. "His integrity and ethical practices have made him a tremendous ally for officers," said Chief Brian Fengel of Bartonville, a vice president of the association. "Darin has been an advocate for local and state issues, always willing to work for the best outcome." He helped to get several bills for law enforcement passed while serving as senator and has always been willing to make himself available to listen to the needs of law enforcement/public safety.

Dr. Jorgensen, a distinguished retired surgeon who was elected coroner in 2012, has been instrumental in raising awareness about an increase in deaths from heroin overdoses and in promoting overdose prevention tools, including the overdose reversal drug Naloxone, often called by its brand name Narcan. Not long after getting elected, he brought the issue to the DuPage County Board and explained that the deaths ranged in age from 15 to 64 and they included every socioeconomic group and more than 30 villages and towns. DuPage law enforcement agencies began carrying Narcan, and by early 2016, the 100th life had been saved. It's a dubious number because it also points to the heroin problem.

"I was among those encouraging the association to honor Jorgensen this year," said James Kruger, ILACP vice president and chief of police in Oak Brook, Illinois. "We know how important Dr. Jorgensen has been in saving lives in DuPage County, and it turns out DuPage was a leader in the state in promoting the use of Narcan to save victims suffering from a heroin overdose."

Last year's winners of this award from the association were state Representative Kelly Burke, D-Chicago, state Senator David Koehler, D-Peoria, and the late Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka.