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Contact: Man Yee Lee  
(312) 836-5234  
[manyeel@ihda.org](mailto:manyeel@ihda.org)



401 N. Michigan Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60611

312-836-5200 Main  
312-836-5222 TDD

[www.ihda.org](http://www.ihda.org)

# News Release

## IHDA Executive Director DeShana L. Forney receives 2008 “Rising Star” Award

*Endorsement represents Forney’s accomplishments as Governor Blagojevich’s most senior affordable housing official*

**Chicago** – DeShana L. Forney, Executive Director of the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA), was today awarded the 2008 “Rising Star” Award by the Women in Public Finance organization. Forney was honored for the leadership she has demonstrated during her first year as Governor Rod R. Blagojevich’s most senior affordable housing official, using creative financing models to increase affordable housing options for Illinois residents.

Forney accepted the award at a reception Thursday (January 24) in Chicago to honor the 2008 recipients of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Women in Public Finance Founders’ Awards. Women in Public Finance is a non-profit, educational and professional networking organization for women in the public finance industry founded in 1997. The awards recognize individuals whose achievements and leadership, both in the public finance sector and in the community, are both inspiring and impacting the public finance field.

“I am truly honored to accept this prestigious award,” said Forney. “I am proud of what IHDA has accomplished in the past year under the leadership of Gov. Blagojevich and IHDA’s Board of Directors and I look forward to building on these successes in the New Year.”

Selections were made by a committee including several of the Women in Public Finance founders, board members, and past year recipients. The “Rising Star” Award presented to Forney recognizes the achievements of women involved in the public finance industry for up to 10 years whose work demonstrates skill and intelligence for long-term impact in the field.

“DeShana is our rising star - a woman in our field for less than 10 years who is quite literally setting a new standard for all of us to follow. As Executive Director of the Illinois Housing Development Authority, she has made an enormous impact and raised the bar for underwriters, attorneys and other professionals in the housing sector,” said Lois A. Scott, Founder of Women in Public Finance. “Women in Public Finance received many nominations and had a very difficult time selecting just a few people to honor. Over the past 20+ years that the founders have been in this industry, the involvement and contributions of women have grown exponentially.”

The other 2008 award recipients are Sarah Eubanks, Managing Director at Standard & Poor's for "Lifetime Achievement" and Dana Bunting, Vice President at Goldman Sachs & Co. who received the "She's our Hero" Award.

"It's an appropriate time to recognize the achievements of our women leaders in public finance, and to celebrate the advancement women have made in the past decade. All the extraordinary women that were chosen demonstrate professional dedication and excellence in their respective fields, and serve as role models for other women in the industry. The Founders' Awards are significant because they highlight the considerable contributions these three exceptional women have made and makes us proud to be a part of our industry," said Melanie A. J. Shaker, President of Women in Public Finance.

Forney was appointed by IHDA's Board of Directors in January 2007 as Executive Director of the self-supporting public agency to lead Illinois' efforts to finance the creation and preservation of affordable housing for the state's low- and moderate-income residents. She is responsible for ensuring that IHDA targets its resources to finance quality affordable housing programs and developments as highlighted in the Governor's annual Comprehensive Housing Plan, which serve as a road map for how to leverage and expend housing dollars.

Among her achievements in 2007, Forney was responsible for the statewide launch of the G-I Loan for Heroes program to help veterans and active duty personnel afford to become homeowners. The program made Illinois the first state in the nation to provide former and current service men and women a comprehensive, affordable financing package. In September 2007, Illinois received national recognition when the National Council of State Housing Agencies awarded IHDA the "Special Achievement" Award for the G-I Loan for Heroes program.

Also under Forney's direction, IHDA kicked off a series of state-sponsored Homeowner Outreach Days last November to provide homeowners with direct information and education on actions that they can and should take to protect themselves from foreclosure. Homeowners have access to one-on-one loan counseling and workshops about refinancing, foreclosure prevention, legal rights, loss mitigation and credit counseling.

Forney also oversaw the expansion of the state's I-Loan Mortgage Program to provide one more safe and affordable option for low- and moderate-income residents who want to purchase their first home. Starting in September 2007, the I-Loan Mortgage program began offering a safe, 40-year loan at a fixed, below-market interest rate to first-time homebuyers as well as the pre-existing 30-year loan option.

Prior to joining IHDA, Forney served as the Director of Public Safety, overseeing the Illinois Department of Corrections, Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, Illinois State Police, Illinois Criminal Justice Informational Authority, Prisoner Review Board and Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board. In this position Forney was responsible for budgetary, operational, legislative and policy objectives and combined budgets of nearly \$2 billion as well as more than 17,000 employees. Among her accomplishments was creating the new Department of Juvenile Justice.

Forney, a Springfield native, also served as the liaison between the Governor and the Illinois House of Representatives. Prior to this she served on the Issues Development Staff for House Speaker Michael J. Madigan, the Deputy Director for the Democratic Party of Illinois and Coordinator for the Illinois Delegation at the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, California.

Forney holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Howard University in Washington, DC and a Masters of Arts degree in Political Studies from University of Illinois-Springfield. She is a member of Pi Sigma Alpha Honor Society, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Treasurer of Illinois Women's Institute for Leadership and is a member of numerous civic and church organizations.

About the Illinois Housing Development Authority

IHDA ([www.ihda.org](http://www.ihda.org)) is a self-supporting state agency that finances the creation and the preservation of affordable housing across Illinois. Since its creation in 1967, IHDA has allocated more than \$9 billion and financed more than 196,000 housing units, including 183,000 affordable units across the state. IHDA accomplishes its mission through a number of federal and state funding sources including the Illinois Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the Illinois Affordable Housing Tax Credits Fund, the allocation of federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits, and HOME Investment Partnership funds. IHDA is also a bonding authority, and independently sells bonds, based on its own good credit, to finance affordable housing in Illinois.