He was President of the United States. His roots are deep throughout Illinois. Yet, Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States, graduate of Eureka College, born in Tampico, raised in Dixon, a resident of Chicago, Galesburg, and Monmouth, is not recognized in any manner at our State Capitol in Springfield.

People are very surprised that there is no recognition of President Reagan," said State Senator Darin LaHood. “There are a lot of statues and paintings of a lot of people. Ronald Reagan is the only U.S. President born in Illinois, raised in Illinois, educated in Illinois and there is no recognition on the State Capitol grounds.”

Sen. LaHood is leading an effort to change that oversight. A key component is the establishment of the Ronald Reagan Statue Fund through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln. The Fund allows private money to be donated toward building a statue or other recognition for President Reagan.

The goal is to raise $300,000. Reliance on private money instead of subsidies from the state or federal governments follows the philosophies set by President Reagan during his tenure in office.

“We want to do it with private money and not taxpayer money,” Sen. LaHood said. “When people find out we are doing it with private funds, they think it’s a great idea. People are supportive."

The process to erect something on Capitol grounds has begun. A bipartisan letter signed by Sen. LaHood, Sen. Barickman, Sen. Bivins and Sen. Sullivan was formally sent to the Architect of the Capitol, Richard Alsop, in May. The letter underscores the reasons to construct recognition for President Reagan on the Capitol grounds and was the first step in navigating the rules and regulations for consideration of having a statue or other recognition. The four Senators, who all represent areas steeped in Reagan history, also spearheaded the passage of a Senate resolution on the issue.

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“This is a wonderful opportunity to recognize a former president from our home state,” said John Stremsterfer, president and CEO of the Community Foundation. “As we are an apolitical, nonpartisan organization, I could envision us playing a similar role recognizing President Obama someday.”

The group will establish a Ronald Reagan Statue Committee and Advisory Committee. Although Reagan became famous after moving to Hollywood and California, many of the traits he is honored for were developed during his early life and education in Illinois.

“Obviously, the values that people talk about with Ronald Reagan come from his upbringing in Illinois,” LaHood said. “To honor him with a statue on the capitol grounds is appropriate.”