

A Company Town Just Outside of Chicago

By David Larson

The photograph above was shot at an event sponsored by the former National Sewing Machine Company on May 5, 1939. Though the photograph commemorates a celebration, today the image might be viewed more as a remembrance of a day and way of life long past.

Since this photograph was posed, the company has ceased to exist. The Hotel Faust diminished with age from the palace it was once was, the facility evolved from a site where well-heeled travelers vacationed, and corporations hosted lavish ceremonial events in vast ballrooms into a rehabilitation site for the physically handicapped. The world depicted in that 1939 photograph was very different from the world we know today in 2023.

A casual scan of the image discloses much about how corporate America—indeed a major segment of the nation—entertained colleagues in 1939. The collection of people that attended

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National Sewing Machine dinner May 5, 1939 at the Faust Hotel in Rockford

One Year After Madigan's Indictment, Former Speaker's Allies Prepare for Trial

'ComEd Four' set for trial this month while former chief of staff's trial scheduled for August

By Hannah Meisel Capitol News Illinois

One year ago today, former House Speaker Michael Madigan – for decades the most powerful figure in Illinois politics – was indicted on 22 counts of racketeering, bribery, wire fraud and extortion.

The anniversary comes roughly two years after Madigan's fellow Democrats forced him to cede the title of longest-serving speaker of any legislature in U.S. history. His ouster in January 2021 was followed by his resignation from both the House seat he'd held since 1971 and as chair of the state Democratic Party he'd molded in order to further consolidate power.

And a little over a year from now, Madigan is scheduled to stand trial in a case that federal prosecutors have been building for the better part of a decade. Along the way, the wide-ranging probes of Madigan and his associates have nabbed more than a dozen other Democratic politicians, lobbyists and business executives, upending Chicago and Illinois politics.

The man on the other end of the massive criminal probe, U.S. Attorney John Lausch, said Wednesday his last day on the job will be March 11, after signaling his intent to step down in January. Lausch, an appointee of former President Donald Trump, stayed on even after President Joe Biden gained control of the White House at the urging of

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Mendoza Pushes for Law Requiring Greater Deposits in 'Rainy Day' Fund

Highest-ever balance slated to exceed \$1.9 billion by end of fiscal year

By Nika Schoonover Capitol News Illinois

A bill that would trigger automatic payments into the state's so-called "rainy day" fund is heading to the Illinois House for consideration after unanimous passage out of committee this week.

Under House Bill 2515, automatic deposits in the rainy day fund and pension stabilization fund would be triggered if the governor's proposed general revenue estimate exceeds the prior year by at least 4 percent and the state has less than \$3 billion in bills awaiting payment from the General Revenue Fund.

In that case, the law would require 1 percent of budgeted spending to be split between the "rainy day" fund and added payments to the Pension Stabilization Fund.

The "rainy day" fund, officially known as the Budget Stabilization Fund, was created in 2000. It was to serve as a fund reserve to reduce the need for short-term borrowing and future tax increases when revenues slow. Having such a fund reserve would theoretically help the state maintain high credit ratings, address budgetary shortfalls and ensure bills are paid in a timely manner even in tough economic times.

But the fund remained woefully short of a meaningful balance throughout the first two decades of its existence.

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ANALYSIS:

State Revenue Projections Increase Again in Fiscal Year's Final Stretch

\$575 million increase gives Pritzker leeway in budget talks as fears of recession persist

By Jerry Nowicki Capitol News Illinois

With two months to go before the adjournment of Illinois' spring legislative session, Gov. JB Pritzker's state budgeting task may have gotten easier Tuesday.

The Commission on Government Forecasting Accountability increased its revenue estimate for the current fiscal year by \$575 million – yet another positive development in a monthlong streak of revenue growth.

The commission is a bipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers and is staffed by nonpartisan economic analysts.

"You can see in every single month so far this fiscal year we've actually had a gain where we've generated more revenue in this fiscal year compared to the same time a year ago," Eric Noggle, senior revenue analyst for COGFA, said at the commission's Tuesday meeting.

All told, COGFA anticipates revenues for the fiscal year that ends June 30 to exceed original estimates by \$5.5 billion, rising to a record \$51.9 billion.

Much of that surplus has already been appropriated. Lawmakers allocated at least \$3.6 billion supplemental spending package in its January lame duck session, and Pritzker proposed spending another \$490 million by the end of the

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Newly Signed Laws Create Tourism Districts, Criminal Justice Reforms

Pritzker signs measures ahead of second-term budget address

By Nika Schoonover Capitol News Illinois

Gov. J.B. Pritzker on Friday signed 15 bills into law, tackling policy areas from tourism to prison reform and making it easier for people previously convicted of felonies to legally change their name.

The laws passed the General Assembly in their recently concluded lame duck legislative session

in January, and Pritzker's signature came less than a week before his budget address, scheduled for Wednesday at the Capitol.

Tourism districts

House Bill 268, effective immediately, creates a framework for local governments to increase funding for local tourism projects in collaboration with hotels by creating local tourism districts.

Hotels can qualify for these tourism districts if they can shoulder half of the proposed costs. If petitioning hotels are approved, they can charge up to a 5 percent rate per-room per-night that will go toward a fund overseen by a state-certified local tourism bureau.

State Sen. Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, a lead sponsor on the bill, said the law will help create additional resources for tourism promotion, while giving more control to business owners in the state.

"Tourism Improvement Districts put business owners back in the driver's seat to direct marketing spending and spur growth," Feigenholtz said in a statement. "The additional revenues generated by these special districts will be one more tool businesses can use to draw visitors to all corners of the state."

In order to qualify, hotel owners must file a petition outlining a district plan including the boundaries of the proposed district, the length of the proposed term and a brief description of the proposed services and improvements they are requesting. They must also show they can pay more than half of the costs that will be taken on by the district.

The post-pandemic measure is an attempt at spurring economic growth as local communities continue to bounce back from the effects of COVID-19.

"The tourism and hospitality sector is the second-largest employer in Illinois," Feigenholtz said. "Tourism Improvement Districts will enable regions of our state to use this additional tool in an effort to recover from the pandemic and bring visitors back to Illinois."

Felon name changes

House Bill 2542 loosens restrictions for individuals with past felony convictions to change their name.

The new law, which takes effect Jan. 1, 2024, allows individuals convicted of identity theft or those registered under the Sex Offender Registration Act, the Murderer and Violent Offender Against Youth Registration Act or the Arsonist Registration Act to change their name "due to marriage, religious beliefs, status as a victim of trafficking or gender-related identity as defined by the Illinois Human Rights Act."

The law also lifts a requirement that individuals must wait 10 years after sentencing to change their name.

Advocates of the law say it removes barriers for transgender and gender expansive individuals who want to change their name.

"The bill moves Illinois closer to a fair, modern system regarding the ability of transgender and gender expansive individuals, as well as survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence to change their names," Khadine Bennett, advocacy and intergovernmental affairs director at the ACLU of Illinois said in a statement. "Survivors of human trafficking and transgender people too often are at risk simply because they do not have identity documents that align with their authentic selves. This is corrected under the new law."

Judges make the final decision on the outcome of a name change petition. Additionally, if a petitioner's sentence has not been completed, terminated, discharged or pardoned, they are not

allowed to request a name change.

Life sentence for those under 21

House Bill 1064, which takes effect Jan. 1, 2024, changes parole requirements for individuals convicted before they are 21 years old.

Under the new law, if those individuals are sentenced to a term of life in prison, they are eligible for a parole review after serving 40 or more years of their sentence.

Cars and vans as school buses

House Bill 1688, which goes into effect July 1, allows cars, vans and other first division vehicles to operate as school buses with a permit from the secretary of state. First division vehicles are classified as those designed to carry no more than 10 people total, according to the Illinois State Board of Education.

Additionally, by Jan. 1, 2024, the secretary of state and Illinois State Board of Education would be required to create a course for individuals operating these vehicles as school buses.

The course will be offered in conjunction with ISBE and the state's regional superintendents of schools.

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- Michele Brand, 70, Belvidere, February 25
- Hector Cruz Bernal, 71, Harvard, March 3
- Frederick Burtelson, 79, Harvard, February 26
- Pamela German, Belvidere, 77, February 22
- Deannah "Dee" Harhen, 19, Marengo, February 27
- Gladys McCollum, 87, Belvidere, March 4
- George Rose, 86, Belvidere, February 26
- Pearl Schroeder, 96, Harvard, March 3

- Tom Sizemore, 61, Burbank, CA, March 3
- Richard Belzer, 78, Beaulieu-sur-Mer, France, Feb. 19
- Raquel Welch, 82, Los Angeles, February 15

Pritzker Touts \$70 Million Plan for Addressing Teacher Shortage

Grant program targets vacancies in 170 school districts accounting for 80% of vacancies

By Nika Schoonover Capitol News Illinois

Gov. JB Pritzker on Friday highlighted a proposed grant program that would direct \$70 million per year over the next three years to school districts facing the greatest teacher shortages.

The Teacher Pipeline Grant Program, which Pritzker included in his budget proposal to lawmakers, would target vacancies in 170 school districts that account for 80 percent of all unfilled teaching positions in Illinois. The districts would have "maximum flexibility" to decide how the funds are disbursed, according to a news release.

Funds could be used for signing bonuses, housing stipends, down-payment assistance and providing residencies or apprenticeships, among other hiring incentives. Districts may also use the funding to reimburse tuition and fees or to provide teaching supplies, coaching and additional school support.

"The result will be that over 870,000 Illinois students will see an improved teacher-student ratio, a critical factor in classroom success," Gov. Pritzker said at a Friday news conference. "Our collective goals are to make sure we have enough great teachers in every classroom."

The governor touted some of his earlier accomplishments aimed at improving the teaching workforce, including increasing the teacher minimum wage, increasing scholarships and grants for aspiring teachers, and reducing the reinstatement fees for a lapsed educator license.

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REAL JOURNALISM FOR A REAL DEMOCRACY

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Each week, the Journal seeks to present a variety of voices.

Letters. Every attempt will be made to print all letters received with the exception of those that are libelous or obscene. Letters should be signed and include an ID or phone number, so that we can contact the author prior to publication to verify authenticity.

Guest columns. Community leaders are encouraged to submit guest columns consistent with our editorial guidelines for possible inclusion in the Journal.

Opinions. The opinions expressed in the Journal are those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Boone County Journal management or ownership.

Belvidere City Council Briefs

By David Larson

• The city council recognized Ed Gonzales, Police and Fire Commissioner, who is retiring after 22 years of serving on the Commission. Gonzales was originally appointed by Mayor Fred Brereton. In receiving the award for his service, he remarked on how far Belvidere has come in overcoming bigotry and expressed his philosophy that a person's roots are vital to one's life.

• Modify sewer rates - Brent Anderson reported the increase for a residence is, on average 8 cents per day. The last rate increase was in 2011. The average water and sewer bill in Belvidere is \$38.72. The average bill for water and sewer in the region is \$70.08.

• The Metro Paramedics Inc. contract was approved by giving the Mayor authority to execute the contract for services. As of April 1, Metro will provide an umbrella of ambulance services, which were provided by OSF Lifeline until they discontinued ambulance service.

Once service begins, Metro will operate out of the former Fire District 2 building on North State Street.



Revenue

from page 1

fiscal year when presenting his proposal for next year's budget last month.

COGFA's new estimate for the current fiscal year is \$545 million beyond the amount assumed by the Governor's Office of Management and Budget in Pritzker's budget proposal.

Read more: Pritzker's second-term agenda buoyed by ongoing strong revenue expectations

COGFA is also projecting stronger revenues in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2024 than the most recent estimate from GOMB. The \$50.4 billion COGFA estimate marks an increase of \$465 million beyond the revenues the governor proposed.

Noggle noted that COGFA's estimate was higher than GOMB's because the commission had an extra half of January and all of February to factor into its projections. Because base revenue growth remained strong over that span, the commission was able to increase the estimate. That drove up the current year base revenues, which in turn drove up estimates for next fiscal year.

In recent years, lawmakers have directed surpluses to retiring debts early, increasing payments to the state's pension system and to long-term savings. For the upcoming fiscal year, Pritzker has proposed added spending across state government – especially on child care and education – while adding an extra \$200 million to the pension fund.

Read more: Pritzker lays out \$49.6 billion spending plan

Tuesday's update could give the governor

additional breathing room to usher his budget through the General Assembly and – if the past is any guide – potentially increase pension contributions or long-term savings.

Noggle said the expected growth was driven by strong performances in the state's base tax revenue sources – corporate and personal income tax and sales tax driven higher by inflation.

The good revenue news in COGFA's March update was the continuation of a nationwide state revenue boom which the Pew Charitable Trusts predicted last month could be reaching an "inflection point."

Read more: Amid 'unprecedented' prolonged revenue boom, state finds budget breathing room

That report was highlighted by the Illinois Department of Revenue in its testimony to a House committee last week. Pew calculated Illinois' post-2020 revenue growth at 10.8 percent over what it was expected to be based on pre-pandemic trends. That put Illinois at the third-best growth of all states.

Still, IDOR, GOMB and COGFA are all in general agreement that a recession is on the horizon – or at least they are relying on outside economic forecasts that predict such a scenario.

While IDOR's presentation last week noted a recession could occur in the first two quarters of the current calendar year, COGFA and GOMB had a different take.

"So far, we're just not really seeing that looking at our income tax data and our sales tax data and the jobs numbers," COGFA Chief Economist Benjamin Varner said at the Tuesday meeting. "Now, tax receipts obviously probably lag economic activity a little, but so far, we think the slowdown is probably going to be a little later in the year."

COGFA's report noted other factors that could change the state's revenue outlook moving forward. Among them are the possibility of another COVID-19 resurgence, a worsening of the war in Ukraine, and the impacts of inflation and further possible interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve.

But the report also noted that its \$575 million upward revision was "very cautious," based on the fact that final income tax receipts could drastically alter the revenue landscape.

Final payments were "especially strong" in the previous fiscal year due to an influx of capital gains taxes amid a booming stock market. But that pace has slowed, leading to the cautious approach, COGFA said.

"The market conditions have been not as strong in tax year 2022, so we're anticipating final income tax payments to drop during this last quarter of Fiscal Year 2023," Noggle said. "But we still have had strong wages, we've had strong personal income...And so we think that they're going to offset each other a little bit. The question is how much is there going to be a decline in the remainder of Fiscal Year 2023?"

All three fiscal forecasting entities have also agreed on another thing in recent months: forecasting has been difficult in an era marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and unprecedented levels of government stimulus.

"We keep expecting that slowdown's going to happen," Noggle said at the end of the COGFA meeting. "But it just hasn't happened yet."

Jerry Nowicki is the bureau Chief of Capitol News Illinois, a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government that is distributed to more than 400 newspapers statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

Teachers

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Pritzker also made a call to other teachers in surrounding states to move to Illinois.

"We have surrounding states where teachers are paid less than teachers in the state of Illinois and I want to formally invite every teacher in every state surrounding us to jump over the border," Pritzker said, eliciting laughter from the crowd.

He was joined by newly appointed State Superintendent of Education Tony Sanders, a former superintendent for Elgin Area School District U46, the second largest school district in Illinois.

Sanders pointed to Illinois State Board of Education data that shows Illinois schools reported 3,558 unfilled teaching positions as of October 2022.

"These shortages don't just affect students equally. These vacancies are concentrated in bilingual education, special education and STEM," Sanders said. "This is why the teacher pipeline program will target districts with the resources they need to solve locally the challenges they have for recruitment and retention and remove barriers preventing aspiring educators from pursuing a calling to teaching."

In addition to the grant program, ISBE will also spend \$6 million in federal funds to hire a multimedia advertising and marketing firm to create a statewide teacher recruitment campaign.

The governor has spent several recent news conferences publicizing his plans on education issues, including his proposed "Smart Start" program to expand access to preschool and child care throughout the state. In the weeks following his budget address, he visited Springfield, Rockford, East St. Louis, Chicago, Mount Vernon, Chicago, Peoria and Macomb to rally support for the plan.

"When I came into office, the state of Illinois was providing nearly the lowest percentage of school funding for K-12 and P-12," Pritzker said at the Friday news conference. "That was four years ago. But during the last four years, with the General Assembly's help, we've addressed this woeful underfunding of K-12 education with an increase of more than \$1.5 billion from the state of Illinois."

His proposed plan calls for \$250 million to fund the first year of Smart Start and an additional \$350 million aimed at the Evidence Based Funding formula.

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Madigan

from page 4

anyway, according to the grand jury's indictment.

The grand jury's questions of Mapes probed whether McClain "acted as an agent" for Madigan even after he officially retired from his work as a ComEd lobbyist in 2016.

"(Madigan), if he had people do things for him like I did things for him, was — didn't distribute information freely," Mapes told the grand jury, according to the indictment.

The partial transcript included in the indictment detailed the grand jury's line of questioning, particularly several attempts to ask Mapes whether he knew that McClain was working with or on behalf of Madigan in any capacity.

"I'm not aware of any," Mapes said replying to one version of the question. "I'm not aware of that activity. Let's put it that way."

However, according to the feds, Mapes did have direct knowledge that McClain was working on Madigan's behalf, as he was the one fielding calls and emails from McClain with messages for the former speaker.

Prosecutors allege that communication between Mapes and McClain continued even after Mapes resigned from his posts.

Mapes' trial is scheduled for Aug. 7.

Still raising, spending money

Madigan's political vulnerabilities began in earnest a little over five years ago, when former political staffer Alaina Hampton alleged Madigan's organization did nothing to stop repeated sexual harassment from an older, married colleague.

Kevin Quinn — the brother of 13th Ward Ald. Marty Quinn — was quickly fired after Hampton went public with her accusations in early 2018. But federal prosecutors allege that even after Madigan fired Quinn under public pressure, McClain directed the speaker's allies to make sure Quinn found a soft landing.

That soft landing allegedly included monthly checks for Quinn totaling more than \$30,000. At the time, a Madigan spokesperson denied the speaker's involvement, saying: "If a group of people were attempting to help Kevin Quinn, the speaker was not a part of it." But in federal court documents filed last year, a transcript of a phone call between McClain and Madigan indicates the former speaker knew about the payments.

"So, speaker, I put four or five people together that are willing to contribute to help a monthly thing, for the next six months, like I mentioned to you," McClain is quoted as telling Madigan in August of 2018, according to an unsealed search warrant.

In the spring of 2019, McClain, Quinn and another Madigan ally, former Chicago Ald. Mike Zalewski Sr. saw their homes raided by the feds. The Chicago Tribune and WBEZ first reported on those raids that summer, and in November 2019 further Tribune reporting revealed the feds were investigating the checks for Kevin Quinn. The news capped off a fall marked by raids and other federal filings in criminal probes involving other Democratic elected officials.

Even as Madigan's power was becoming a liability for his fellow Democrats in 2019 and

2020, the former speaker kept raising and spending money in the two campaign funds he still controls: Friends of Michael J Madigan and 13th Ward Democratic Org. The latter committee he chairs in his role as 13th Ward Democratic Committeeman, his only remaining role in public life. As elections for that post coincide with presidential primaries, Madigan's term ends next spring.

Since around the time Hampton went public with her allegations in early 2018, former speaker has spent more than \$10 million in legal fees, mostly out of his personal campaign fund. But even in the two years since mostly stepping away from politics, both of Madigan's committees have kept paying a handful of staffers, plus bills and rent for office space in his longtime home base at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture in Chicago's West Lawn neighborhood.

Money keeps flowing in and out of Madigan's campaign coffers, with transfers in from sources including trade unions long loyal to the former speaker, and payments out for items as ordinary as office supplies, as vague as "services" and intriguing as "gifts" from a home décor store in the upscale north suburb of Glenview. In the fourth quarter of last year, the 13th Ward Democratic Org spent more than \$2,100 on ice, according to publicly available campaign finance records.

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Rainy Day

from page 1

Within Comptroller Susana Mendoza's first year in office beginning in December 2016, the rainy day fund's balance dropped to roughly \$69,000 — which she often quipped wouldn't keep state government running for more than 30 seconds. It was a drop from about \$276 million in June 2016 as the funds were used to keep state government functional amid a two-year budget impasse between Democrats in the General Assembly and Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner.

Now Mendoza is the most vocal backer of the bill to require the annual payments to the fund when the state's financial situation allows it.

"This is the right time to move this legislation forward because I just believe that history teaches us that not every governor believes that Illinois shouldn't spend every penny that they bring in," Mendoza said in an interview. "This has been an

administration...who really understand the value of saving and preparing for both the rainy day but also saving money and pension obligations."

The fund's balance is scheduled to reach \$1.9 billion by the end of this fiscal year, but Mendoza said it's not enough when compared with the national average. According to the most recent data from the National Association of State Budget Officers, the average number of days that states currently have in their rainy-day reserves is about 54 days. Illinois' rainy day fund represents roughly 11 days' worth of funds.

Read more: ANALYSIS: Pritzker, Mendoza see record 'rainy day fund' balance as proof of fiscal achievement

"Now, with this legislation, we're making the required payments like we should have," Rep. Stephanie Kifowit, D-Oswego, a lead sponsor on the legislation, said in an interview. "For decades, [payments] didn't happen. They didn't happen in the right amount, they were always shorted."

Current law only requires automatic deposits if the state's general revenue estimates increases by 4 percent or more over the prior year. But that trigger has never been reached and Mendoza said the current system isn't working.

"The language is unclear as to how, when and by whom this number is determined," Mendoza said in committee. "Instead, past deposits into the rainy day fund were results of one-time actions by previous general assemblies."

The legislation also calls for a six-month review from the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability. Mendoza said in committee this could trigger savings if growth exceeds 4 percent in the middle of the fiscal year.

Mendoza advocated for a similar bill last year proposed by then-representative and current state Sen. Michael Halpin, D-Rock Island, but it died in committee. This year, though, the bill has bipartisan support with Republican Minority Leader Rep. Tony McCombie, R-Savanna, acting as a chief co-sponsor on the bill.

Read more: Amid 'unprecedented' prolonged revenue boom, state finds budget breathing room

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FILED JANUARY 6, 2023

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Property Index No. 05-03-326-015.

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This notice is also to advise you that a petition has been filed for a tax deed which will transfer title and the right to possession of this property if redemption is not made on or before June 29, 2023.

This matter is set for hearing in the Circuit Court of this county in Belvidere Illinois on July 18, 2023 at 9:00am at 601 N Main, Belvidere IL 61008 in courtroom #3.

You may be present at this hearing but your right to redeem will already have expired at that time.

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1212 Logan Ave, Suite 103,

Belvidere Illinois 61008

Telephone 815-544-3103

Laura Jo Larke

Purchaser

Dated 2/23/2023

Published In The Boone County Journal March 2, 9, 16

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BETHANY ANNE RITTER
Case No. 2023 MR 15

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Published in the Boone County Journal – 03/02,09,16

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL
BOONE COUNTY

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Plaintiff

-VS-

CASE # 2022-DC-55

ELIAS MAX CORDOVA

Defendant

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Dated: 2/22/2023

Pamela Coduto

Clerk of the Circuit Court

17th Judicial Court

Boone County, Illinois

Published in The Boone County Journal 3/2, 3/9, 3/16 (P)

TAX DEED NO 2023TX4
FILED JANUARY 6, 2023

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County of Boone, Illinois
Date premises Sold October 29, 2020
Certificate No. 2019-00701.
Sold for General Taxes of 2019.

THIS PROPERTY HAS BEEN SOLD FOR DELINQUENT TAXES
Property Located at 1006 Washington St, Belvidere, Illinois 61008
Legal Description 36-44-3 LT 4 BLK 4 AD TURNERS 3RD SUB or
Property Index No. 05-36-256-001.

This notice is to advise you that the above property has been sold for delinquent taxes and that the period of redemption from the sale will expire on June 29, 2023.

The amount to redeem is subject to increase at 6-month intervals from the date of sale and may be further increased if the purchaser at the tax sale or her or his assignee pays any subsequently accruing taxes or special assessments to redeem the property from subsequent forfeitures or tax sales. Check with the county clerk as to the exact amount you owe before redeeming.

The notice is also to advise you that a petition has been filed for a tax deed which will transfer title and the right to possession of this property if redemption is not made on or before June 29, 2023.

This matter is set for hearing in the Circuit Court of this county in Belvidere Illinois on July 18, 2023 at 9:00am at 601 N Main, Belvidere IL 61008 in courtroom #3.

You may be present at this hearing but your right to redeem will already have expired at that time.

YOU ARE URGED TO REDEEM IMMEDIATELY TO PREVENT LOSS OF PROPERTY

Redemption can be made at any time on or before June 29, 2023 by applying to the County Clerk of Boone County Illinois at the Office of the County Clerk in Belvidere Illinois.

For further information contact the County Clerk

ADDRESS: Boone County Clerk's Office

1212 Logan Ave, Suite 103,

Belvidere Illinois 61008

Telephone 815-544-3103

/s/ Laura Jo Larke

Purchaser

Dated 2/23/2023

Published In The Boone County Journal March 2, 9, 16

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

Sealed Proposals for 2023 Mowing Public Works Properties in the City of Belvidere will be received at the office of the City Clerk of the City of Belvidere, 401 Whitney Boulevard, Suite 100, Belvidere, Illinois until 9:00 A.M. local time on Tuesday, March 21, 2023 and will be publicly opened and read at that time.

Specifications and Proposals forms may be obtained, by any qualified bidder, from the Department of Public Works, 401 Whitney Boulevard, Suite 200, Belvidere, Illinois.

All proposals must be accompanied by a bid bond or bank cashier's check for not less than ten (10) percent of the amount of the bid.

The City Council reserves the right to reject any or all Proposals and to waive technicalities.

This was published in The Boone County Journal – 03/09

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

Sealed Proposals for the "2023 Tree Work Program" in the City of Belvidere will be received at the office of the City Clerk of the City of Belvidere, 401 Whitney Boulevard, Suite 100, Belvidere, Illinois until 9:00 A.M. local time on Tuesday, March 21, 2023 and will be publicly opened and read at that time.

Specifications and Proposals forms may be obtained, by any qualified bidder, from the Department of Public Works, 401 Whitney Boulevard, Suite 200, Belvidere, Illinois.

All proposals must be accompanied by a bid bond or bank cashier's check for not less than ten (10) percent of the amount of the bid.

The City Council reserves the right to reject any or all Proposals and to waive technicalities.

This was published in The Boone County Journal – 03/09

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

Sealed Proposals for the 2023 ADA Ramp & 50/50 sidewalk replacement program will be received at the office of the City Clerk of the City of Belvidere, 401 Whitney Boulevard, Suite 100, Belvidere, Illinois until 9:00 A.M. local time on Tuesday, March 21, 2023 and will be publicly opened and read at that time.

Specifications and Proposal forms will be available in the office of the Director of Public Works, 401 Whitney Boulevard, Suite 200, Belvidere, Illinois 61008.

The City Council reserves the right to reject any or all Proposals and to waive technicalities.

All proposals must be accompanied by a bid bond or bank cashier's check for not less than ten (10) percent of the amount of the bid.

This was published in The Boone County Journal – 03/09

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

Sealed Proposals for 2023 Landscape maintenance of various City facilities will be received at the office of the City Clerk of the City of Belvidere, 401 Whitney Boulevard, Suite 100, Belvidere, Illinois until 9:00 A.M. local time on Tuesday, March 21, 2023 and will be publicly opened and read at that time.

Specifications and Proposals forms will be available in the office of the Director of Public Works, 401 Whitney Boulevard, Suite 200, Belvidere, Illinois 61008.

The City Council reserves the right to reject any or all Proposals and to waive technicalities.

All proposals must be accompanied by a bid bond or bank cashier's check for not less than ten (10) percent of the amount of the bid.

This was published in The Boone County Journal – 03/09

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING BOONE COUNTY
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

Notice is hereby given that the Boone County Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, March 28, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the County Board Room, 1212 Logan Ave, Belvidere, IL 61008 upon the following petitions:

The applicant, Joanne Heritsch, 3928 Manchester Road, Poplar Grove is seeking a Special Use Permit pursuant to Section 2.7 (Special Uses) and Section 3.16.1 (Table of Permitted Uses) of the Boone County Zoning Ordinance to allow a kennel, boarding and breeding facility in the A-1 Agriculture District. PIN 01-10-400-005

The applicant, IL Solar 9000 LLC c/o Lightstar Renewables, 502 Boylston St, Boston, MA, is seeking a special use permit in the A-1 Agricultural Preservation District to allow a solar energy development in unincorporated Floral Township, Boone County, IL, pursuant to section 2.7 (Special Use) and Section 3.16.1 (Table of Permitted Uses) of the Boone County Zoning Ordinance. PIN 07-08-400-004

Tony Savino, Chair, Boone County Zoning Board of Appeals

Published in the Boone County Journal on March 9, 2023.

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

SPECIALIZED LOAN SERVICING LLC, Plaintiff,

vs. CASE NO. 2022FC93

MICHAEL J. BRENNAN; WEST GROVE CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION; UNKNOWN HEIRS AND LEGATEES OF PATRICIA BRENNAN; KRISTEN AANERUD; JENNIFER AANERUD; LAURA VANGORKUM A.K.A LAURI VANGORKUM; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS, Defendant(s).
Property Address: 5000 TRILLIUM TRAIL, UNIT 5-B POPLAR GROVE, IL 61065

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

The requisite affidavit for publication having been filed, notice is hereby given you, UNKNOWN HEIRS AND LEGATEES OF PATRICIA BRENNAN; MICHAEL J. BRENNAN; KRISTEN AANERUD; JENNIFER AANERUD; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS ; , defendants in the above entitled cause, that suit has been commenced against you and other defendants in the Circuit Court for the Judicial Circuit by said plaintiff praying for the foreclosure of a certain mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to wit:

UNIT 5B OF WEST GROVE CONDOMINIUMS AS DELINEATED ON A SURVEY OF CERTAIN LOTS OR PART THEREOF IN THE PLAT OF WEST GROVE SUBDIVISION PLAT NO. 1, BEING A SUBDIVISION OF PART OF THE SOUTHWEST QUARTER (1/4) OF THE SOUTHEAST QUARTER (1/4), PART OF THE NORTH HALF (1/2) OF THE SOUTHEAST QUARTER (1/4) AND PART OF THE SOUTHEAST QUARTER (1/4) OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER (1/4) ALL IN SECTION 23, TOWNSHIP 45 NORTH, RANGE 3 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED SEPTEMBER 15, 2004 AS DOCUMENT NO. 2004R10950 IN THE RECORDER'S OFFICE OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS, WHICH SURVEY IS ATTACHED AS EXHIBIT "B" TO THE DECLARATION OF CONDOMINIUM OWNERSHIP RECORDED AS DOCUMENT NO. 05R05475 IN BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS, TOGETHER WITH AN UNDIVIDED PERCENTAGE INTEREST IN THE COMMON ELEMENTS, APPURTENANT TO SAID UNIT, AS SET FORTH IN SAID DECLARATION, AMENDED FROM TIME TO TIME; SITUATED IN THE COUNTY OF BOONE AND STATE OF ILLINOIS.

P.I.N.: 03-23-457-038 NEW; 03-23-455-001 OLD

Said property is commonly known as 5000 TRILLIUM TRAIL, UNIT 5-B, POPLAR GROVE, IL 61065 and which said mortgage(s) was/were made and recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds as Document Number 2006R10666, and for other relief; that Summons was duly issued out of the above Court against you as provided by law and that said suit is now pending.

NOW THEREFORE, unless you, the said above named defendants, file your answer to the complaint in the said suit or otherwise make your

appearance therein, in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at Boone County on or before APRIL 10, 2023, a default may be taken against you at any time after that date and a Judgment entered in accordance with the prayer of said complaint. E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit www.illinoiscourts.gov/FAQ/gethelp.asp.

YOU MAY BE ABLE TO SAVE YOUR HOME – DO NOT IGNORE THIS DOCUMENT. By order of the Chief Judge of the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit, this case is subject to Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program. For further information on the mediation process, please see the NOTICE OF MANDATORY MEDIATION on file with the Clerk of the Circuit Court by contacting the Plaintiff's attorney at the address listed below.

This communication is an attempt to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose.

Diaz Anselmo & Associates, LLC

Attorneys for Plaintiff

1771 West Diehl Road, Suite 120

Naperville, IL 60563

Telephone: (630) 453-6960

Facsimile: (630) 428-4620

Attorney No. Cook 64727, DuPage 293191

Service E-mail: midwestpleadings@dallegal.com

6088-930720

Published in The Boone County Journal March 9, 16, 23

**VILLAGE OF POPLAR GROVE
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
ANNUAL BUDGET ORDINANCE**

Notice is hereby given that the corporate authority of the Village of Poplar Grove, Illinois, will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, March 22, 2023 at 6:45PM on the fiscal year 2024 proposed annual appropriation ordinance for the municipal operating and capital budgets. The Hearing shall take place in the Village Board Room, Poplar Grove Village Hall, 200 N. Hill Street, Poplar Grove, Illinois,

A detailed copy of the fiscal year 2024 proposed budget is accessible for examination by the public during business hours at the office of the Village Clerk, 200 N. Hill Street, Poplar Grove.

Dated this 9th Day of March 2023.

Karri Anderberg, Village Clerk

Village of Poplar Grove

Published in The Boone County Journal March 9

Lawmakers Work to Meet Friday Deadline

Most bills need to pass out of committee by week's end

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

Illinois lawmakers began working through mountains of proposed legislation this week as a Friday deadline approaches for bills to pass out of their original committees.

As of Tuesday, more than 6,500 bills had been introduced in the 2023 session. While many of those bills could miss that deadline, there are multiple ways to work around regular deadlines to pass the substantive language of a bill at a future date.

Below are a few of the bills discussed at the Capitol Tuesday.

Hotel industry

Hotel owners in Illinois said Tuesday they want state lawmakers to pass legislation to protect their front-line workers from the increasingly common threat of verbal abuse from their customers and guests.

That was one part of a legislative agenda that the Illinois Hotel and Lodging Association unveiled as the industry continues efforts to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Unfortunately, we have seen a troubling trend in which service industry workers are facing abuse from customers,” association president and CEO Michael Jacobson said during a news conference. “While this is not unique to the hotel industry, it is important that hotels are able to take necessary steps to keep employees safe and foster a positive working environment.”

Several industries, including hotels, restaurants and airlines, have reported a rise in customer harassment of their employees in recent years. In Chicago, the problem became so bad that in 2018, the city enacted an ordinance requiring hotels to issue panic buttons to hotel housekeeping staff who are assigned to work alone.

The association said it wants legislation that

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Blaine Cemetery Association
Spring Meeting March 19 12:30 pm
Leroy Township Building

Deadline

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would specifically authorize hotels to remove guests or deny them accommodations when they engage in harassing behavior. Jacobson said no such law exists in Illinois today, which he said could put businesses in legal jeopardy if they try to remove someone from their property.

The industry is also asking for relief from a relatively new and growing form of competition – short-term property rental services such as Airbnb and Guesty, which don’t have to charge and remit state bed taxes the way hotels and motels do.

Jacobson said the industry wants the state to require businesses like Airbnb to charge their guests the same 6 percent bed tax – officially known as the Hotel Operators’ Occupation Tax – as hotels do. Revenue from that tax is earmarked for several purposes primarily related to convention and tourism promotion.

Election judges

As local election officials face a critical shortage of election judges, state lawmakers are considering a bill that would offer incentives to college students who agree to work at the polls on Election Day.

House Bill 995 passed unanimously out of the House Ethics and Elections Committee Tuesday. It would require community colleges and public universities to adopt policies for awarding academic credit for election judges, although the bill’s sponsor, Rep. Daniel Didech, D-Buffalo Grove, said it is written to give schools flexibility in what policies they adopt.

Lake County Clerk Anthony Vega, who is supporting the bill, said it’s a way to get more young people involved in the democratic process and instill confidence in the integrity of elections.

“Inadequate staffing at the polls will result in a degrading voter experience that may very well discourage voters from participating in the process and play into the extremist movement which seeks to undermine the integrity of our electoral process,” he said. “The bill is not a golden solution. But it is an added tool for us to be able to recruit and retain election judges across Illinois.”

Vega noted that Illinois already allows high school students to serve as election judges to meet their civics requirement. But he said most other election judges are either retired or professionals whose employers give them the flexibility to take time off for an election.

Since 2020, Vega said, Lake County has operated with 25 to 40 percent fewer election judges than it needs for optimal operation.

Voter registration

The House Ethics and Elections Committee also heard testimony to give the Illinois secretary of state more authority to register voters.

In many other states, the secretary of state is the chief election officer. But in Illinois, that job is assigned to the Illinois State Board of Elections, and the secretary’s role is limited to offering voter registration when people come in for a driver’s license or to conduct other business with the office.

House Bill 3794, sponsored by Rep. Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz, D-Glenview, would remove that restriction and allow secretary to offer voter

registration at any driver services facility or mobile site to any qualified individual without having to perform any other services or transactions. It would also allow the secretary of state to offer voter registration applications through an online website maintained by that office.

The bill provides that the secretary of state’s office would coordinate with the State Board of Elections to attend citizen naturalization ceremonies at each federal district court in Illinois to offer voter registration services there as well.

The committee took no action on the bill. But Chairman Maurice West II, D-Rockford, said it is one of several bills that could be folded into an “omnibus” elections bill later in the session.

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government. It is distributed to more than 400 newspapers statewide, as well as hundreds of radio and TV stations. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

Illinois to Relocate at Least Half of Current Residents at Choate

Officials acknowledged that news reporting had put a spotlight on conditions at facility plagued by abuse, cover-ups

By Beth Hundsdorfer Capitol News Illinois & Molly Parker Lee Enterprises Midwest

This article was produced for ProPublica’s Local Reporting Network in partnership with Lee Enterprises, along with Capitol News Illinois.

The Illinois Department of Human Services plans to dramatically reduce the number of patients with developmental disabilities who live at the embattled state-run Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center.

In an exclusive interview before an expected Wednesday announcement, IDHS Secretary Grace Hou outlined a “repurposing and restructuring” of Choate, located in rural Anna, about 120 miles southeast of St. Louis. That process will start with the relocation of 123 residents with developmental disabilities who entered the facility voluntarily — roughly half the current population.

In a separate interview with reporters, Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker said that IDHS has been working on improvements at Choate since he first took office in January 2019. But he said “it became clear, I would say certainly over the last year — and, in part, because of your reporting — that there were more significant changes that needed to be made.”

The announcement — which the governor’s office billed as a “transformational” behavioral health initiative in southern Illinois — comes after

months of reporting by Capitol News Illinois, Lee Enterprises and ProPublica that detailed the beatings of patients, a concerted effort by some staff members to cover up abuse and serious neglect, the intimidation of employees who reported it and the attempt to coerce new employees into participating in the abuse or being silent about it. Local prosecutors have filed felony charges against at least 49 people, both residents and employees, since 2015, a review of court records by reporters showed.

Hou also said the reporting played into the timing of the announcement because it has “brought a lot of this to light and I think forced the conversation into the public discourse.”

The agency will help residents relocate from Choate, and it will give them two to three years to move, Hou said. She said some will likely move into state-supported centers and others will go to community settings.

IDHS will also develop a plan for an additional 112 residents with developmental disabilities who currently live in its so-called specialty units, Hou said. The group includes some people who were sent to Choate by a criminal court judge after they were found unfit to stand trial or not guilty by reason of insanity. Hou said that the state is likely to move a “significant portion” of those residents, but that the agency does not want to rush the decision before it is able to determine “what capacity we have to serve those individuals in a different setting.”

In the interviews and news release, Hou, IDHS and the governor’s office did not label their plans for Choate as a closure, and no layoffs were included in the announcement. The facility’s 49-bed psychiatric hospital will remain open and may expand, Hou said. They’ve tapped the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine to determine the best path forward for the institution.

The restructuring of Choate, she said, is part of a broader goal for Illinois to expand services for people with developmental disabilities who are receiving state funding and want to live in the community; the aim is ultimately to reduce the number of people living at its seven developmental centers.

Advocacy and legal organizations that represent people with disabilities have long criticized the state for its heavy reliance on large public and private institutions to house people with disabilities, and for its lack of adequate funding for community-based options such as group homes or supports to keep people at home with loved ones.

Spurred by a slew of lawsuits across the country, states have reduced the number of people with developmental disabilities in state-operated institutions by more than 90% over the past half century, according to a 2022 study by the University of Minnesota. As of 2018, only four states — Illinois, Texas, North Carolina and New Jersey — had 1,000 or more state-operated beds

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Could Brazil Surpass U.S. as World's Top Corn Exporter

By Daniel Grant *FarmWeek*

Competition in world markets is expected to intensify as Brazil is projected to produce record corn and soybean crops for 2022-23.

Joana Colussi, postdoctoral research associate at the University of Illinois who serves on the farmdoc team there, reported crop production in her home country of Brazil could increase to record levels of 5.6 billion bushels of beans and 4.9 billion bushels of corn.

If realized, Brazilian corn output for 2022-23 would be up 12% from the previous year, with a portion of the additional bushels likely headed to the export market.

"The weather situation so far has been favorable conditions for most regions," Colussi said at the Illinois Farm Economics Summit in Peoria. "There's been moderate to severe drought in the south, but expectations so far are for good yields."

In 2022, Brazil exported a record amount of corn, 44 million metric tons (mmt) or 1.73 billion bushels. And those sales could swell to 50 mmt (or 1.96 billion bushels) this year.

"China signed an agreement with Brazil to import corn. Those shipments started in November," Colussi said.

If the pace of corn production and exports continues to grow in Brazil, could it surpass the U.S. as the world's top exporter? Colussi believes it's possible.

"Brazil could surpass the U.S. in corn exports sometime between 2024 and 2026," she said. "We'll see. There are many factors at play."

USDA's November forecast pegged all U.S. ag exports at \$190 billion for fiscal year 2023, down \$3.5 billion from its August estimate.

Grain and feed exports are projected to decrease by \$300 million to \$46.2 billion in 2023. And USDA reduced its estimate of U.S. corn exports by 150 million bushels to 1.92 billion as of Jan. 12, reflecting the slowest pace of sales since 2019-20.

Meanwhile, U.S. ag imports are projected to grow to \$199 billion this year, driven by higher imports of horticultural products, sugar, tropical products and grain and feed.

"A strong dollar, while a headwind to the export forecast, is partially responsible for the higher import demand," USDA noted.

However, there could be an opening for the U.S. to export more corn in the months ahead before Brazil harvests its second-crop corn, safrinha. That's not the case with soybeans, though, as Brazilian soybeans should start hitting the market next month.

USDA lowered its soybean export forecast for the U.S. by 55 million bushels as of Jan. 12 to 2 billion bushels.

"The U.S. should have an opportunity to sell more corn before Brazil's safrinha harvest in July," Colussi said.

Double- and triple-cropping adds about 66 million acres worth of crop production in Brazil each year.

Elsewhere, the crop outlook in Argentina isn't as rosy. With 85% of corn and 90% of soybeans planted as of Jan. 5, the majority of beans (70%) went into the ground outside of the period to maximize yields due to weather-related planting delays.

"Drought conditions made it difficult to plant early," Colussi said. "It's a third consecutive La Niña year, which usually creates a hotter and drier summer in Argentina."

And the August-through-December timeframe the past three years there has been the driest in more than 30 years.

Crop output subsequently is projected to decline by 45% for wheat and 15% for corn in Argentina for 2022-23.

USDA's latest estimates released Jan. 12 pegged the Argentine soy crop at 45.5 mmt, down 4 million from the previous estimate, while the Brazilian soy crop increased a million to 153 mmt.

This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.

Choate

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open, the Minnesota study found.

Closures of large institutions accelerated with the U.S. Supreme Court's 1999 *Olmstead* decision, which found it unconstitutional to segregate people with disabilities from the rest of society. Seventeen states no longer operate developmental centers at all, and others have dramatically reduced the number of beds they operate.

Illinois has shuttered some of its large institutions over the past two decades, but it has been slow to transition compared with other states. It houses more people with developmental disabilities in large institutions and spends more to operate those institutions relative to statewide personal income than almost every other state in the nation, according to a review of data compiled by researchers with the University of Kansas. The number of people, nearly 15,000, on its waitlist for community-based services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is one of the largest in the country.

In addition, a 2005 lawsuit brought on behalf of residents living in large privately operated state-funded centers argued the state had failed to live up to the mandates of *Olmstead*. As a result, Illinois currently operates under the terms of a federal consent decree to ensure that people with developmental disabilities get sufficient support from the state in their homes and community settings.

Hou said this week that when Pritzker appointed her to lead IDHS after he took office in 2019, the state's poor record was common knowledge. "I think all of us leaders knew that Illinois was a laggard as it relates to prioritizing community-based care," she said.

But Hou said that back then, the provider network that serves people in the community was not in a place to handle a large influx of people. Then COVID-19 hit the following year, putting significant changes on hold. "We've taken the opportunity over the course of the past four years to build up the community-based system," she said, including increasing pay for direct service professionals, the front-line caretakers.

Hou said the state has made significant new investments in its community-based system since Pritzker took office, but it has so far failed to make the improvements needed to bring the consent decree to a close.

Pritzker, who just won a second term, has faced numerous challenges with the large state agencies that provide social and human services. Advocates for people with disabilities have praised the administration's expansion of services, but they argued it hasn't been enough to correct decades-old problems. Pritzker said the budget crisis under his predecessor "hollowed out" social service agencies; the pandemic further caused a labor shortage, he said.

"Rebuilding takes time, and we're proud of the progress that we've made so far," he said.

The plan Hou put forth also signaled changes for all state-operated developmental centers, including

safety enhancements, and expanding support for community-based living.

The agency also created a new position of chief resident safety officer to oversee security at all residential centers. Ryan Thomas, a former compliance officer for a Chicago community health organization, will fill that role. In addition, the agency announced it would be adding 10 investigators to its Office of Inspector General, which investigates allegations of patient maltreatment.

This week's decision to repurpose Choate "advances the State's commitment to equity and the civil rights of people with disabilities," IDHS said in its news release about its planned announcement. "It also reflects the State's legal duty to ensure residents with disabilities have a full opportunity to live in the least restrictive environment of their choosing."

In its news release, IDHS noted that Choate had been heavily scrutinized by state and federal overseers, as well as Equip for Equality, a legal advocacy organization appointed to monitor conditions inside Choate, for at least the past 20 years.

In a 2005 report, Equip for Equality detailed cases of patient abuse and neglect, poor medical and mental health care and an excessive use of restraints; it said that an "archaic system" had resulted in "tragic consequences for people with disabilities." A U.S. Justice Department investigation had similar findings in a report four years later. At the time, IDHS promised to improve conditions, but the news organizations' reporting uncovered that strikingly similar patient mistreatment and poor care persisted long after the Justice Department closed its case in 2013.

Past governors have closed facilities, but Illinois has a poor record when it comes to ensuring that the community-based system has the proper oversight and staffing to provide safe care for those who move. In 2011, then-Gov. Pat Quinn, a Democrat, announced plans to close several state-operated facilities under a plan he called a "rebalancing initiative." Those included Jacksonville Developmental Center, about 35 miles southwest of the capital, Springfield, and the Warren G. Murray Developmental Center in the southern Illinois city of Centralia.

Some residents moved out of Murray, but ultimately it was not closed after parents, the union and local leaders opposed the plan and Quinn lost his reelection bid. Jacksonville was. Four years later, a Chicago Tribune investigation documented the state's botched transition efforts, resulting in horrifying mistreatment and tragic deaths across the state.

Hou, in the interview, acknowledged the difficulty of closing facilities. "The one thing that is common throughout those closures is that it tears communities apart. And it pits people against each other," she said, adding that it was her hope to avoid past mistakes.

Hou also said there would be no change in the administration at Choate. Bryant Davis, the facility manager, and Gary Goins, the quality manager, were both indicted by a Union County grand jury in 2021 on charges of felony official misconduct in connection with a patient abuse case. After the charges were issued, they were relieved of their duties at the facility. They pleaded not guilty, the charges were later dismissed and they returned to work.

"We've weighed a lot of different perspectives, but I think we need a leader who knows Choate inside and out, who has relationships with the residents and the parents and the staff to lead us through this challenging transition. I think to put someone new in there, I think would be very disruptive and even further unsettling," Hou said.