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## Morris Retained As Mayor

By David Larson

Belvidere's incumbent Independent Mayor, Clint Morris was re-elected to another four-year term with 1,179 votes or just under 60 percent of the votes cast. He was challenged by Republican former mayor Fred Brereton, who received 532 votes and John Albertini who received 281 votes.

The Republicans, who ordinarily have a lock on Belvidere's political culture, offered aldermanic candidates in only two of the six races. Both Republicans, Matthew Fleury (Ward 4) and Chris Montalbano (Ward 5) were unopposed and won their elections.

Democrats failed to achieve a win, but Michael Yates, the former school principal, came within 8 votes of winning a seat in Ward 3. In Ward 2, Former teacher turned software engineer, Michael Hart, lost by 26 percent, and in Ward 1, businessman Michael Carlyle lost by 11 percent.

Four independent aldermanic candidates who won were Clayton Stevens (Ward 1), Jerry I. Hoiness (Ward 2), Rory Peterson (a special election for a 2-year unexpired term in Ward 2), and Sandra Gramkowski (Ward 3). As noted above, each of those had challengers from the Democratic Party except for Peterson. The Republicans did not mount a challenge to any of the "independents." All four independents had the support of Mayor Morris.

Mayor Morris should have a clear path in any City Council actions he supports. But, with fewer than 15 percent of eligible voters going to the polls, the culture of not voting persists in Belvidere elections.

The result is hardly a mandate:

Incumbent mayor Clint Morris won reelection with 8.45% of eligible voters in Tuesday's municipal election. In second place, Belvidere's former Mayor of 16 years, Fred Brereton, captured second place with 3.81% of eligible voters in Belvidere. Finally, Belvidere Alderman John Albertini, thought to be a rising star in Belvidere politics, captured 2% of the potential electorate.

More than 85% of the voters decided to stay home.

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## Illinois' Community Colleges See Nearly 9% Spike in Spring Enrollment

*Spring enrollment tops 285,000,  
marking third straight year of growth*

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

Enrollment at Illinois community colleges grew to more than 285,000 in the spring semester this year, an 8.9% increase over a year ago and the largest spring-to-spring enrollment increase since the Illinois Community College Board began collecting systemwide data in the late 1990s.

In a report released Tuesday, the ICCB said 40 of the state's 45 community colleges reported enrollment growth this spring.

There was significant growth in several enrollment categories, including a nearly 20% increase in students enrolled in dual credit programs, which allow high school students to earn college credits. But there was an even greater increase, 23.4%, in students seeking general associate's degree programs.

"With the largest spring-to-spring enrollment increase and the third straight year of growth, our community colleges have not only bounced back from the pandemic — they are now stronger than ever thanks to our historic investments in education," Gov. JB Pritzker said in a statement.

Since Fiscal Year 2019, the year Pritzker came into office, state funding for the Monetary Award Program, also known as MAP grants, the state's need-based financial aid program, has increased 77%, to just over \$710 million.

During that time, Illinois has been able to increase both the number of grants it awards each year to more than 151,000 this year, as well as the maximum grant amount, which now stands at \$8,604.

For Fiscal Year 2026, which begins July 1, Pritzker has proposed another \$10 million increase in MAP grants, bringing the total to \$721.6 million.

Martin Torres, Pritzker's deputy governor for education policy, said in an interview that increased funding for financial aid has made higher education in Illinois more accessible to moderate-income students, especially those who choose to attend a community college.

"If you're at a community college, combined with the (federal) Pell grant and the MAP, the vast majority, nearly every single student who's at or below median income level can go for free in terms of tuition and fees," he said in an interview.

Illinois community colleges also saw year-over-year enrollment increases in the fall semester. ICCB reported in October the total headcount enrollment had grown to 265,227, up 7.4% from the previous fall. That was also a higher growth rate than the state's public universities, which saw only a 2% increase in undergraduate enrollment over that same period, according to the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

In his budget address to the General Assembly in February, Pritzker also proposed giving community colleges a larger role in the state's higher education system by allowing them to offer four-year bachelor's degrees in high-demand career fields in their local areas. He said that is intended to make four-year programs more accessible to people who don't live in or near cities with major universities.

Read more: Pritzker to call for expansion of 4-year degree offerings at some community colleges

Torres said he expects that legislation to come up soon in the General Assembly, possibly as early as this week.

"The community colleges who pursue this,  
*continued on page 2*

## School Board Approves Metal Detector Purchase, Terminates 23 Staff Members

By Sofi Zeman  
Contributing writer

Students, staff, and families may soon undergo metal detector screenings ahead of school events, trustees decided March 17. The District 100 Board during its regular meeting unanimously approved purchasing two metal detectors that would be used for large school events, scheduled safety checks, and in light of security concerns within the school community.

Belvidere-area students will not be required to undergo screenings on a daily basis, according to the district. The detectors, which will cost \$41,850 from Electromagnetic Inspection and Heating System Group CEIA, are intended to provide added security on an occasional basis as needed. Board members weighed in that they don't view detectors as a foolproof means of deterring violence in schools, but that they may offer comfort to students and families.

Other board actions during the March 17 meeting included approving a reduction in force that terminates the contracts of 23 educational support employees and increases administrative salaries in the new school year.

Five paraprofessionals and 18 permanent substitutes will no longer have their current positions effective June 30, according to board documents. They will not be re-employed in the 2025-26 school year. The school district will notify each employee via an honorable dismissal notice.

District 100 will spend four percent more on administrative salaries in the 2025-26 school year. The District 100 board unanimously approved Superintendent Cassandra Schug's request during the March 17 meeting. Schug will bring a salary increase proposal by each administrator during the April meeting. Although this year's budget didn't specify how much District 100 spent on administrative salaries alone, during the 2024-25 year, the school district budgeted \$70.7 million on all educator salaries and \$4.1 million on all maintenance and operations salaries.

The board later amended its 2024-25 budget to include \$2.3 million in new state and federal grant revenues and to shift \$10 million from the district's education fund to its capital projects fund.

Trustees adopted guidelines detailing academic tools and non-use parameters for artificial intelligence in district schools. That information will be shared with staff and families.

# Pritzker's Community College Initiative Stalls In House Committee

*Bill would allow community colleges to offer four-year bachelor's degree programs*

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

One of Gov. JB Pritzker's top legislative initiatives stalled in the General Assembly this week when the chair of the House Higher Education Committee refused to call a vote on a bill that would authorize community colleges to offer four-year bachelor's degree programs in select, high-demand career fields.

The decision not to call the bill for a vote came as lawmakers face a Friday deadline for most bills other than spending bills to pass out of committee and be sent to the floor of their respective chamber.

But legislative deadlines are not always strictly observed in Springfield, and Rep. Katie Stuart, D-Edwardsville, who chairs the committee, said the decision not to act on the bill does not necessarily mean it is dead for the session.

"I don't think around here anything's really ever dead, and I think there's a path forward," she told reporters after Wednesday's committee hearing.

Pritzker called for expanding the role of community colleges by allowing them to offer four-year degree programs in his State of the State address in February. The idea was to make those programs more affordable and accessible to Illinoisans, especially those who don't live near a four-year university.

"With lower tuition rates and a greater presence across the state — especially in rural areas — community colleges provide the flexibility and affordability students need," he said. This is a consumer-driven, student-centered proposal that will help fill the needs of regional employers in high-need sectors and create a pathway to stable, quality jobs for more Illinoisans."

House Bill 3717, sponsored by Rep. Tracy Katz Muhl, D-Northbrook, would implement Pritzker's plan. It would allow community colleges to offer bachelor's degree programs in select areas, provided the school's board of trustees can demonstrate the program would help fill an "unmet workforce need" in the area the school serves, and that the school has sufficient resources, expertise and student interest to sustain the program.

But Stuart, whose district includes the campus of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, said concerns have been raised that allowing community colleges to offer bachelor's programs could undercut similar programs already being offered by four-year universities.

Stuart said her concerns were not necessarily about the impact the change would have on SIUE, but rather schools such as Northeastern Illinois University and Chicago State University that serve largely minority student populations.

"If we're not careful about what programs are allowed, that it could collapse the existing programs in those institutions, collapse their student base, and just make them not able to be operational," she said. "And then we wouldn't have a four-year institution serving those communities."

After Wednesday's hearing, a coalition of presidents from several public and private universities, including Chicago State and NEIU, issued a statement saying they were concerned the legislation could lead to "duplicating efforts and increasing costs at a time of limited resources," but they suggested there was still room for a compromise.

"We are encouraged by negotiations and remain committed to working collaboratively to build a higher education ecosystem that serves all of our students and employers," the statement read.

A spokesman for Pritzker also said there was still time to negotiate a bill that would satisfy the concerns of lawmakers and universities.

"It's March, and plenty of time remains in session to achieve that goal," press secretary Alex Gough said in an email. "He (Pritzker) looks forward to continuing discussions with lawmakers in both chambers and other stakeholders throughout the rest of the legislative session."

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## Enrollment

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if the General Assembly creates this authority, will have to go through the same accreditation process as four-year institutions," Torres said. "And so from a quality standpoint, students will be able to expect the same level of quality, and the instructors will be required to be trained in the same way."

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# Pritzker to Call for Expansion of 4-Year Degree Offerings at Some Community Colleges

*Select institutions could offer bachelor's degrees in high-need career fields*

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

Gov. JB Pritzker plans to offer a proposal in his budget address Wednesday that would allow some community colleges to offer four-year baccalaureate degrees.

The goal, according to the governor's office, would be to make four-year degrees more accessible to working adults, particularly those who don't live near a public university.

That would be a big change for Illinois community colleges, which typically offer two-year associate's degrees and other kinds of training certificates. But Martin Torres, Pritzker's first assistant deputy governor for education, said it's a concept already in use in many other states.


"There are 24 states across the country that have this type of policy in place, including Indiana,"

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## OBITUARIES

- Lavon Anderson, 81, Belvidere, Mar. 14
- Harold "Hal" Booth Jr., 93, Belvidere, Mar. 25
- Delores (Dee) Carlisle, 97, Belvidere, Mar. 11
- Marilyn Graves, 72, Belvidere, Mar. 16
- Philip Hart, 80, Belvidere, Mar. 29
- Catherine Henning, 91, Harvard, Mar. 27
- Susan Locascio, 67, Marengo, Mar. 25
- Lyle Sherman, 82, Poplar Grove, Mar. 19
- Robert Winkler, 79, Poplar Grove, Mar. 29



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**THE BOONE COUNTY JOURNAL**  
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# Illinois Bill Aims to Add More Oversight Of Homeschooling

*Following a ProPublica and Capitol News Illinois investigation, an Illinois lawmaker has introduced legislation that would require families to tell their public school districts if they are homeschooling.*

**By Molly Parker & Beth Hundsdorfer  
Capitol News Illinois**

A new Illinois bill aims to add some oversight of families who homeschool their children, a response to concerns that the state does little to ensure these students receive an education and are protected from harm.

The measure, known as the Homeschool Act, comes after an investigation by Capitol News Illinois and ProPublica last year found that Illinois is among a small number of states that place virtually no rules on parents who homeschool their children. Parents don't have to register with any state agency or school district, and authorities cannot compel them to track attendance, demonstrate their teaching methods or show student progress.

Under the new bill, families would be required to tell their school districts when they decide to homeschool their children, and the parents or guardians would need to have a high school diploma or equivalent. If education authorities have concerns that children are receiving inadequate schooling, they could require parents to share evidence of teaching materials and student work.

Illinois Rep. Terra Costa Howard, a Democrat from a Chicago suburb who is sponsoring the legislation, said she began meeting with education and child welfare officials in response to the news organizations' investigation, which detailed how some parents claimed to be removing their children from school to homeschool but then failed to educate them.

The investigation documented the case of L.J., a 9-year-old whose parents decided to homeschool him after he missed so much school that he faced the prospect of repeating third grade. He told child welfare authorities that he was beaten and denied food for several years while out of public school and that he received almost no education. In December 2022, on L.J.'s 11th birthday, the state took custody of him and his younger siblings; soon after, he was enrolled in public school.

"We need to know that children exist," said Costa Howard, vice chair of the Illinois House's child welfare committee. The legislation is more urgent because the number of homeschooled children has grown since the pandemic began, she said. "Illinois has zero regulations regarding homeschooling — we are not the norm at all."

The most recent numbers available at the time of the news organizations' investigation showed nearly 4,500 children were recorded as withdrawn from public school for homeschooling in 2022 — a number that had doubled over a decade. But there is no way to determine the precise number

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## Pritzker

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Missouri and Michigan just in the Midwest," he said in an interview with Capitol News Illinois. "There are almost 200 community colleges across the country who are doing this today. And so the concept is certainly not new. It's something that's been advocated for here by our own community colleges. And we really felt like it was time to do everything we can to reduce barriers across the state in earning a B.A. in high-need areas."

Torres said the governor's office will push for legislation this year to authorize community colleges to offer four-year programs specifically tailored to meet the employment needs of their communities in high-demand employment areas. Examples of those might include health care, early childhood education or advanced manufacturing, he said.

The legislation would allow community colleges to offer programs in subject areas where they have identified unmet workforce needs in their region. The proposed programs would also need to be approved by both the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board.

Schools would also have to demonstrate how their proposed programs would reach students who are underserved by other higher education programs in the state.

The governor's proposal would also cap the tuition rates community colleges could charge for a baccalaureate program. Schools would not be allowed to charge more than 150% of their regular tuition for the third and fourth years of a four-year program.

By comparison, according to the governor's office, Illinois public universities currently charge tuition and fees that are nearly three times higher than those of community colleges while private, not-for-profit universities charge rates that are more than six times higher.

There are currently 15 public universities in Illinois, including three medical schools. Only two of those — the Southern Illinois University campuses in Carbondale and Edwardsville — are located south of Interstate 70.

Community colleges, by contrast, are spread throughout the state more evenly. Illinois is divided into 39 community college districts, each governed by a board of trustees that has its own taxing authority.

Torres said one of the main goals of the governor's proposal is to make four-year degrees more accessible to a segment of the population that doesn't fit the standard profile of an undergraduate college student.

"What we've observed of the student profile across the country where this is done is that those students tend to be older, they tend to be more diverse, and they tend to have personal

logistics and circumstances that just don't allow for them to up and move to wherever a four-year public university may be," he said.

It was not immediately known prior to the governor's address, however, whether state universities will support the idea of allowing community colleges to offer degree programs that might duplicate, or even compete with, established programs at the universities.

"I don't want to speak on behalf of the public universities on the subject," Torres said. "What I would say is, when we look at the experience of other states throughout the country — Florida was a real early adopter of the community college baccalaureate — there's no evidence in the enrollment patterns there or anywhere else across the country that would suggest that this is going to have a negative impact on public university enrollment."

Torres said the legislation being proposed does not include funding for the additional cost of launching new degree programs. He said the bill proposes to give community colleges permission to offer four-year degrees, but it would be up to those schools to decide for themselves how to pay for any additional costs associated with the programs.

He also said the governor's proposal to expand community college degree offerings is unrelated to any other higher education plan being considered in the General Assembly this year, including proposals in the House and Senate to overhaul the state's funding system for public universities. Those plans would replace the current system with one similar to the Evidence-Based Funding model used for PreK-12 education.

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**Thank you, The Belvidere Cemetery**

**Home Schooling** from page 3

of students who are homeschooled in Illinois, because the state doesn't require parents to register.

The bill would require the state to collect data on homeschooling families. Regional Offices of Education would gather the information, and the state board would compile an annual report with details on the number, grade level and gender of homeschooled students within each region.

Read more: Illinois lawmaker calls for strengthening protection for homeschooled children

Homeschool families and advocates said they will fight the measure, which they argue would infringe on parental rights. Past proposals to increase oversight also have met swift resistance. The sponsor of a 2011 bill that would have required homeschool registration withdrew it after hundreds of people protested at the Illinois State Capitol. In 2019, a different lawmaker abandoned her bill after similar opposition to rules that would have required curriculum reviews and inspections by child welfare officials.

The Home School Legal Defense Association, which describes itself as a Christian organization that advocates for homeschool freedom, said it plans to host virtual meetings to educate families on the bill and ways they can lobby against it.

Kathy Wentz of the Illinois Homeschool Association, which is against homeschool regulations, said she is concerned about the provision that would allow the state to review education materials, called a "portfolio review" in the legislation. She said visits from education officials could be disruptive to teaching.

"There is nothing in this bill to protect a family's time so they can actually homeschool without interruptions," Wentz said. She pointed to a 1950 Illinois Supreme Court ruling establishing that homeschooling qualified as a form of private education and that the schools were not required to register students with the state.

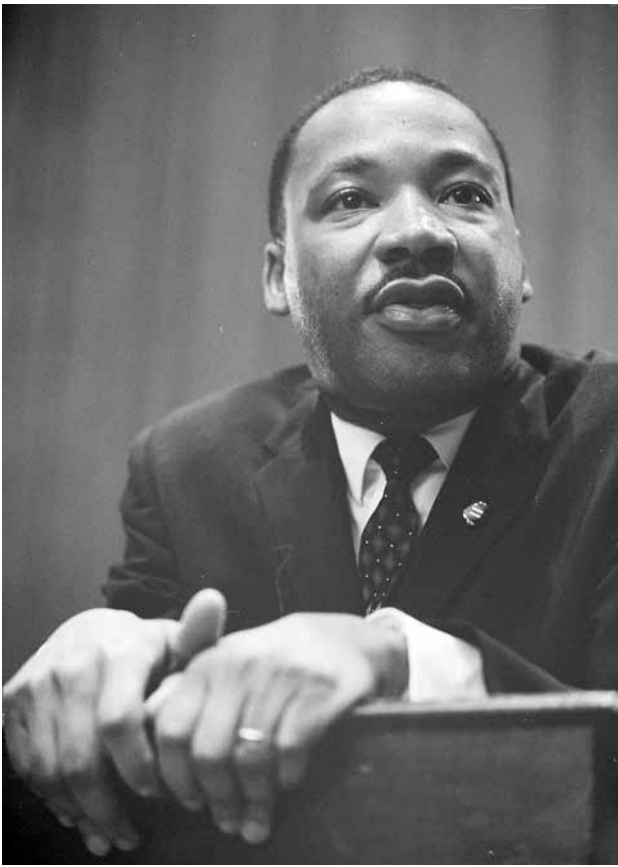
The bill would require all private schools to register with the state.

The Capitol News Illinois and ProPublica investigation found that it's all but impossible for education officials to intervene when parents claim they are homeschooling. The state's child welfare agency, the Department of Children and Family Services, doesn't investigate schooling matters.

Under the proposed law, if the department has concerns about a family that says it is homeschooling, the agency could request that education officials conduct a more thorough investigation of the child's schooling. The new law would then allow education officials to check whether the family notified its district about its decision to homeschool and compel parents to turn over homeschool materials for review.

The increased oversight also aims to help reduce truancy and protect homeschooled students who lose daily contact with teachers and others who are mandated to report abuse and neglect, Costa Howard said. Some truancy officials said that under existing law they have no recourse to compel attendance or review what students are learning at home when a family says they are homeschooling.

Jonah Stewart, research director for the Coalition for Responsible Home Education, a national organization of homeschool alumni that advocates for homeschooling regulation, said the lack of oversight in Illinois puts children at risk. "This bill is a commonsense measure and is critical not only to address educational neglect but also child safety," Stewart said.



*Doctor King*

## MLK Assassin Ray Was Illinois Native

*Anniversary of King's Death is April 4*

*By Tom Emery*

Most consider Martin Luther King, Jr. to be the greatest civil rights leader of all. Sadly for Illinois, his alleged assassin is a native son.

Friday marks the anniversary of the assassination of King, who was gunned down in Memphis on April 4, 1968. James Earl Ray, the man who many believe pulled the trigger, was born in Alton and spent time there at various points over the next four decades, sometimes with criminal intent.

Ray pled guilty to the killing of King, but later recanted. His role is still debated by researchers today, and some believe he was innocent, a bit player in a murky conspiracy. Among the doubters are members of the King family, who have stated their belief that the reverend was not killed by Ray, but by a massive government plot.

Gerald Posner, however, disagrees. Posner, an attorney and investigative reporter from New York City, has authored over a dozen books, including the widely acclaimed 1998 work *Killing the Dream*, an intricate analysis of Ray and the King assassination. He cites, among other things, the numerous inconsistencies in Ray's stories and finds no conclusive evidence that disputes Ray's guilt.

"Do I think that Ray was the trigger man? Absolutely," said Posner, who has appeared on The History Channel, CNN, CBS, Fox News, and NBC. "The question is why. There are many reasons why he may have done it."

Posner notes that little is known on Ray's time in Alton, and few have delved into his earlier years. "A lot of people have researched Ray and the assassination, and have looked into every detail," he remarked. "But not much has ever been done on his connections to Alton. People really don't talk much about that."

James Earl Ray was born in a two-room basement apartment in a simple frame house near the corner of Ninth and Belle streets on March 10, 1928. He was the first of eight children of George and Lucille Ray, who had married in 1926.

George, who was nicknamed "Speedy" because of his slow way of talking, was a small-time hood who preferred crime to honest work. A former inmate at the Iowa State Penitentiary, he used over a dozen surnames in his life. Lucille, who

came from a decent family, eventually became a disheveled individual who slid into alcoholism.

George's many misdeeds and inability to hold a real job relegated the Ray family into a life of economic misery in one of the poorest areas of Alton. One of the largest brothels in the city was just a few doors down.

"I think it's hard to overstate the degree of hard existence, with a grinding poverty in a poor white neighborhood," said Posner. "It was a hardscrabble, tough life."

James' middle name came from his uncle Earl, who was in prison for most of his life. It carried on a family tradition.

"Ray came from a heralded history of petty criminals," remarked Posner. "His father, grandfather, and uncle all had criminal backgrounds steeped in crime. They were always trying to beat the system, rather than work within the system."

Brothers John and Jerry also spent plenty of time behind bars. Both would later produce books claiming their brother's innocence in the King assassination.

When James was a year and a half old, the Rays left Alton and moved north, eventually settling in the Missouri towns of Bowling Green and Ewing. However, James would make his way back to Alton on several occasions.

In May 1944, James, then sixteen, dropped out of the eighth grade and returned to the River Bend, where he lived with his maternal grandmother, Mary Maher, in her boarding house on Broadway.

Maher was one of the few positive influences in Ray's life. "I think Ray felt comfortable in Alton. It gave him a feeling of stability," said Posner. "When he was with his grandmother, he was away from the anger, hatred, and violence of his father, and his mother's increasing drinking.

"His grandmother was one of the few people who dealt with him in saying, if you want to work, then here's what you do. She always helped him find jobs," continued Posner. "She provided a different atmosphere than his home life, because role models of any kind for James in that household were nonexistent."

The next few months were one of the brighter times in Ray's sordid life. With his grandmother's help, he found a job in the dye department at International Shoe Company in East Hartford for 77 cents an hour. Ray commuted to his job by streetcar. Production at the company was high because of World War II, and Ray racked up plenty of overtime.

In December 1945, Ray's account at the Alton Bank and Trust Company totaled \$1,180. "That was an amazing amount of money for someone like him at the time," said Posner. "That he saved that much money is remarkable.

"He could have spent it drinking and whoring, or bought himself a truck to go out partying," continued Posner. "But he did what his grandmother would have wanted, to save it."

He was also around his uncle, Willie Maher, and a close relationship formed, albeit briefly. "They did everything together," said Posner. "They went to football games, and played pickup baseball."

However, Ray became fond of a German friend at work, Henry Stumm, who was a German nationalist and follower of Adolph Hitler. Some believe that Ray enhanced his already-racist views from his connection to Stumm.

"I don't view Ray as a racist in the sense of someone in the Ku Klux Klan, whose life is driven by racism," remarked Posner. "But Ray had a denigrating view of blacks, who were the only ones below the poor whites like Ray's family on the socioeconomic scale."

*Continued on Page 5*



**MLK**

from page 4

Ray's job at International Shoe abruptly ended in December 1945 when he was fired as the company stopped its military shoe production with the end of wartime.

"There was one window in James Earl Ray's life, and that was in Alton at that time," theorized Posner. "There was a span of about a year where he had the option of going straight, not have a life of crime. He had a steady job, and was saving some money. He had a chance to turn himself around. But when he was fired, he gradually fell back into the life he had before.

"It's certainly easy to speculate. But what if he hadn't lost the job with International Shoe?" wonders Posner. "Would things have turned out differently? Would he have killed Martin Luther King in 1968? It's very possible that he wouldn't have. But we'll never know for sure."

Ray then enlisted in the Army in February 1946 and, enamored with Hitler and the Rhineland, requested station in Germany. But he soon became disillusioned, and briefly returned to Alton after a general discharge in late 1948. He still had \$1,400 in the bank, but that soon was spent, and he left for Chicago in June 1949.

He drifted amid various convictions, including a sentence for robbing a Chicago cab driver in 1952 that resulted in 22 months in prisons at Joliet and Pontiac. He was back in Alton in the brutally hot summer of 1954, and was nabbed in a bungled burglary at a dry cleaner in East Alton that August 27.

Ray skipped out after bail and went back to Quincy, where much of his family now lived. He was subsequently convicted of robbing a post office in Adams County, Ill. and sentenced to Leavenworth. Sixteen months after his release, Ray and another man, Joseph Austin, robbed an IGA supermarket in Alton with pistols at 9:30 a.m. on Aug. 7, 1959. The crime netted them almost \$1,000, and they fled in a blue 1950 Buick.

"I was on a three-wheeler, and I chased them into the woods," recalled John Light, who spent thirty years on the Alton police force. "We got his accomplice, Austin. But Ray got away."

He was eventually captured and tied to an armed robbery of a St. Louis Kroger store with another man two months later. Two of the IGA employees identified Ray as the perpetrator, though he only admitted to the Kroger crime. As a repeat offender, he received a twenty-year sentence at the Missouri State Penitentiary.

On April 23, 1967, Ray escaped in a bread truck from the penitentiary. Once again, he would make his way back to Alton.

There, police were not aware that Ray had escaped. "The Missouri State Pen thing was a farce," said Light, who was then chief of detectives in Alton. "They had prisoners working in the office who made the fliers for escapees. They had the wrong photo, wrong everything."

On July 13, 1967, two masked gunmen with shotguns held up the Bank of Alton. "That was a different kind of bank robbery," said Light, who now lives in Oregon. "Normally, bank robbers will go up to one cage, get the money, and run. In this case, one robber jumped from counter to

counter and cage to cage, and got away with a lot."

A total of \$27,230 was taken in the incident. Witnesses described the men as similar in height and build to the Ray brothers, and the robbers fled in a waiting getaway car that drove deeper into Alton – rather than making a run out of town. The shotgun, masks, and clothing were found near Willie Maher's home on Fourth Street.

An FBI investigation could not definitively tie the Rays to the robbery, though the House Select Committee later determined that "substantial, albeit circumstantial" evidence existed to link the Rays.

Light is among the believers. "Oh, yeah, that's who I think it was," he said. "I heard it from informants, and we knew what they had been doing." Light also believes that James was the robber who went from counter to counter at the bank.

A 2008 CNN report asserted that the Alton bank heist bankrolled Ray in the months leading to King's assassination. Ray used cash for a number of subsequent purchases, including for a 1962 Plymouth on July 14 – the day after the incident at the bank.

Four days after the robbery, Ray arrived in the Montreal area, the first stop in a string of travel that took him to Mexico, Los Angeles, and elsewhere in late 1967 and early 1968.

At 6:01 p.m. on Thursday, April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was standing on the second-floor walkway of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis when he was felled by an assassin's bullet. An investigation determined the shot was fired by an assailant standing in a bathtub in the upstairs room of a boarding house, some 207 feet away.

The killing sparked unrest in dozens of cities, including Alton. Ray, who fled to Canada and on to London, later claimed that he was swept up in an intricate plot involving a shadowy figure named Raoul. Many discount Ray's claims as fantastic and believe that he fired the shot.

The King family is not among them, believing that their father was the victim of a government conspiracy that involved the CIA, FBI, Army intelligence, and President Lyndon B. Johnson.

In March 1997, Dexter Scott King, the youngest son of the slain reverend, met with Ray in a Nashville prison. Ray denied killing King, to which Dexter replied, "I believe you, and my family believes you."

The King family later requested a new government inquiry from the Clinton administration, but the Justice Department offered only a limited investigation. In June 2000, the Department concluded that no evidence of a plot existed, and that Ray acted alone.

Ray died of liver disease in prison on April 23, 1998. In December 1999, the King family prevailed in a civil suit against Memphis businessman Loyd Jowers, who owned a restaurant below the rooming house where the fatal shot was fired.

Jowers had claimed in an ABC-TV interview in 1993 that he had hired King's assassin as a favor to a friend in the underworld. The Kings believed the verdict validated their claim that someone other than Ray was the assassin.

Posner believes otherwise. He states that

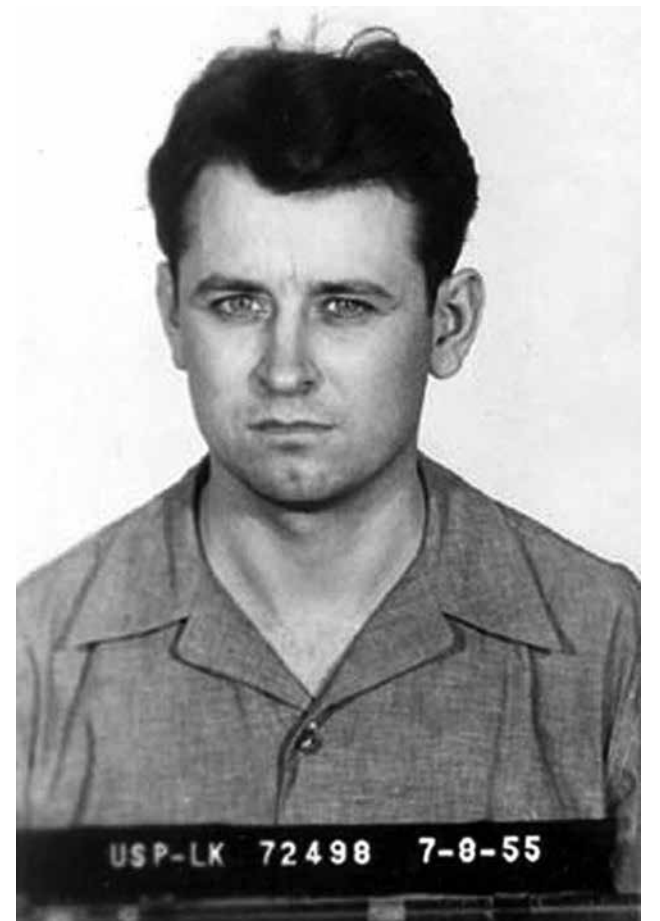
Ray's desire for notoriety, as well as a possible payday from one of many bounties on King, may have played a factor.

He also states that Ray was apparently not driven by political motives, unlike assassins such as Lee Harvey Oswald, and was much older than many assassins, who are often younger men seeking to change the world. Ray, who was 40 at the time of the King assassination, was actually a year older than King himself.

"There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that Ray was the trigger man. The more troubling question is why," said Posner. "It's not enough to just say he was a racist. But Ray took those final answers with him to the grave.

"I think that's why so many Americans have difficulty accepting that Ray was the lone assassin, because they don't understand his motive," continued Posner. "Only by understanding Ray is it possible to know why King died and it's puzzling, even for those of us who have studied Ray.

"Ray had peculiar demons," concluded Posner. "The hard part is figuring them out."



James Earl Ray

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# LEGAL NOTICES

N&L No. 1889-475  
NOONAN & LIEBERMAN, LTD.  
Attorneys  
33 N. LaSalle Street, Suite 1150  
Chicago, IL 60602

STATE OF ILLINOIS, COUNTY OF BOONE, ss - IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, BOONE COUNTY, BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS, GREENSPRING CAPITAL MANAGEMENT, LLC, NOT IN ITS INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY BUT SOLELY AS ADMINISTRATOR OF RMH 2023-4 TRUST, Plaintiff, -vs- UNKNOWN HEIRS AND LEGATEES OF LAWRENCE B. WIRTH (DECEASED); UNKNOWN HEIRS AND LEGATEES OF DIANE M. WIRTH (DECEASED); LORI A. PERRY (OWNER); UNKNOWN OWNERS-TENANTS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS; Defendant(s)., Case No. 2025 FC 20. The requisite affidavit for publication having been filed, notice is hereby given to you: UNKNOWN OWNERS-TENANTS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS, Defendants, defendants in the above-entitled suit has been commenced in the IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, BOONE COUNTY, BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS, by the said plaintiff against you and other defendants, praying for the foreclosure of a certain Mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to-wit: LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Lot Two (2) in Block Twelve (12) as designated upon the Plat of Sheffield Green No. 3, being a Subdivision of part of the South (1/2) of Section 35, Township 44 North, Range 3 East of the Third Principal Meridian, according to the Plat thereof recorded February 15, 1968 as Document No. 10982, in Boone County, Illinois, situated in Boone County, State of Illinois. COMMONLY KNOWN AS: 1721 9th Avenue, Belvidere, IL 61008 PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION NO: 05-35-378-002, and which said Mortgage was made by LAWRENCE WIRTH and DIANE M. WIRTH to METLIFE HOME LOANS, A DIVISION OF METLIFE BANK, N.A., dated December 22, 2009, and recorded January 8, 2010, as 2010 R 00142 in the Boone County, Illinois Office of the Recorder of Deeds, and the present owner(s) of the property being LORI PERRY; and for other relief: that summons was duly issued out of said Court against you as provided by law, and that the said suit is now pending.

Now, therefore, unless you, the said above named defendant, file your answer to the Complaint in the said suit or otherwise make your appearance therein, IN THE SEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT OF BOONE COUNTY, BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS, BOONE COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 601 N. MAIN STREET, BELVIDERE, IL 61008 on or before APRIL 21, 2025, default may be entered against you at any time after that day and a Judgment entered in accordance with the prayer of said Complaint.

Dated, Chicago, Illinois, March 17, 2025.  
Clerk of the BOONE County Circuit Court.

THIS IS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT, AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

6088-951540  
Published in The Boone County Journal March 20, 27, April 3, 2025

## Notice of Lien Sale of Stored Vehicle

Notice is hereby given by Boxed Up Self Storage, or affiliates, intends to hold a public sale to satisfy a lien, pursuant to 770 ILCS 95/1 et seq., by selling a vehicle belonging to those individuals listed below on April 24, 2025, at approximately 7 pm (CST) at www.storage-treasures.com.

### BOXED UP SELF STORAGE

4431 IL Route 173, Caledonia IL, 61011-9754

Parking Space: V104  
Owner(s): Keith Williams and Monica Dickerson  
Lienholder: N/A  
Make: GMC  
Model: 2008 Acadia  
VIN: 1GKEV33778J248502  
Amount due and owing: \$684.40

For more information, please contact Boxed Up Self Storage by phone at (815) 399-9226 or by email at info@boxedupselfstorage.com.

The auction will be listed and advertised on www.storage-treasures.com. See website and conditions. Purchases must be made with cash only and must be paid at the Boxed Up Operations Center located at 1511 E. Riverside Boulevard, Loves Park, Illinois 61111, in order to complete the transaction. Boxed Up Self Storage may refuse any bid and may rescind any purchase until winning bidder takes possession of the property. All sales are final. Following sale, buyer must cooperate with completion of all documentation required by the Illinois Secretary of State to transfer ownership of the vehicle and take possession.  
Published in The Boone County Journal March 27, April 3

## NOTICE TO BIDDERS

FOR NORTH BOONE COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 200  
The following bid notice was published by North Boone Community Unit School District 200:

The North Boone Community Unit School District 200 Board of Education is accepting bid proposals for flooring replacement at three (3) existing school buildings.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Scope of Work includes removing the existing flooring and base and installing new VCT, carpet tile, and rubber floors at Capron Elementary School, Manchester Elementary School, and North Boone Middle School.

### PROJECT SCHEDULE / BID SCHEDULE

The work is to be performed at the three (3) school buildings and is scheduled to take place between June 2025 and August 2025.

Beginning April 1, 2025, complete sets of the bid documents may be obtained from the North Boone School District by emailing a request to Jim Nolen at jnolen@nbcusd.org.

Bidders are required to provide a sealed Bid Proposal to the North Boone School District 200 before 3:00 P.M. on April 15, 2025, at the District Administrative Offices located at 6248 N. Boone School Road, Poplar Grove, Illinois.

The Owner reserves the right to accept or reject any and all bids and to waive informalities to any bid when the Owner deems it to be in the Owner's best interest.

This invitation is issued in the name of North Boone Community Unit School District 200.

Published in The Boone County Journal April 3, 2025

## ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY Given to the legal voters, residents of the Town of LeRoy in the county of Boone and State of Illinois, that the Annual Town Meeting of said Town will take place on Tuesday, April 8, 2025 being the second Tuesday of said month at the hour of 7:00 P.M. at LeRoy Town Hall for the transaction of the miscellaneous business of the said town, and after a Moderator having been elected, will proceed to hear and consider reports of officers and decide upon such measures as may in pursuance of the law come before the meeting.

Dated March 20, 2025  
Jamie Murray, Town Clerk

Published in The Boone County Journal March 27, April 3

## STATE OF ILLINOIS IN THE CIRCUIT COURT BOONE COUNTY

DATE FOR REQUEST OF NAME CHANGE (ADULT):  
LAUREEN RAE MATTSON Case No. 25MR12  
There will be a court date on my Request to change my name from:  
LAUREEN RAE MATTSON to the new name of LAURIE RAE MATTSON. The court date will be held on 06/10/2025 at 9:00 a.m. at the Boone County Courthouse, 601 N. Main St., Belvidere, IL 61008 in Courtroom #3  
Published in the Boone County Journal - 04/03,10,17 P.

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

FOR FLORA TOWNSHIP on April 8, 2025, LOCATED AT 3100 TOWNHALL RD., BELVIDERE, IL 61008. TIME OF THE MEETING WILL BE 6:00 PM.

The Annual Town Meeting for Flora Township will be 04/08/2025 and start promptly at 6:00 PM.

The regular meeting will start promptly following the Annual Town Meeting for Flora Township.

Should you have any questions feel free to call Don Banks, Flora Township Clerk at 815-751-6228.

Published in The Boone County Journal March 27, April 3

## NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADVERTISE FOR DESIGN-BUILD SERVICES

The Belvidere Township Park District (BTPD) intends to issue a Request for Qualifications/Proposal (RFQ/P) on April 17, 2025, pursuant to the requirements of 70 ILCS 1205/8-52 for the following design-build project:

Open-Air Roof at the Riverside Ice Arena

The project will include site preparation, design and construction of an open-air roof.

All information regarding the project and the RFQ/P submittal requirements, evaluation criteria and selection process will be posted on the BTPD's website at www.belviderpark.org and published as required by the Act. No additional information is available at this time.

Please send all questions regarding this project via email to Tony Williams: twilliams@belviderpark.org.

Published in the Boone County Journal April 3, 2025 Edition

## IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS PROBATE DIVISION

IN RE THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF: Renato Garza Jr., Deceased.

CASE NO: 2025PR11

### CLAIM NOTICE

NOTICE is given of the death of RENATO GARZA JR on September 23, 2024. Letters of Office were issued on March 19, 2025 to: Ena O Garza who is the legal representative of the estate. The attorney is Christian Solares, 4855 E State St Ste 24, Rockford, IL 61108.

Claims against the estate may be filed within six (6) months from the date of first publication. Any claim not filed within six (6) months from the date of first publication or claims not filed within three (3) months from the date of mailing or delivery of Notice to Creditors, if mailing is required by Section 18-3 of the Illinois Probate Act, 1975, as amended whichever date is later. Any claim not filed by the requisite date stated above shall be barred.

Claims may be filed in the office of the Boone County Circuit Clerk-Probate Div. at the Boone County Courthouse, 601 N. Main St., Belvidere, IL 61008, or with the representative or both.

Copies of claims filed with the Circuit Clerk's Office-Probate Div., must be mailed or delivered to the estate legal representative and to the attorney within ten days (10) after it has been filed.

DATED: 03/26/2025

ENA O. GARZA, ADMINISTRATOR  
CHRISTIAN SOLARES #6325075  
Attorney for Estate  
4855 E State St Ste 24  
Rockford, IL 61108  
815/312-1703

Published in the Boone County Journal - 04/03,10,17

## STATE OF ILLINOIS IN THE CIRCUIT COURT BOONE COUNTY DATE FOR REQUEST OF NAME CHANGE (ADULT): JHONTAYA CARLINA BAROSSO

Case No. 2025-MR-13

There will be a court date on my Request to change my name from: JHONTAYA CARLINA BAROSSO to the new name of JHONTAYA CARLINA BAROSSO. The court date will be held on 05/13/2025 at 9:00 a.m. at the Boone County Courthouse, 601 N. Main St., Belvidere, IL 61008 in Courtroom #3  
Published in the Boone County Journal - 4/3, 4/10, 4/17/2025

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

Federal National Mortgage Association, Plaintiff,

-v.- 2024FC56

Luis Lopez Rodriguez; et. al., Defendants.

121 BULLARD ST, POPLAR GROVE, IL 61065

NOTICE OF SALE PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on 12/17/2024, an agent of Auction.com LLC will conduct the auction in person at 12:00 PM on May 15, 2025 located at 601 N Main Street, Courthouse Steps, Belvidere, IL 61008, and will sell at public sale to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate. LOT FIVE (5) IN BULLARD'S ADDITION TO POPLAR GROVE, BEING A SUBDIVISION OF PART OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER (1/4) OF SECTION 19, TOWNSHIP 45 NORTH, RANGE 4 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED IN BOOK 10 OF PLATS ON PAGES 50 AND 51 AS DOCUMENT NO. 72-3406 IN THE RECORDER'S OFFICE OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS; SITUATED IN THE COUNTY OF BOONE AND THE STATE OF ILLINOIS. Commonly known as 121 BULLARD ST, POPLAR GROVE, IL 61065

Property Index No. 04-19-151-023

The real estate is improved with a Residential Property. The judgment amount was \$178,076.41 Sale Terms: 20% down of the highest bid by certified funds at the close of the sale payable to Auction.com LLC, No third party checks will be accepted. All registered bidders need to provide a photo ID in order to bid. The balance, in certified funds/or wire transfer, is due within twenty-four (24) hours. (relief fee not required) The subject property is subject to general real estate taxes, special assessments, or special taxes levied against said real estate and is offered for sale without any representation as to quality or quantity of title and without recourse to plaintiff and in "AS IS" condition. The sale is further subject to confirmation by the court. Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser will receive a certificate of sale that will entitle the purchaser to a deed to the real estate after confirmation of the sale.

The property will NOT be open for inspection and plaintiff makes no representation as to the condition of the property, prospective bidders are admonished to check the court file to verify all information. If this property is a condominium unit, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and the legal fees required by the Condominium property Act, 765 ILCS 605/9 (g)(1) and (g)(4). If this property is a condominium unit which is part of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by the Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1).

IF YOU ARE THE MORTGAGOR (HOMEOWNER), YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN IN POSSESSION FOR 30 DAYS AFTER ENTRY OF AN ORDER OF POSSESSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 15-1701 (C) OF THE ILLINOIS MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE LAW.

For information, contact Plaintiff's attorney: CODILIS & ASSOCIATES PC (630) 794-5300 please refer to file number 14-24-04980.

Auction.com LLC 100 N LaSalle St., Suite 1400 Chicago, IL 60606 - 872-225-4985 You can also visit www.auction.com.

Attorney File No. 14-24-04980 Case Number: 2024FC56

NOTE: PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT, YOU ARE ADVISED THAT PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

I3258582

Published in the Boone County Journal - 4/3, 4/10, 4/17/2025 PNN

# ASSUMED NAMES

## STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY OF BOONE COUNTY ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION

No. DBA4226 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a MEN'S RETAIL business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of THE ARMOURY CLUB that its location is or will be 10020 KARL CLOSE in BELVIDERE, in the County of Boone County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.

Phone Number: 815-980-8622

AMY CHRISTINE SALVI  
10020 KARL CLOSE BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS 61008

I, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk And Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do the hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: March 26, 2025

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder  
Published in Boone County Journal 04/03,10,17 P.

## STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY OF BOONE COUNTY ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION

No. DBA4223- The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a CHRISTIAN LIFE COACHING business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN LIFE COACHING that its location is or will be 1105 7TH AVE., BELVIDERE, in the County of Boone County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.

Phone Number: 815-323-8283

Dola Bell Gregory, 3174 Spring Center RD., Belvidere, Illinois 61008

I, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk And Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do the hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: March 18, 2025.

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder  
Published in Boone County Journal 03/20,27 04/03 - P

## STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY OF BOONE COUNTY ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION

No. DBA4225 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a SEALCOATING business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of GOMEZ SEAL COATING that its location is or will be 219 RIDGESTONE TRAIL in POPLAR GROVE, in the County of Boone County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.

Phone Number: 815-491-0845

JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ SR 219 RIDGESTONE TRAIL  
POPLAR GROVE, ILLINOIS 61065

I, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk And Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do the hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: March 20, 2025

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder  
Published in Boone County Journal 3/27, 4/3, 4/10 - P

## STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY OF BOONE COUNTY ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION

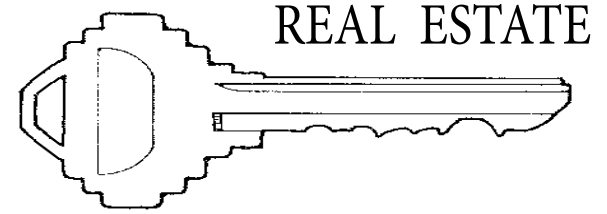
No. DBA4224 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a POWER WASHING business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of NICO'S LANDSCAPING LLC DBA NICO'S POWER WASHING that its location is or will be 2706 WINFIELD LANE in BELVIDERE, in the County of Boone County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.

Phone Number: 815-505-6777

NICOLAS DAVID REZA 2706 WINFIELD LANE  
BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS 61008

I, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk And Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do the hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: March 20, 2025

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder  
Published in Boone County Journal 3/27, 4/3, 4/10 - P



## IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Federal National Mortgage Association, Plaintiff,

-v.- 2024FC56

Luis Lopez Rodriguez; et. al., Defendants.

121 BULLARD ST, POPLAR GROVE, IL 61065

NOTICE OF SALE PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on 12/17/2024, an agent of Auction.com LLC will conduct the auction in person at 12:00 PM on May 15, 2025 located at 601 N Main Street, Courthouse Steps, Belvidere, IL 61008, and will sell at public sale to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate. LOT FIVE (5) IN BULLARD'S ADDITION TO POPLAR GROVE, BEING A SUBDIVISION OF PART OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER (1/4) OF SECTION 19, TOWNSHIP 45 NORTH, RANGE 4 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED IN BOOK 10 OF PLATS ON PAGES 50 AND 51 AS DOCUMENT NO. 72-3406 IN THE RECORDER'S OFFICE OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS; SITUATED IN THE COUNTY OF BOONE AND THE STATE OF ILLINOIS. Commonly known as 121 BULLARD ST, POPLAR GROVE, IL 61065

Property Index No. 04-19-151-023

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The property will NOT be open for inspection and plaintiff makes no



representation as to the condition of the property, prospective bidders are admonished to check the court file to verify all information. If this property is a condominium unit, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and the legal fees required by the Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/9 (g)(l) and (g)(4). If this property is a condominium unit which is part of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by the Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1).

IF YOU ARE THE MORTGAGOR (HOMEOWNER), YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN IN POSSESSION FOR 30 DAYS AFTER ENTRY OF AN ORDER OF POSSESSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 15-1701 (C) OF THE ILLINOIS MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE LAW.

For information, contact Plaintiff's attorney: CODILIS & ASSOCIATES PC (630) 794-5300 please refer to file number 14-24-04980.

Auction.com LLC 100 N LaSalle St., Suite 1400 Chicago, IL 60606 - 872-225-4985 You can also visit www.auction.com.

Attorney File No. 14-24-04980 Case Number: 2024FC56

NOTE: PURSUANT TO THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT, YOU ARE ADVISED THAT PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY IS DEEMED TO BE A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE.

13258582

Published in the Boone County Journal - 4/3, 4/10, 4/17/2025 PNN

of diseases, invest in lab upgrades, build up the public health workforce, and improve vaccination efforts.

A report published Thursday by Trust for America's Health, a non-profit research organization, ranked states into one of three tiers based on their preparedness for a public health emergency, and Illinois ranked in the middle tier.

Illinois is one of 47 states with detailed "surge plans," that outline IDPH's ability to handle a sudden surge in testing demand and implement changes like reallocating staff and acquiring supplies, according to the report.

Over the past decade, IDPH published several surge plans including an "Ebola Virus Disease Preparedness and Response Plan" in 2019 and a "Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Plan" in 2020.

A surge plan is a "critical indicator of a state's emergency preparedness" that demonstrates a state's capabilities to tackle a crisis, the report said.

It noted that seasonal flu vaccination rates also give an insight into the state's emergence response capabilities. According to IDPH, about 28% of Illinoisans received a flu shot for the current season.

IDPH also is keeping an eye on the spread of bird flu with the now-ceased federal funds. Although the CDC says bird flu does not currently pose a threat to humans, there is concern that interaction between the seasonal flu virus and the bird flu virus might create a new strain that could start human-to-human transmissions and increase the risk of a pandemic, Vohra said in a February interview with Capitol News Illinois.

Read More: Illinois health officials taking bird flu precautions despite assessing no 'active risk' to humans

Legal and budget impacts

Funding for IDPH's and DHS' programs was appropriated by Congress but is now being rescinded by executive agencies. The Illinois Attorney General's Office has already sued the Trump administration over other spending cuts, including on disaster funding, clean energy grants and teacher preparation grants.

Funding for IDPH's infectious disease prevention programs was appropriated by Congress in the 2020 CARES Act — a law signed by Trump designed to help businesses, individuals, and health care institutions access funding during the height of the pandemic. Funding for DHS' mental health and substance abuse program was appropriated by Congress in the American Rescue Plan of 2021 — a wide-ranging stimulus bill signed by President Joe Biden that included funding for programs intended to alleviate effects of the pandemic.

"The State of Illinois will do everything in our power to restore this vital federal funding and continue to invest in common sense public health solutions to keep our state safe and healthy," Pritzker said.

A judge issued a preliminary injunction blocking Trump's broad federal spending freezes in January, but Illinois and other states have continued to be notified that money already destined for the state's use is being rescinded.

Read more: Pritzker says federal funds still being withheld

The \$477 million being pulled from IDPH and DHS is part of roughly \$1.8 billion in federal funding the state is expecting to receive but remains in limbo. It's also the latest example of the state losing money that's already being put to use.

At the beginning of March, the Illinois Department of Agriculture learned the Trump administration will not reimburse the state for costs in the Illinois-EATS program incurred after Trump took office, leaving the state without \$18 million of reimbursements. The program provides fresh food from Illinois farms to community distribution sites.

Read more: Trump administration ends reimbursements for Illinois food programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture terminated a \$26.3 million grant earlier this month to the Illinois State Board of Education that helped Illinois schools and child care facilities buy locally grown fresh produce from Illinois farmers for use in meals and snacks.

Read more: In remarks to teachers union, Pritzker lashes out at Trump's education cuts

Other areas of funding also remain uncertain as federal judges issue injunctions preventing the federal government from blocking funding already obligated to states and the Trump administration changes course about whether it will end or continue programs.

*Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service that distributes state government coverage to hundreds of news outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.*

## Trump Administration Blocks More Than \$400m in Funding For Illinois Health Programs

*Nearly \$2B in federal funds is not being sent to Illinois, according to Pritzker's office*

By Ben Szalinski & Jade Aubrey  
Capitol News Illinois

President Donald Trump's administration is pulling back \$477 million from Illinois that was to be used to prevent infectious disease and treat mental health and substance abuse issues.

The Illinois Department of Public Health announced this week the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is taking back \$125 million allocated to IDPH and 97 local health departments for infectious disease prevention. Another \$324 million appropriated by Congress for "future use" in preventing and treating infectious disease also is being blocked.

Separately, the Illinois Department of Human Services was notified this week that \$28 million from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for mental health and substance use disorder treatment would be terminated. The funds had been appropriated by Congress in the American Rescue Plan Act for 77 Illinois community organizations providing mental health and substance abuse treatment services to residents.

"This decision to terminate already awarded federal funding will cause immeasurable harm and disruption to the health and safety of the people of Illinois and generate larger expenses in the longer run," Gov. JB Pritzker said in a statement.

IDPH's funding for infectious disease prevention will see a "debilitating impact," Director Sameer Vohra said in a statement. IDPH has been using the funding to track the spread

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