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A New Years Party that did not End Well

By David Larson

New Years Eve 1958 was depicted in Frances Ford Coppola's iconic movie *Godfather Part II*. A society without a knowledge of history is like a person with no memory to make important decisions.

Recognizing the Cuban Revolution is interesting at this moment for many reasons. One reason is that the overthrow of the Batista Regime by Fidel Castro occurred on New Years Eve 1958. Another reason is that President Barack Obama moved to "normalize" relations with Cuba. The plan when it was announced would have an American embassy opened in Havana by the end of 2015. President Donald Trump reversed this normalization of relations with Cuba and now has been reelected President. After Trump's first term, President Joe Biden has moved toward the normalization of relations with Cuba.

The actual timeframe of the revolution ran from July 1953 until January 1, 1959. The revolution was led by Fidel Castro, and by Che Guevara, who some described as the conscience of the revolution.

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IBM Will Build New Quantum Computer In State-Backed Technology Park

Latest win in governor's plan to make Illinois 'global capital for quantum computing'

By Andrew Adams Capitol News Illinois

IBM, the tech giant known for revolutionizing computing over the past 70 years, is setting up shop on Chicago's South Side to develop what could be the field's next big leap: quantum technology.

It's part of a multi-year effort from Gov. JB Pritzker, state officials and economic development groups to turn Illinois into a global hub for quantum computing and research.

IBM announced Thursday it will open a facility known as the National Quantum Algorithm Center that will bring together experts and researchers to focus on ways to combine quantum computers and traditional computers to solve complex problems. It will also house IBM's Quantum System Two, a quantum computer that can be upgraded as the company develops its technology further.

Quantum technology uses quantum mechanics – the sometimes counterintuitive physics of very small particles – to perform calculations and do other computing tasks very quickly, some of which would take a traditional computers thousands or even millions of years.

IBM is the latest organization to join the state's efforts to make Illinois a quantum computing

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The first three from the left: Fidel Castro, Raul Castro, and Che Guevara

Electors Cast Official Votes for President

Harris, Walz take Illinois' 19 electoral votes

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

Illinois officially awarded its 19 electoral votes Tuesday to Vice President Kamala Harris and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, the unsuccessful Democratic candidates to be the next president and vice president of the United States.

During a ceremony at the Statehouse that lasted only about half an hour, 19 people chosen by the Democratic Party of Illinois stepped up, one-by-one, and dropped their paper ballots into a specially-made wooden box – one ballot for president, and a separate ballot for vice president.

For some, it was a chance to make a final statement about the 2024 election.

"It is my honor and my privilege to represent the people of the 7th Congressional District to cast this historical ballot for a person who has broken barriers for women, and particularly women of color," said Elector Vera Davis, wife of U.S. Rep. Danny Davis. "And also, my sister in the sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., I cast this vote for Kamala Harris."

After the ballots were cast, Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias, accompanied by electors Loretta Durbin and Bobby Rush, opened the ballot box, counted the ballots and announced the results.

At first, Giannoulias misspoke and said Harris had received 19 votes and Walz had received 11. But after someone pointed out the error, he corrected himself for the record.

"It is my pleasure to announce that Kamala D. Harris has received 19 electoral votes for president of the United States from the great state of Illinois, and Tim Walz has also received 19 votes for vice

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Regulators OK Statewide Electric Grid Upgrades, Rate Increases

Decision comes after state rejected utilities' original grid plans last year

By Andrew Adams Capitol News Illinois

Illinois utilities are set to invest more than a billion dollars into upgrading the state's electric distribution grid, resulting in higher rates for customers around the state.

The Illinois Commerce Commission on Thursday approved scaled-back plans submitted by Commonwealth Edison and Ameren Illinois, the electric utilities for northern and southern Illinois, respectively.

The plans outline the next three years of infrastructure upgrades, laying out how the companies will roll out new technologies to meet the state's clean energy goals and maintain existing infrastructure.

Regulators approved \$1.5 billion in spending for ComEd, a 25% reduction from their original plan. They also approved \$333 million in spending at Ameren, a 75% reduction. Ameren also had some additional spending approved earlier this year due to a procedural appeal of a previous ICC decision.

The ComEd plan includes an average increase in residential bills of about \$22 per year each year between 2024 and 2027, when the company is expected to file a new grid plan.

Ameren has not released a final cost estimate for its 1.2 million customers, but officials at the company say Thursday's decision will increase bills by less than a dollar per month.

Read more: After being rebuffed by regulators, utilities file slimmed-down spending plans

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Budget Pressures Could Impact K-12 Funding

State Board of Education gets briefing on fiscal landscape ahead

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

Public schools in Illinois have enjoyed several consecutive years of substantial increases in state funding, thanks largely to steady growth in state revenues and a new funding formula that lawmakers approved in 2018.

But whether that can continue into the upcoming fiscal year is an open question that state lawmakers will have to face when they return to the Statehouse in January.

With budget forecasters predicting flat revenue growth over the next year and continued demands for increased spending in other areas of the budget such as pension costs and health care, members of the Illinois State Board of Education were told Wednesday that they are now in a different fiscal environment.

"I do not envy anybody involved in that process because it won't be a fun time," Eric Noggle, revenue manager of the legislature's Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability, or COGFA, told the board.

COGFA is a nonpartisan agency that provides economic and budgetary analysis to the General Assembly. It operates independently of the

Governor's Office of Management and Budget, or GOMB, although the two agencies are often in agreement in their general findings and analysis.

In November, GOMB issued a report projecting a \$3.2 billion deficit in the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2025. That was based on projections of essentially flat revenue growth of about \$53.4 billion, and a 6% increase in spending due to statutorily required increases in things like pension contributions, Medicaid and state employee health care costs, and PreK-12 education.

In the current fiscal year, state spending on public schools totals just under \$11 billion, or about 20% of the state's \$53 billion General Revenue Fund Budget.

Two factors are primarily responsible for the demand for increased state spending on schools. One is the 2018 funding formula, known as the Evidence-Based Funding model, that calls for annual increases of at least \$350 million.

That law sets out a formula for determining what would be an "adequate" level of funding for each district based on factors such as total student enrollment, poverty rates, and the number of English language learners in the district. The adequacy target includes both state aid and money the district is able to raise on its own through local property taxes.

The law then directs that the new money each year be sent to districts that are furthest away from their adequacy target. The annual funding increases are supposed to continue until all districts reach at least 90% of their adequacy target.

But some advocates argue the state needs to increase its evidence-based funding by more than the minimum \$350 million each year.

"One thing that we know is that three out of four children in Illinois are still in underfunded districts. That's more than 1 million students," Jelani Saadiq, director of government relations for the advocacy group Advance Illinois, told the board during the public comment portion of its meeting Wednesday. "The latest school report card shows continued challenges with chronic absenteeism and lagging recovery in math. We need to set our schools up for success in addressing these challenges in the absence of federal stimulus funds by doubling down on our EBF investment moving forward."

The other factor driving increases in public school spending is known as "mandatory categorical" spending, or MCAT, which includes such things as transportation costs, the state's free breakfast and lunch program and the cost of educating children in foster care.

Andy Krupin, ISBE's director of funding and disbursements, explained that the state often does not fully fund MCAT expenses and thus "prorates" the amount it reimburses districts for those expenses. The level of proration varies depending on how much the General Assembly appropriates in each category.

Based on the agency's estimate of next year's costs, Krupin said, the General Assembly would need to add another \$142.2 million to its PreK-12 budget just to maintain the same level of proration as this year.

Combined with the \$350 million increase called for under the EBF formula, that would be a total increase in PreK-12 spending of \$492.2 million next year.

But ISBE has received requests for even more funding increases than that. During a series of

public hearings on the budget in October, officials said, the agency heard numerous proposals adding up to about \$2.2 billion in funding increase requests. Those included proposals for a \$550 million increase in EBF funding and a \$10 million increase in career and technical education funding, among other requests.

GOMB's projection of a \$3.2 billion deficit assumed a \$444 million increase in school spending, as well as a \$1.1 billion increase in health care expenses and a \$437 million increase in pension contributions, among other increases.

State Superintendent of Education Tony Sanders is scheduled to submit his final budget proposal to the board for approval at the board's Jan. 15 meeting. Pritzker is scheduled to deliver his budget address to the General Assembly Feb. 19.

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Nearly 300 New Illinois Laws Take Effect in 2025

They include digital driver's licenses, salary transparency and health insurance changes

By Ben Szalinski Capitol News Illinois

Time to study up, Illinois. When the clock hits midnight on New Year's Day, 293 new state laws will take effect.

Those include some of the defining bills of the 2024 legislative session and others that will change how people get IDs, evaluate job postings and even cancel gym memberships.

In addition to the laws taking effect on Jan. 1, the state's minimum wage will rise to \$15 to complete a ramp up initiated during Gov. JB Pritzker's first month in office in 2019.

Digital driver's licenses

The secretary of state can begin creating a process to issue digital driver's licenses and state IDs beginning in the new year after Pritzker signed House Bill 4592. Residents will still be required to receive a physical ID and agencies or private entities will not be required to accept digital IDs in place of physical IDs.

Providing a phone to police to show a digital ID also doesn't give police consent to search a person's cell phone.

Salary transparency

Employers with 15 or more employees must include information about benefits and the salary range on job postings, according to House Bill 3129. The law will also apply to businesses hiring for remote work positions in Illinois.

"When employers aren't transparent about pay, gender and racial wage gaps widen, costing women and people of color valuable compensation," Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton said in a news release. "Illinois' new Pay Transparency law is a resounding win for the working people who call our state home."


'Junk' health insurance

Short-term, limited duration health insurance plans will be illegal in Illinois beginning Jan. 1. The plans, often called "junk insurance" by critics, do not meet the minimum standards of the

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- Alice Aumiller, 87, Belvidere, Dec. 19
- Terry Blazer, 73, Formerly of Belvidere, Dec. 13
- Donald Claude, 98, Formerly of Poplar Grove, Dec. 16
- Roosevelt Dennis, 78, Belvidere, Dec. 18
- Gerald "Jerry" Kasang, 83, Marengo, Dec. 16
- Gloria Kirchner, 84, Belvidere, Dec. 13
- Barbara Montgomery, 81, Belvidere, Dec. 13
- Lester Nelson, 79, Belvidere, Dec. 16
- Tony Ziegelbauer, 66, Belvidere, Dec. 17



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New Laws

from page 2

federal Affordable Care Act.

The ban outlined in House Bill 2499 was part of Pritzker's health insurance overhaul that lawmakers passed in the spring. It was aimed at reducing barriers to care for patients and making health care more affordable by expanding coverage requirements for insurance companies.

Short-term insurance plans are typically for people who have a lapse in health insurance coverage such as when they lose or change jobs, but they are different from COBRA benefits, which most employers are required to offer under federal law. Supporters of the bill argued the plans are deceptive and stick consumers with huge out-of-pocket costs, but others said the plans provide consumers with an affordable option to fill a gap in coverage.

Caregiver discrimination

House Bill 2161 adds family responsibilities to the list of categories protected from discrimination and retaliation in the workplace. The new law prevents employers from taking adverse action against employees because of their responsibilities as a caregiver for a family member, which could cause them to miss work.

Bill sponsor Rep. Will Guzzardi, D-Chicago, told a House committee in April that pregnant women are a good example of who the bill is designed to help. He said pregnant women shouldn't be passed up for a promotion or face other consequences at work in anticipation that they will be taking time off to care for their baby. Guzzardi stressed the bill does not protect employees who fail to meet job performance requirements.

AI regulations

New laws governing artificial intelligence take effect Jan. 1. It will be illegal to generate child pornography using AI, according to House Bill 4623. Supporters of the bill, including the Illinois Attorney General's Office, said it is becoming more difficult to distinguish between real and AI-generated images. They said updating Illinois' child pornography laws was a necessary to step allow law enforcement to identify and prosecute child pornography cases.

House bill 4875 also adds new protections to prohibit using AI to recreate a person's voice, image or likeness for commercial purposes without the person's consent. Recording artists can seek damages for violations of the law.

Politics and religion at work

Employees can't be required to sit through work meetings discussing religion or politics

starting Jan. 1. Senate Bill 3649, an initiative of the Illinois AFL-CIO, creates new protections for employees who skip out on such meetings and prevents employers from retaliating against them.

The law does not prohibit discussing religion or politics at work, but employees are not required to participate in the discussions if such activities are not part of their job. The law excludes non-profit and advocacy groups where politics or religion may be part of job.

Coming later in 2025

Pritzker's signature health reform package goes into effect on Jan. 1, but most provisions don't have to be implemented until the beginning of 2026. House Bill 5395 bans "step therapy," which requires patients to try and fail treatments preferred by insurance companies before they can receive the treatment recommended by their doctor.

It also bans insurance companies from requiring prior authorization for emergency in-patient mental health treatment, requires insurers to keep up-to-date lists of in-network providers and expands the power of the Illinois Department of Insurance to regulate premium rates.

Many hotels in Illinois will no longer be allowed to provide customers with single-use plastic soap and shampoo beginning July 1 under Senate Bill 2960. The move is designed to cut down on waste from single-use products. The Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association supported the change. Hotels with fewer than 50 rooms have until 2026 to make the change.

Other new laws

NIL money: Student athletes at NCAA universities can earn name, image and likeness money directly from their universities. House Bill 307 was an initiative of the University of Illinois.

Hearing aids: Insurance providers must cover medically prescribed hearing aids for all people under House Bill 2443. Coverage was previously only required for those under 18.

Gym memberships: House Bill 4911 requires gyms and fitness centers to accept multiple ways for people to cancel their membership. Physical fitness locations also must now allow customers to cancel their membership by email or online. Customers will also be allowed to submit written notice for canceling their membership by mail.

Subscription renewals: Businesses that offer a free trial or promotional period for their product or service must notify customers at least three days before the subscription automatically renews at a paid rate under Senate Bill 2764. The law only applies to subscriptions longer than 15 days.

Crime victim DNA: DNA evidence collected from a person who is the victim of a crime to aid a criminal investigation cannot be entered into a DNA database, according to House Bill 1168.

Families, Providers Of Early Intervention Services Seek \$60 Million in New State Funding

Advocates argue wait times are too long, babies at risk of falling behind

By Atmika Iyer

Illinois News Bureau for Capitol News Illinois

Early childhood intervention advocates are calling on the state to increase funding by \$60 million to better support children with developmental delays and disabilities who are on long waiting lists for the critical services and care.

"Babies can't wait" is the rallying cry for [Raising Illinois](#), the coalition championing the request for new funding in the upcoming fiscal year budget. They held rallies from Oct. 22 through Nov. 1 in nine cities, including Champaign, Peoria, Aurora and Chicago, calling attention to staffing shortages and long wait times for families to access early intervention services. The coalition called attention to 3,500 babies and toddlers being left on waiting lists every day to receive early intervention services.

Early intervention is a state-funded program that offers families with infants, toddlers and children up to age 3 access to speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy and more support if the child has a developmental delay or disability. The goal is to help children and families get the necessary resources to address development, speaking and mobility, as well as physical, cognitive and emotional abilities they may need support to develop in early childhood.

The extra funding would help attract more therapists and providers in early intervention. According to a [report published by Raising Illinois](#), around 500 early intervention providers have left the profession every year since 2019 in the state.

Therapists and providers in early intervention are designated as independent contractors — which means no health insurance, no pay for missed appointments and no fees for transportation to the families they serve, Peoria speech pathologist and Early Intervention Grassroots Alliance leader Sarah Ziemba said.

"Most of the people in my field are women

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New Years Eve from page 1

Both men came from wealthy backgrounds. Fidel was the illegitimate son of a wealthy farmer; one of seven children that his father sired with his servant. Later, while studying law at the University of Havana, Fidel adopted a socialistic political philosophy that moved him to become a revolutionary. Che has been described as an “Argentine, Marxist, revolutionary, physician, author, guerrilla leader, diplomat, and military theorist.” His family was anchored in the rising Middle Class in Argentina with parents that supported “Liberal” ideals including the support of the Republicans in Spain’s struggle with the Fascist Franco. From his upbringing, he acquired an affinity for the poor.

It was out of this mutual affinity for the poor that brought Fidel and Che together. They recognized that Cuba’s Batista regime was sacking the nation and contributing to the poverty, which had identified the nation for decades. Cuba was a nation heavily influenced by the American mafia in the 1950s. The mob used the island as a destination, much like Las Vegas today. It was also an agricultural economy composed of wealthy landowners. Cuba does not have a native population. Christopher Columbus and his son exterminated all of the indigenous people of Cuba long ago.

In a prelude to the revolution, Fulgencio Batista served as President of Cuba from 1940 until 1944. He lost a return to office in 1952, so he staged a military coup-d’etat, canceling that year’s elections. During his first term, he was a strong believer in Communism, but in his second term, he became a strong anti-communist, Fascist. As a result of the coup led by Batista, Castro a young lawyer at the time, called for the overthrow of the Batista regime. Fidel and his brother Raul founded “The Movement,” stockpiled weapons, and by 1953 they claimed they had 1,200 followers described as disgruntled workers.

The Battle of Santa Clara occurred in a haze of confusion with combined rebel forces overpowering governmental forces. The result of the rebel efforts caused confusion within the governmental forces, and the governmental forces retreated in disarray. This defeat occurred on New Years Eve, 1958. Batista left Cuba with a trove of funding, bound for Miami. This was the moment in the Coppola movie where Michael tells Fredo he knew it was him who betrayed him.

There was never an accurate audit or calculation of how much gold and money left Cuba with Batista, but the estimated total reached into the tens of millions.

In 1959, Castro came to American to explain to the American people and the American government why the revolution had occurred. He was a guest on many news and late-night shows, however, he was not a favorite with the newly elected Kennedy administration. Perhaps

because of the Kennedys alleged connection to the mafia, who lost everything in the revolution. An economic embargo was soon installed, and this policy has remained until today. Under President Obama, this started to change.

In 1961, America backed an armed counterrevolutionary attack at the Bay of Pigs that was aimed at ousting Castro, but the effort failed. The counterrevolutionaries were defeated, and though many plans surfaced to assassinate or to overthrow Castro and his government, the American effort to that end ceased to be exercised after the fiasco at Bay of Pigs.

Since those days, little has been done with Cuba other than for the island to be watched. Since the Spanish-American War, a small piece of the island has been claimed by America, where a Marine Corps base was installed. That base, Guantanamo, has also been used as a site to hold individuals that were believed to be terrorists.

Yet, for the first time in almost 60 years, there could be a change in American policy with Cuba. It could be possible soon for Americans to travel to Cuba and to engage in commerce. It could soon be possible for Americans to buy Cuban cigars, among other products.

The Journal wants to recognize “historically speaking news.com” for providing the photograph that was used here. We also want to acknowledge Wikipedia.com for material used in the preparation of this piece. In addition, much of this article was originally published in the Journal in 2014, written by James Middleton.

IBM from page 1

hub. Over the past year, several quantum computing organizations have made Chicago a go-to destination for quantum researchers and businesses, capitalizing on Pritzker’s goals for the research park.

In July, the federal Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA, announced it was going to launch a program meant to serve as a “proving ground” for quantum technologies – testing how useful they could be in real-world settings.

The same month, the state unveiled its plans for a quantum research and business park – with \$700 million in tax incentives, grants and other financial support. The Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park, or IQMP, is set to open in about two years with California-based PsiQuantum as its first anchor tenant.

DARPA and IBM will also have facilities at the quantum park, with the state kicking in \$25 million to purchase equipment and make preparations to house IBM’s new quantum computer.

As part of its initial commitment to the state,

IBM said its development will bring 50 permanent jobs to the park in addition to construction work.

IBM CEO Arvind Krishna said Thursday he expects the company’s overall investment in the facility to be in the tens of millions or low hundreds of millions. He said he expects that figure – and the number of jobs generated by the project – to grow as the company begins to host student intern programs, graduate fellowships and university faculty for research projects.

“Being at the forefront of this industry holds the potential to deliver long-term, broad-based economic prosperity for our people,” Pritzker said Thursday.

The IQMP is being built at the lakefront site of a former U.S. Steel plant on Chicago’s South Side. That plant closed in the early 1990s, but at its height of its operations was the source of tens of thousands of jobs and significant economic activity for its surrounding neighborhood.

Some local residents are worried that the benefits of a high-tech research and business facility won’t reach the neighborhood that still feels the absence of U.S. Steel’s plant.

“We’re a very unique and diverse community with a lot of talent, but there’s been a lot of disinvestment,” Vanessa Schwartz, a born-and-raised resident of the Southeast Side, told Capitol News Illinois in a late-November interview. “That property alone has had a lot of investors with plans that have fallen through, so there’s some kind of reticence with the community to see if this is going to be something like that.”

Schwartz, who now runs the Metropolitan Family Services’ Southeast Chicago Center, said residents in her community feel wary of the potential environmental impacts of the project and are worried they will lose access to a lakefront park at the site.

“The real fear is what’s going to happen to the local residents and the local neighborhood,” Schwartz said. “Will they be priced out, will rents increase?”

Schwartz said there have been several well-attended community meetings held to discuss the development, but much of the information provided to residents so far has been in “broad strokes” and been “too vague.”

Pritzker and others on Thursday defended efforts to meet with the community and address these concerns. He noted a “real commitment” from himself and many of the groups involved in the quantum park to address concerns from residents.

Rep. Curtis Tarver, D-Chicago, represents the district where the IQMP is being built and he said his office has received calls with concerns that are “very relevant,” but that he didn’t think a formal community benefits agreement was necessary for the project. Still, he applauded the community engagement efforts he’s seen so far.

“I’ve been around a long time. I used to work for Mayor (Richard M.) Daley’s office almost 20 years ago,” Tarver said. “This is as much engagement as I’ve seen on a project in quite some time. It really is.”

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Electors

from page 1

president of the United States,” Giannoulas said. “I did that on purpose. I’m proud to see the electors are paying attention.”

Read more: Illinois’ presidential electors to meet Tuesday to cast votes for Harris

Similar ceremonies were carried out in state capitals across the country and Washington, D.C. Although the final outcome has been known for weeks, the formal ceremony was still carried out, just as it has in every presidential election since the nation’s founding.

For Illinois, it was the 52nd meeting of the state’s presidential electors.

The ballots cast on Tuesday will next be delivered to the president of the U.S. Senate – who happens to be Harris – who will open and tally them during a joint session of Congress on Jan. 6.

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Grid

from page 1

These increases are on top of those approved in 2023 as part of separate multi-year “rate plans.” Both the grid plans and new ratemaking process are part of the 2021 Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, landmark climate legislation that set Illinois’ goal of decarbonizing the electric grid by 2045.

But the companies initially struggled to meet that act’s requirements. ComEd and Ameren filed grid plans in early 2023 with the goal of having them approved at the end of that year.

But in a rare and surprising move, commissioners at the ICC rejected those plans on a split vote. At the time, they said the companies didn’t meet legal requirements to prove that their plans were “cost effective” for customers and directed the two utilities to refile updated versions.

Read more: State regulators once again flex muscle in rejecting utilities’ grid plans, lessening rate hikes

Over the past nine months, regulators, state officials, consumer advocates and environmental groups have litigated and debated the revised plans, and the commission approved modified versions Thursday.

Representatives of both companies said they’re still reviewing the decisions but indicated they were happy to have more certainty for the next few years of infrastructure spending.

“Our primary focus remains our commitment to providing safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable energy to our customers and communities,” ComEd spokesperson John Schoen said in a statement.

Ameren officials said their plans to install upgrades and replace aging infrastructure will be good for customers in the long run, even if it comes with upfront costs.

“It is a ‘pay now or pay more later’ proposition,” Matt Tomc, who manages Ameren’s regulatory policy, told Capitol News Illinois.

The upgrades laid out in the two plans are notable because many of them are aimed at making electric distribution easier as the state moves toward relying on more renewable energy sources. This includes new methods of managing distributed energy generation – like rooftop and community solar projects.

The plans also include more traditional

spending on “poles and wires” – the distribution infrastructure that brings electricity to homes and businesses. Tomc noted this maintenance work has also changed due to an increased focus on the grid’s “resilience” in the face of severe weather events around the state.

Some state officials are beginning to worry about the long-term prospects for Illinois’ clean energy goals – particularly the future for clean energy generation and long-range transmission. But these grid plans, which focus on the local distribution network, were hailed by several advocates and regulators as a win for the state’s clean energy policy.

Read more: Worried about grid reliability, state officials seek to boost renewables, energy storage

The regulatory cases, which function like court proceedings, had several groups submit testimony and arguments that ICC commissioners weighed in their final decision. These groups included consumer advocates, environmental groups, the state and businesses that have an interest in energy policy.

Brad Klein, managing attorney at the Environmental Law & Policy Center, worked on the case and told Capitol News Illinois he was pleased with the collaborative approach that the state is taking to meet its climate goals and improve the electric grid.

“We hope this becomes a model for other states,” Klein said.

As part of this process, ComEd signed a memorandum of understanding with ELPC and several other groups to share data and work with them on future grid planning projects. Klein noted that while Ameren doesn’t have that formal obligation, it made similar commitments to ComEd.

Consumer advocates at the Citizens Utility Board, which also took part in the case, acknowledged that the decisions were a “step in the right direction” to limit what they called “wasteful” utility spending.

“In the face of foot-dragging by Illinois’ biggest electric utilities, this ICC has shown concern for affordability and reducing reckless utility spending,” CUB spokesperson Jim Chilsen said in a statement. “Of course, an increase of any kind will be difficult to bear for far too many customers who have been hit with multiple utility rate hikes over the last decade. We still have a lot of work to do to secure a clean, affordable energy future for Illinois consumers.”

ICC Chair Doug Scott called the decisions a “first step” and said future plans will be “refined and improved.”

Other commissioners noted that they expect continued collaboration between the utilities and others involved in the process.

“The work is not done,” ICC Commissioner Conrad Reddick said. “Today’s orders ask more of all the stakeholders. . . . CEJA mandates stakeholder workshops with wide participation, informed debate and robust discussion as the engine of that work.”

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.

**Intervention**

from page 3

who are married, who have access to benefits and health insurance through spouses. That is the only way they can remain in the field,” Ziembra said. “If the state can’t make decisive action to keep those providers and build up the early intervention program this fiscal year (2026), then that exodus of providers will be even more stark a year from now.”

Gov. JB Pritzker and lawmakers approved a measure creating a Department of Early Childhood earlier this year. His press secretary, Alex Gough, declined on Monday to comment further on the request for a \$60 million increase in early intervention programs. The current fiscal year 2025 budget includes a \$162 million General Revenue Fund appropriation for early intervention services, which marked a \$6 million increase from the previous year.

The shortage of staff has increased wait times for families hoping to get early intervention services before their children age out of the program. With an 8% delay in service, according to the Early Intervention Statistical Report released in September, some Illinois parents are unable to receive the full scope of services they could have access to, while providers are balancing an average caseload of 49 per worker.

Some parents also don’t know about the services.

Karen Heath, 41, of Joliet, had triplets born almost three months premature. While her newborns automatically qualified for early intervention, she said, the doctors who told her that her babies wouldn’t make it overnight originally did not tell her about the services. All they offered was training an hour before the triplets were discharged, connected to machines the infants would need at home, she said.

“What I saw driving from Joliet to Chicago every day for over 136 days, were three babies that were born early and showing signs to me of normal babies outside of the fact of the setbacks that they had,” Heath said. “In all actuality, they need help, they fall behind, because you have these programs out here, and we don’t know about these programs.”

She added that the nurse who put in a referral for Heath and her children to access early intervention services never informed her of the referral or explained what early intervention services were. While they were able to get physical therapy, consistency with other therapies like speech and occupational has been a challenge for her family. A little over a year ago, her now 6-year-old triplets were diagnosed with cerebral palsy after they aged out of early intervention.

“From what the specialist said, all of them had bleeds on the brain from being born so early. So, why they waited till they were 4 to give them a diagnosis, that I don’t know,” she added.

Pediatric physical therapist Darcy Armbruster echoed Heath’s sentiment that current wait times are frustrating, amid an undercount in children who qualify for early intervention with many parents unaware that this service exists.

“We know that we’re already having capacity issues for meeting the kids’ needs for those who are getting identified and referred to the system. We also know that we are under-identifying children,” Armbruster said. “Kids are also often seeing delays there. I know I work with one particular family who had concerns months before their pediatrician gave them a referral.”

Children with developmental delays or disabilities that remain unaddressed as they enter preschool are often met with under-resourced teachers and school therapists who aren’t able to

Continued on page 7

LEGAL NOTICES

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

Pingora Loan Servicing, LLC, Plaintiff,
-v.-
2023 FC 31

**LINN PERKINS, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF GARY RANDLE
DRAHEIM, DECEASED; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-
RECORD CLAIMANTS; SHARON GAHLBECK; UNKNOWN
HEIRS AND LEGATEES OF JOHN DRAHEIM Defendants.**

**1504 -1506 MARYLAND COURT,
BELVIDERE, IL 61008**

NOTICE OF SALE

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on 10/16/2024, an agent of Auction.com LLC will at 12:00 PM on 1/23/2025 located at 601 N Main Street, Courthouse Steps, Belvidere, IL 61008, sell at public sale to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate.

LOT THIRTY-ONE (31) AS DESIGNATED UPON THE PLAT OF APPLETON MEADOWS, A SUBDIVISION OF PART OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION 26, TOWNSHIP 44 NORTH, RANGE 3 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, AND PART OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF SECTION 27, TOWNSHIP 44 NORTH, RANGE 3 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, THE PLAT OF WHICH IS RECORDED IN DOCUMENT NO. 3920, SITUATED IN BOONE COUNTY, STATE OF ILLINOIS.

Commonly known as 1504 -1506 MARYLAND COURT, BELVIDERE, IL 61008

Property Index No. 05-26-102-001

The real estate is improved with a Single Family Residence.

The judgment amount was \$39,876.28

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: McCalla Raymer Leibert Pierce, LLC (312) 346-9088 please refer to file number 23-147201L.

Auction.com LLC

100 N LaSalle Suite 1400 Chicago, IL 60606 – 872-225-4985

You can also visit www.auction.com.

Attorney File No. 23-147201L

Case Number: 2023 FC 31

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.

6088-947769

Published in The Boone County Journal Dec 12, 19, 26, 2024 SW

CHANGE IN CERTIFICATE OF OWNERSHIP OF BUSINESS PUBLICATION NOTICE

Public Notice is hereby given that on DECEMBER 5, A.D. 2024, a certificate was filed in the Office of the County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, concerning the business known as WILCOX FRONTIER SPORTING GOODS, located at 704 S. STATE ST., BELVIDERE, IL 61008, which certificate sets forth the following changes in the operation thereof: The business is dissolved.

Dated this 05th day of December, A.D. 2024

Julie A. Bliss

Boone County Clerk

Published in the Boone County Journal 12/12,19,26 (P)

STATE OF ILLINOIS

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL
BOONE COUNTY

CARLOS ROJAS CEBALLOS, Plaintiff

-VS- CASE # 2024-DN-67

EVA GONZALEZ ARIZMENDI, Defendant

NOTICE OF PUBLICATION

Notice is given to you, EVA GONZALEZ ARIZMENDI, Defendant that this cause has been commenced against you in this Court asking for DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE and other relief.

I have been separated from Eva Gonzalez Arizmendi for 30 years. I do not know her whereabouts in Mexico (Veracruz)

Dated: 11/26/2024

Pamela Coduto

Clerk of the Circuit Court

17th Judicial Court

Boone County, Illinois

Published in The Boone County Journal 12/19, 12/26/2024, 01/02/2025 (P)

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS
COUNTY DEPARTMENT – PROBATE DIVISION

Estate of THOMAS J. HORVATH, Deceased
No. 24 PR 45

CLAIM NOTICE

NOTICE is given of the death of THOMAS J. HORVATH of Poplar Grove, Illinois. Letters of Office as Independent Executor were issued on December 10, 2024, to TERRENCE M. HORVATH, 3116 South Amble Pass, Gold Canyon, AZ 85118, who is the legal representative of the Estate of THOMAS J. HORVATH, whose attorney is Franks, Gerkin, Ponitz & Greeley, P.C., 19333 East Grant Highway, P.O. Box 5, Marengo, IL 60152.

Claims against the estate may be filed within six (6) months from the date of first publication, or within three (3) months from the date of mailing or delivery of Notice to creditors, if mailing or delivery is required by Section 5/18-3 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 against the estate may be filed in the office of the Boone County Circuit Clerk-Probate Division at the Boone County Courthouse, 601 North Main Street, Belvidere, IL, or with the estate legal representative, or both. When a claim is filed with the representative but not with the Court, the representative may file the claim with the Court but has no duty to do so.

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

PREPARED BY:

Christopher T. Marx – ARDC#: 6291152
FRANKS, GERKIN, PONITZ & GREELEY, P.C.

Attorneys for Independent Executor

Our File No.: 21889.175

19333 East Grant Highway, P.O. Box 5

Marengo, IL 60152

(815) 923-2107

pleadings@fgpglaw.com

Published in *The Boone County Journal* Dec. 19, 26, Jan 2

2025 NOTICE OF ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

To All Owners And Occupiers Of Lands Lying Within The Boundaries Of The Boone County Soil And Water Conservation District:

Notice is hereby given that an Election will be held on the eighth day of January, 2025 from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 211 N. Appleton Rd, Belvidere, IL 61008. Two Directors will be elected to serve the Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District of the State of Illinois.

All persons, firms or corporations who hold legal title or are in legal possession of any land lying within the boundaries of the said district are eligible to vote at said election, whether as lessee, renter, tenant or otherwise. Only such persons, firms or corporations are eligible to vote.

William Hall

Chairman

Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District

Published in *The Boone County Journal* Dec.26, 2024

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT FOR
BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS - CHANCERY DIVISION

CARRINGTON MORTGAGE SERVICES, LLC, Plaintiff,

vs. Case No.: 2024FC49

**BRIAN MIELKE; LOUIS MIELKE; SECRETARY OF HOUSING
AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT; FOUNDATION FINANCE
COMPANY LLC; ASMC SERVICING LTD.; FIRST NORTHERN
CREDIT UNION; MV REALTY OF ILLINOIS, LLC; UNKNOWN
OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS, Defendants.**

Property Address:

220 Beacon Dr, Belvidere, IL 61008

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO THE FOLLOWING,

BRIAN MIELKE

LOUIS MIELKE

defendants, that this case has been commenced in this Court against you and other defendants, asking for the foreclosure of a certain Mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to wit:

LOT EIGHT (8) IN BLOCK TWO (2) AS DESIGNATED UPON THE PLAT OF BIESTER'S THIRD SUBDIVISION, BEING A PART OF LOT 4 OF PROSPECT HILL SUBDIVISION, THE PLAT OF WHICH FIRST NAMED SUBDIVISION IS RECORDED IN BOOK 4 OF PLATS ON PAGE 30 IN THE RECORDER'S OFFICE OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS; SITUATED IN THE COUNTY OF BOONE AND STATE OF ILLINOIS.

Commonly known as: 220 Beacon Dr, Belvidere, IL 61008

Names of the titleholders of record: BRIAN MIELKE; LOUIS MIELKE.

Date of the Mortgage: September 30, 2008.

Name or names of the mortgagors: BRIAN MIELKE; LOUIS MIELKE.

Name of the mortgagee: GSF Mortgage Corp..

Date and place of recording: October 1, 2008; Office of the Recorder of the Deeds of Boone County, Illinois.

Identification of recording: Document No. 2008R08245.

NOW THEREFORE, unless you file your answer or otherwise file your appearance in this case, on or before January 25, 2025, A JUDGMENT OR DECREE BY DEFAULT MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST YOU FOR THE RELIEF ASKED IN THE COMPLAINT.

E-filing is now mandatory with limited exceptions. 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 <http://illinoiscourts.gov/self-help> or talk with your local circuit clerk's office. If you cannot e-file, you may be able to get an exemption that allows you to file in-person or by mail. Ask your circuit clerk for more information or visit www.illinoislegalaid.org. For information about defending yourself in a court case (including filing an appearance or fee waiver), or to apply for free legal help, go to www.illinoislegalaid.org. You can also ask your local circuit clerk's office for a fee waiver application.

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

Lender Legal PLLC

1800 Pembroke Drive, Suite 250

Orlando, Florida 32810

Tel: (407) 730-4644

Service Emails:

cwinters@lenderlegal.com

EService@LenderLegal.com

LLS13560-IL - MIELKE

_s/ Colin Winters, Esq. ___

Colin Winters, Esq.

Counsel of Record for Plaintiff

ARDC # 6297980

Published in The Boone County Journal Dec 26, Jan 2, 9, 2025

NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION
STATE OF ILLINOIS

BOONE COUNTY IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE

SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Ma Calderon Zarate, Plaintiff

V. Case No. 2024-DN-53

Joel Huerta Parra, Defendant TO: JOEL HUERTA PARRA,

TAKE NOTICE that a Complaint has been filed in the above case in the Circuit Court of Boone County, Illinois. The relief sought is an Absolute Divorce by the Plaintiff, Ma Calderon Zarate.

You are required to file a response to this Complaint no later than January 24th, 2025 which is 40 days from the date of the first publication of this notice. If you fail to respond by this date, the Plaintiff will request the Court to grant the relief sought in the Complaint.

This notice is given on the 13th day of December, 2024. Christian E Solares

Attorney for Plaintiff

Midwest Law Works, LLC Christian Solares, ARDC #6325075 4855

E State St., # 25

Phone Number: 815-312-1703

E-mail: Christian@midwestlawworks.com

E-FILED

Nov 27 2024

02:24PM

PAMELA CODUTO

Published in *The Boone County Journal* 12/26, 2024, 1/2,9, 16, 2025

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF AUDIT REPORT FOR THE BOONE COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT NO. 2

The Board of Trustees of the Boone County Fire Protection District No. 2, Boone County, Illinois, hereby provides public notice that an audit of its funds for the fiscal year beginning on May 1, 2023 and ending on April 30, 2024 was prepared by our auditor, Roger E. Wooten, CPA of Garden Prairie, Illinois. The FY2023-2024 audit has been filed with the Boone County Clerk in Belvidere, IL in accordance with 30 ILCS 15/0.01 et seq. The entire audit report and the annual statement of receipts and disbursements are available for public inspection at the Fire District Administration Office located at 1777 Henry Luckow Lane, Belvidere, Illinois from 9:00 a.m. through 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. /s/ Mark Huntington, Treasurer, Board of Trustees, Boone County Fire Protection District No. 2.

STATE OF WISCONSIN, CIRCUIT COURT, DANE
PUBLIC SUMMONS and NOTICE

(Small Claims)

CREATIVE FINANCE, INC.

815 Business Park Road

Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965, Plaintiff

-VS- CASE NO. 24SC7326

JOHN RANDALL SPLAN

713 ½ Buchanan Street

Belvidere, IL 61008, Defendant

NOTICE OF PUBLICATION

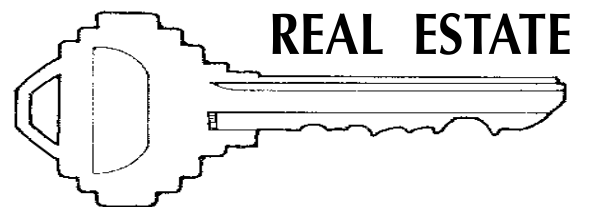
Notice is given to you, JOHN RANDALL SPLAN, Defendant that you are being sued by the above Plaintiff.

The lawsuit will be heard in the follow small claims court in DANE County in First Floor Courtroom 1000, 215 South Hamilton Street, Madison, WI 53703 on January 17, 2025 at 9:00a.m. Courthouse phone number – (608) 266-4121.

If you do not attend the hearing, the court may enter a judgement against you in favor of the Plaintiff suing you. A copy of the claim has been sent to you at your address as stated above. A judgement may be enforced as provided by law. A judgement awarding money may become a lien against any real estate (property) you own now or in the future, and may also be enforced by garnishment or seizure of property.

You may have the option to Answer without appearing in court on the court date by filing a written Answer with the clerk of court before the court date. You must send a copy of your Answer to the Plaintiff named above at their address. You may contact the clerk of court at the telephone number above to determine if there are other methods to answer a Small Claims complaint that county.

This was published in The Boone County Journal – 12/26/2024



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

Pingora Loan Servicing, LLC, Plaintiff,

-v.- 2023 FC 31

**LINN PERKINS, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF GARY RANDLE
DRAHEIM, DECEASED; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-
RECORD CLAIMANTS; SHARON GAHLBECK; UNKNOWN
HEIRS AND LEGATEES OF JOHN DRAHEIM Defendants.**

**1504 -1506 MARYLAND COURT,
BELVIDERE, IL 61008**

NOTICE OF SALE

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Commonly known as 1504 -1506 MARYLAND COURT, BELVIDERE, IL 61008

Property Index No. 05-26-102-001

The real estate is improved with a Single Family Residence.

The judgment amount was \$39,876.28

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.

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For information, contact Plaintiff's attorney: McCalla Raymer Leibert Pierce, LLC (312) 346-9088 please refer to file number 23-147201L.

Auction.com LLC

100 N LaSalle Suite 1400 Chicago, IL 60606 – 872-225-4985

You can also visit www.auction.com.

Attorney File No. 23-147201L

Case Number: 2023 FC 31

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6088-947769

Published in The Boone County Journal Dec 12, 19, 26, 2024 SW

The Journal
has old newspapers free
for picking up from time to time.
Call to see if any are available

Intervention

from page 5

offer one-on-one support in the same manner as early intervention.

Erin Stout, program director at Peoria Bright Futures preschools, said teachers are seeing “a huge delay in speech” and having a hard time helping a larger group of students whose needs have not been met by or identified for early intervention services. She said that when toddler students can’t communicate their needs, they become frustrated with a “snowball effect” in the classroom.

“It takes time to get those students through the process of getting the speech and language services that they need, figuring out what tools or devices or supports they’re going to need that will help them,” Stout said.

For Stephany Valencia, 28, of Aurora, her son was able to receive speech therapy after her child care provider informed her about early intervention services when her son was a little older than 2. He received six months of speech therapy before he aged out of the program. Valencia said that while the therapy was helpful, her son, now 7 years old, is having trouble with speech in school.

“It’s so frustrating for my child to struggle with communication — I was so relieved when I was taught about the program. It gave me hope,” Valencia said. “My child, he got six months of early intervention, then another year of early childhood special education — a year-and-a-half total. He’s still struggling, sometimes his bilingualism is blamed for it.”

The request for more state funding comes at a time when Illinois faces a \$3.2 billion projected deficit for the 2026 fiscal year, though forecasts predict a \$574 million increase to the Illinois Department of Human Services operating budget. Early intervention programs fall under the department, and it remains unclear in a tight spending year whether there can be an increase for intervention programs.

“If we achieved this \$60 million increase, and that translated to like a 15% increase for providers,” Ziemba said. “I do think that there would be an immediate improvement, and there’d be an immediate willingness to try to attract providers and see more families, and we would see that impact quickly. I think it would be a complete cultural renewal.”

Atmika Iyer is a graduate student in journalism with Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications, and a Fellow in its Medill Illinois News Bureau working in partnership with Capitol News Illinois.

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.

Prosecution Rests In Madigan Trial as Defense Calls Witness Dropped From Feds’ List

Trial stays focused on AT&T-related bribery charge as co-defendant begins mounting case

By Hannah Meisel Capitol News Illinois

After calling 50 witnesses over the last two months, prosecutors in former Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan’s federal corruption trial rested their case Wednesday, followed

immediately by defense attorneys calling their first witness.

Lawyers for Madigan’s close friend and co-defendant, longtime Statehouse lobbyist Mike McClain, called a witness the government dropped off its own list last week: retired AT&T Illinois lobbyist Steve Selcke.

Prosecutors had closed out their case detailing a 2017 episode in which AT&T hired newly retired Democratic state Rep. Eddie Acevedo as a consultant while the company was pushing for major legislation. The feds allege Acevedo’s \$22,500 no-work contract was meant as a bribe to Madigan in exchange for the powerful speaker’s help pushing the legislation through the General Assembly.

But Selcke insisted neither he nor any of his colleagues believed hiring Acevedo had any bearing on the passage of a bill AT&T had been working on for the last six years, except to prevent against “rocking the boat” with Madigan’s office.

Selcke gave essentially the same testimony in September at the separate bribery trial of former AT&T Illinois president Paul La Schiazza, which ended in a deadlocked jury. After prosecutors last week handed over the list of the remaining witnesses they intended to call in the case, Madigan attorney Dan Collins told U.S. District Judge John Blakey that Selcke’s absence from the list was “not a shock” and that defense lawyers had subpoenaed him instead.

In the few hours Selcke was on the witness stand Wednesday, the former lobbyist took jurors through the same events they’ve now heard about three times.

In 2017, Illinois and California were the only two states that still had 1930s-era laws on their books requiring AT&T to maintain its aging copper landline network as the “carrier of last resort,” or COLR. AT&T’s predecessor, the Bell Telephone Company, operated a nationwide monopoly until its breakup in the 1980s, which obligated the company to provide landline service everywhere.

But by the early 2010s, landline customers began dropping precipitously while maintaining the old copper line phone system kept getting more expensive. An AT&T executive last week testified the company struggled to find spare equipment on eBay, as the manufacturers had long since gone out of business or stopped making replacement parts.

AT&T adopted a national strategy to get COLR laws off the books in the 21 states that had adopted the requirements from the 1934 Federal Communications Act. The company argued doing so would allow it to invest more in wireless and internet infrastructure, bringing parity with peers who weren’t beholden to COLR laws.

Selcke noted the Illinois team’s attempts had failed in 2011, 2013 and 2015, though the company did have a legislative victory in 2015 that he believed signaled Madigan was becoming more open to the idea of full COLR relief.

And in February 2017, Selcke was proven right when the powerful speaker accepted a meeting with labor leaders to discuss COLR, at least through the lens of preserving union jobs. On the same day Selcke and his colleagues received word about Madigan’s agreement to a meeting, one of AT&T Illinois’ other two internal lobbyists received an email from McClain asking if there was “even a small contract for Eddie Acevedo.”

At the time, Acevedo was newly retired from 20 years in the Illinois House and looking for lobbying and consulting work along with his sons. Two days later, La Schiazza emailed AT&T Illinois’ executive team, saying he’d just spoken to McClain, who told him that Madigan had assigned him the COLR relief bill as a “special

project.”

“Game on,” La Schiazza wrote in his update.

Selcke on Wednesday said he viewed that as a “positive development” for COLR, having known McClain since the late 1970s while Selcke was a staffer for House Republicans and McClain was a Democratic leader of the House before his decades as a lobbyist. Selcke told the jury what it’s now heard dozens of times over the course of trial: McClain was close to Madigan and was viewed as the powerful speaker’s emissary.

But it wasn’t until more than two months later that Selcke and his colleagues were able to offer Acevedo a nine-month consulting contract, which he initially turned down in a contentious meeting. Selcke said Wednesday that he remembered Acevedo being insulted by the \$2,500-per-month offer, though he ultimately accepted.

“Did you at any time think that in exchange, that would result in Speaker Madigan allowing COLR to pass?” McClain attorney John Mitchell asked Selcke Wednesday.

“I did not have the feeling that that would result in the speaker allowing passage,” Selcke answered.

“Did any of your colleagues ever tell you that they intended to trade a \$2,500-a-month job offer to Acevedo in exchange for Speaker Madigan’s allowing for passage of the COLR relief bill?” Mitchell asked.

“No,” Selcke said.

Mitchell showed Selcke emails in which he and his colleagues discuss “getting credit” for fulfilling McClain’s request and achieving the “ultimate objective.” Selcke said he and his colleagues only wanted to put La Schiazza in a position to go back to McClain to say they’d found something legitimate for Acevedo to do, though the former lawmaker never actually wrote the Latino Caucus-focused report he was supposedly hired to complete.

Selcke said he was “not aware of” anyone ever suggesting that McClain would tell Madigan to kill the COLR bill had AT&T not offered Acevedo a contract.

He explained Wednesday that a pair of GOP House members had warned that hiring Acevedo as a lobbyist might hurt AT&T’s hopes for a bipartisan vote on a COLR bill. At the time, consultants did not need to publicly register like lobbyists did, which is why Selcke suggested the company retain Acevedo as a consultant instead.

Madigan attorney Todd Pugh also asked Selcke whether there was a connection between Acevedo’s contract and COLR’s eventual passage.

“In my mind, it didn’t have any impact on our responsibility and effort to go get votes relative to the bill,” Selcke said. “It did have some degree of tangential impact because we didn’t want to rock the boat with the speaker’s office.”

Selcke’s testimony will continue Thursday on the trial’s last scheduled day before the jury is seated again on Jan. 2.

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.



BOONE COUNTY LICENSE & TITLE

What WE Can Do For YOU!

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- Cars • Trucks • Motorcycles •
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