

To be notified of new issues online, register at www.boonecountyjournal.com

Playing For School to Start

By David Larson

This photo was taken near Pearl and First Streets in Belvidere, sometime before 1913. It catches our attention because of the unfamiliar building in the background and the children playing before school.

The building furthest away in the picture is the original secondary school in Belvidere. In 1912-13, that building was replaced by what Belvidere knew as Belvidere High School until 1966. It was a high school for 53 years before it became Belvidere's junior high school for the following 20 years thereafter.

The closest building still exists. It was built to be a grade school, and functioned similarly to Perry School's role today in the system as a grade school. Presently, having been converted into Pearl Place Apartments. The building in the foreground and the yet-to-be-built Belvidere High School are the component buildings of today's apartment complex. The complex has just completed an extensive revocation, continuing to preserve Belvidere's architectural heritage.

After the junior high school moved out of the complex in the 80s, these buildings became a carcass, and the community didn't know what to do with them. An investment company and Belvidere Mayor Rory Peterson guided the establishment of



the apartment complex in the 90s.

The influence of our heritage in public education is underrated. When this part of the world began to be settled by Europeans, the ability to read, write, and do simple arithmetic were the only educated skills available to learn—if one were lucky enough to know someone who could teach them. Such was the beginnings of education in Belvidere.

Today, the curriculum of School Districts 100 and 200 are much more robust. In suburban school

districts, even more so. Despite taking education for granted, we have to acknowledge that the economic growth it has stimulated by invention and initiative. These have added to the pleasures of life in Belvidere.

In this picture, the play of children in the foreground is no different than the behavior of children today. The world is waiting for their generation to lead the next. But for them, it is just the imagination of children playing before the school day begins.

As Medicaid Redeterminations Restart, about 73% Of State's Recipients Remain Enrolled

More than 660,000 disenrolled following expiration of COVID-era rule

By Dilpreet Raju Capitol News Illinois

About 73 percent of Illinois' Medicaid recipients remain on the rolls after the first redetermination cycle following the COVID-19 pandemic, while approximately 660,000 recipients have been disenrolled.

Speaking at a news conference in Chicago, Gov. JB Pritzker celebrated the fact that 2.6 million Illinoisans remained on the rolls despite redeterminations beginning anew, saying "this is what good government looks like."

"I am proud to announce that Illinois is among the leading states in the country with a retention rate of 73 percent, one of the highest in the entire nation," he said. "We made every effort to automate renewals, give customers more time and information, and to build the capacity necessary to manage the caseload and work to avoid letting people slip through the cracks."

During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress enacted changes to Medicaid

Continued on page 4

Judge Considering Whether Slated Candidates Can Appear on November Ballot

Would-be GOP candidates sued over new law

By Hannah Meisel Capitol News Illinois

A Sangamon County judge is weighing whether to block a new state law that bans the long-practiced tradition of political parties slating candidates for a general election after sitting out of a primary race.

Democrats who control the General Assembly pushed the measure through the legislative process and Gov. JB Pritzker signed it into law in a matter of days last month, arguing that slating is unfair to voters who didn't get a say in a primary contest. Several would-be Republican candidates then sued over the law, claiming it's unfair to ban the practice in the middle of an election cycle.

Now, the dispute is in the hands of Sangamon County Judge Gail Noll, who heard two hours of arguments over the case on Monday, which was also the last day slated candidates were able to file their nominating petitions under the old law. Noll last week ordered the State Board of Elections to keep accepting the petitions while the case plays out, which the board had already been doing.

Continued on page 4

Hands-Off Approach To Homeschooling Puts Children at Risk

At 9 years old, L.J. started missing school. His parents said they would homeschool him. It took two years — during which he was beaten and denied food — for anyone to notice he wasn't learning.

By Beth Hundsdorfer & Molly Parker
Capitol News Illinois

This article was produced for ProPublica's Local Reporting Network in partnership with Capitol News Illinois.

It was on L.J.'s 11th birthday, in December 2022, that child welfare workers finally took him away. They arrived at his central Illinois home to investigate an abuse allegation and decided on the spot to remove the boy along with his baby brother and sister — the "Irish twins," as their parents called them.

His mother begged to keep the children while her boyfriend told child welfare workers and the police called to the scene that they could take L.J.: "You wanna take someone? Take that little motherfucker down there or wherever the fuck he is at. I've been trying to get him out of here for a long time."

By that time, L.J. told authorities he hadn't been in a classroom for years, according to police

Continued on page 4

OP-ED

Three Things About Inflation

By Bob Evans
Rockford University

Let us contemplate three facts. First, this is an election year. Second, the punitive effects of inflation fall most heavily on the very constituencies most likely to stray from their otherwise Democratic roots. Third, voters tend to make their decisions late in the summer before November-and more are voting early.

Democrats risk losing key constituencies because many putative loyalists appear to be alienated by the inflation that they blame on the Biden Administration. Polls reveal a public perception that we are actually in a recession while simultaneously being battered by high inflation. Just think about that! Elites may confidently chide the masses that such is not the case, but it would be well to remember the old saying about the relationship between perception and reality.

Many African American and Hispanic voters chafe under inflation. Seniors and public aid recipients live on fixed incomes. Young voters are just now sampling the economy. Inflation erodes the stability of so desperately needed by these fellow citizens. Further, for some of these folks the porous border seems to encourage the

perception of “those people” coming after “our” jobs.

The President actually deepens public anxiety by claiming that the problem of inflation is solved. First of all, he needs to be honest in order to be persuasive. The inflation rate was not nine percent when he assumed office, despite the claim that it was. It was one and a half percent, and then accelerated to the traumatic levels that people remember, and for which they assign blame. Wisely, the President trumpets the term “Bidenomics” less often now.

We must remember that inflation is cumulative. It accumulates. Prices in general have not fallen; they are just rising-accumulating-more slowly. Many goods and services now cost more than twenty percent more than they did just three years ago. The *Wall Street Journal* found that the average hourly wage increase exceeded the cost of living by just seven cents last year. Economists describe inflation as a silent or hidden tax. It is also relentless.

The effects of inflation follow people wherever they go. Basic staples at the grocery store get more and more expensive. “Fast food” has two

advantages. It is fast and it is cheap. Well, it is still fast. Rising gas prices literally shout at drivers from a sign by the road even if they do not stop to fill up. Rising interest rates affect credit card payments and mortgage rates. Health care costs are, and have been, soaring.

Professional people and executives may have a degree of income flexibility, but the low and fixed income folks identified above feel the ever tightening jaws of a vice. They just might be so alienated from their otherwise Democratic roots that they would overlook the peculiarities and eccentricities of the Trump campaign. They might recall more placid and less threatening conditions that they think that they faced before. They might choose a remembered past over a threatening future.

We began by noting three facts. We close by making two observations. First, economic conditions are the single most powerful determinant of electoral results. Second, every election involves to some degree a retrospective judgment. This fall, will it be the retrospective judgment on the Biden economy or the retrospective judgment on the Trump economy?

ANALYSIS: Democrats Tap Gaming Cash Cow to Help Fill State Budget Gap

Taxes to increase on sports betting, video gambling

By Hannah Meisel Capitol News Illinois

In order to boost infrastructure spending and avoid a projected fiscal cliff facing the state in the next couple of years, Democrats who control state government are betting on two of its most rapidly growing revenue sources: sports wagering and video gambling.

The industries – both legalized within the last 15 years – have developed into two of the most robust markets in the nation; Illinois’ sportsbooks collectively have the fourth-largest handle among all states, while Illinois’ video gambling industry is by far the largest of any state.

When proposing his budget plan in February, Pritzker suggested increasing taxes only on sports betting. But despite pushback from some Democrats – and the sportsbooks’ massive spend on lobbying to kill the tax hike – the governor got above and beyond what he’d requested from the legal gambling industry, even as some of his other proposed new revenues were left on the cutting room floor in the final weeks of the General Assembly’s spring legislative session.

Read more: Pritzker proposes over \$2B in spending growth, backed by tax increases for corporations, sportsbooks

In the end, Illinois’ growing video

gambling industry will see a 1 percentage point tax hike that’s estimated to bring in another \$35 million next year for infrastructure projects. Meanwhile, the state’s burgeoning sports betting industry will see a more substantial increase in taxes from a flat 15 percent rate to a graduated structure ranging from 20 percent on the lowest-earning sportsbooks to 40 percent for the highest earners.

The change is projected to generate an extra \$200 million, which will be directed to the state’s General Revenue Fund, Illinois’ main discretionary spending account.


Those promised windfalls would bolster already sizeable sources of revenue for the state. In the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2023, Illinois netted \$142 million in taxes from sportsbooks, while video gambling terminals in bars, restaurants and dedicated gaming cafes generated \$814 million.

Taken together, the two made up almost half of the near-\$2 billion the state took in from all forms of wagering last fiscal year, which also

Continued on Page 3



Ronald Anderson, 89, Harvard, May 15
Delfo Fuentes Hernandez, 87, Harvard
Joyce Hobbs, 92, Belvidere, May 27
Harold Miller, 80, Harvard, May 25
William “Bill” Sautter, 73, Marengo, May 25
Klaus Weskott, 81, Poplar Grove, May 28



REAL JOURNALISM FOR A REAL DEMOCRACY

Publisher/Editor	David C. Larson
Senior Writer/Editorial	Charles Herbst
Photography	Susan Moran

David Grimm April 1938 - Dec. 2000
Richelle Kingsbury Aug. 1955 - June 2013

THE BOONE COUNTY JOURNAL

419 S. STATE ST • BELVIDERE, IL 61008
PHONE: (815) 544-4430 FAX: 544-4330
WWW.BOONECOUNTYJOURNAL.COM
NEWS@BOONECOUNTYJOURNAL.COM

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

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

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


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

Charles Herbst

Attorney At Law

Practice Areas:

- Wills and Trusts
- Tax Strategy
- IRS Representation
- Real Estate
- Wealth Planning
- LLCs and Corporate



Education:

- LL.M. (Masters in Tax Law)
New York University
- B.S. Business, J.D. Law (cum laude)
Indiana University

Experience:

- International Tax Associates, Director of Federal Tax Research
- Ernst and Young LLP, Manager; Writer, Washington National Tax Writing Center
- Private Practice in the local area for over 13 years
- Former chairman of the written publications committee of the Indiana State Bar Association.

Over 25 years of experience
With a comprehensive approach to tax management.

Licensed to practice before the Internal Revenue Service nationally and in state courts in Illinois.

345 Bienterra Trail, Suite 3, Rockford, IL 61107
815 484 9482

Gaming

from page 2

includes growing revenues from the state lottery and casinos.

Organized labor, a top funder and ally for Democrats, balked at the plan to deposit the extra tax dollars from sportsbooks into GRF instead of dedicating it to infrastructure projects, where current sports betting revenues are directed. And major sportsbook operators threatened to stop advertising or even withdraw from the state as the legislature's scheduled adjournment date drew near last week.

But Pritzker was undeterred, pointing consistently to East Coast states like New York and three others, which have all implemented tax rates over 50 percent on their online sportsbook operators. Before the tax hike's passage last month, the governor brushed off opposition, saying the sportsbooks "have made literally tens of millions of dollars from the state of Illinois," later noting that the major sportsbooks subject to the highest taxes in the new graduated structure "don't reside in the state of Illinois."

"Our focus was on asking...companies that can pay more to pay more," he said after the tax increase's passage last week. "And indeed, we kept the tax on sportsbooks lower than the top states in that arena."

In pushing the tax hikes through the General Assembly, the governor and legislative Democrats are making a bet that sports betting and video gambling companies need Illinois as much – or more – than Illinois needs their tax revenue.

Sports betting

Under the new tax revenue package, sports betting revenues going forward will be split between the state's General Revenue Fund (58 percent) and Capital Projects Fund (42 percent).

Pritzker's office predicts the graduated structure will bring in the same \$200 million extra for GRF that increasing the flat tax would have.

Sportsbooks' new tax rates will depend on their annual revenues.

Timeline

Illinois early to enter online sports betting market, middle of pack on taxes

While sports betting is legal in 38 states and Washington, D.C., eight of those states don't allow online wagering. In the jurisdictions that allow both, online sportsbooks are far and away the more popular option, so it's useful to compare only online markets.

Source: American Gaming Association, National Conference of State Legislatures • Analysis: Hannah Meisel, Capitol News Illinois

Sportsbook Tax Rate Comparison

The highest tax rate under Illinois' proposed sportsbook tax would be lower than four other states'

The graduated tax structure would hike taxes on Illinois sportsbooks from the current 15% on all operators to 20% for the lowest earners up to 40% for the highest earners in 5% increments.

Sports Betting Revenue

State tax revenues from sportsbooks have increased 5-fold since Illinois' market launched

Illinois' legal sports betting market launched in March 2020, just days before the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered both professional sports nationally and gambling activity statewide. Even so, the market generated nearly \$38 million for Illinois' coffers that first year, a figure that's only grown since.

Video Gaming Revenue

Continued growth in Illinois' video gambling industry netted state \$818M last fiscal year

Video gambling tax revenues — which are earmarked for infrastructure projects — have more than doubled since the pandemic, helped along by a tax hike the year before COVID hit and increasing the maximum number of terminals allowed in bars and restaurants. Lawmakers have just approved another tax increase on video gambling.

Earnings between \$30 million and \$50 million annually will be taxed at 25 percent. Earnings between \$50 million and \$100 million annually will be taxed at 30 percent. Earnings between \$100 million and \$200 million will be taxed at 35 percent. Earnings above \$200 million will be taxed at 40 percent.

The final plan marks an evolution from Pritzker's February proposal, which sought to increase the state's current 15 percent tax on sports betting operators to 35 percent.

But not all Democrats were on board with the governor's idea, with some expressing concerns about overleveraging a nascent industry, which has threatened to stop advertising or even operating in Illinois if the tax hike is passed.

A nationwide industry group dubbed the Sports Betting Alliance, which represents both big players and emerging sportsbooks, launched a campaign against the tax increase that generated more than 56,000 emails and calls to the governor's office and lawmakers, according to a representative for the group. Last month, sportsbook giant FanDuel pushed alerts to its Illinois users via its app, urging them to take similar action.

"This tax hike will mean worse products, worse promotions, and inevitably, worse odds for Illinois customers — not to mention provide a massive leg up to dangerous, unregulated and illegal offshore sportsbooks who pay no taxes and adhere to none of Illinois' sports betting regulations," Sports Betting Alliance President Jeremy Kudon said in a statement.

The sportsbooks contend that they earn only a small amount of every dollar wagered, as the rest is paid out in winnings. From that small amount, they say, everything from payroll to marketing must be paid — including taxes.

Sportsbooks claim taxing them more could backfire as they may decide to spend their marketing dollars in other states, and without special promotions to entice the casual and occasional bettors, those users could drop off entirely.

In House floor debate over the revenue package that contained the sports betting tax hike, state Rep. Will Guzzardi, D-Chicago, said the reach of the sportsbooks was drilled into him while watching the NBA playoffs.

"It seems like every other commercial I see is from one of these sportsbooks, and they've got celebrities and they're buying up all these timeslots," he said. "I guess I'm hard-pressed to think of DraftKings and FanDuel as small mom-and-pop Main Street Illinois businesses that are struggling to get by."

Like in many other states, DraftKings and FanDuel have cornered roughly three-quarters of Illinois' sports betting market. Their ability to do so was aided by unforeseen circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Illinois became the 15th state to legalize sports betting as part of a massive gambling expansion law passed in 2019. Lawmakers, sports enthusiasts and gambling interests had been champing at the bit to legalize sports wagering for a year prior to its passage after a U.S. Supreme Court decision striking down a federal ban on the industry outside of Nevada, which had been grandfathered in.

Though the law that legalized sports betting in Illinois had intended for casinos to get an 18-month head start in the sports betting market before big online operators like DraftKings and FanDuel became licensed, those companies got around the law by partnering with downstate casinos to operate their sportsbooks.

They were also helped by Pritzker's COVID-era suspension of the law's requirement for in-person registration at casinos, allowing bettors from hundreds of miles away to start gambling almost as soon as they downloaded a certain sportsbook's app.

The first bets were placed at Rivers Casino in Des Plaines on March 9, 2020, just days before the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered both professional sports nationwide and gambling activity in Illinois.

Even so, by the end of 2020, Illinois' overall handle — the amount bettors spent wagering — had launched to fourth among states, and it's consistently stayed that high ever since.

The industry has generated \$415 million in tax revenue for the state in the four years since the market launched, according to the Illinois Gaming Board's latest available data, which is current through the end of March 2024.

The rate of growth in wagers and the corresponding growth in tax revenue has slowed from its initial explosion, but still grew 23 percent between the third and fourth years of legal sports betting in Illinois.

Online wagering is infinitely more popular than placing bets at a "retail" sportsbook like a casino or pro sports stadium. According to a September report by the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability, 98.8 percent of all wagers in Illinois were made online in the fiscal year that ended in June 2023.

Tax revenues reflect that disparity. Illinois Gaming Board records show tax receipts made from online bets netted the state nearly \$399 million in the last four years, compared with just \$16 million from in-person bets.

That dynamic is echoed in other states that have legalized both online and in-person betting, meaning it's most useful to compare states' online

Continued on page 7



- Digital Color & Black & White
- Multi Functional
- * Copy * Print * Fax * Scan
- * Service • Supplies • Toner

Sharp ~ Canon ~ Toshiba ~
Lexmark ~ HP ~ Xerox ~ Ricoh

Sales Service

815-608-1173 815-282-4002

Pro Tree Care & Landscaping

Linda Johns owner

Over 30 years of service • 24 hr emergency service

General and Safety Pruning

Hedge and Shrub trimming • Tree and stump Removal

Spring and Fall cleanup • Firewood pickup and delivery




815-547-3345 jackoftrade81@mchsi.com

Medicaid

from page 1

requiring states to keep patients continuously enrolled through the public health crisis, even if they might have become ineligible due to changes in their income or family circumstances.

That continuous enrollment program expired in March 2023, forcing states to resume the process of requiring Medicaid enrollees to reapply each year and determine if they were still eligible.

Federal officials estimated at the time that 17.4 percent of all the people enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program would be disenrolled through redeterminations. That would have translated to about 15 million people nationwide, and 700,000 in Illinois.

Read more: [Impending Medicaid changes could leave hundreds of thousands uninsured](#)

The Department of Healthcare and Family Services said at the time it hoped to lessen the impact of the change and hold the number of people disenrolled to about 384,000.

But on Monday, HFS reported more than 660,000 Illinoisans had been disenrolled from state health insurance in the past year. About two-thirds of those people lost coverage because of procedural reasons, like submitting incomplete information or not completing forms in time. The remaining were disenrolled due to finding new coverage, moving states or making too much money to be eligible for Medicaid.

A report by the national health nonprofit KFF, formerly the Kaiser Family Foundation, noted procedural disenrollment can be "concerning because many people who are disenrolled for these paperwork reasons may still be eligible for Medicaid coverage."

Illinois had a high mark of nearly 4 million residents on Medicaid during fiscal year 2023, but redetermination effectively lowered the number of people on Illinois Medicaid down to pre-COVID levels.

Elizabeth Whitehorn, director of HFS, said reliance on publicly funded insurance grew due to the onset of COVID.

"At the beginning of the pandemic, the federal government implemented the continuous Medicaid coverage requirements directing states to stop the regular practice of annual redeterminations for Medicaid," she said. "During the three years that the continuous coverage requirement was in place, our Medicaid enrollee population in Illinois grew by nearly one million people."

More than 300,000 Illinois Medicaid recipients are still in the midst of redetermination, a majority of whom have not submitted paperwork, according to HFS. Paperwork is pending for about 90,000 of those cases, according to the department noted.

Pritzker said the state launched an advertising campaign to remind residents about redetermination and applying to renew Medicaid status in 15 languages and installed new methods of renewal.

"We added text messaging capabilities and telephone helpline improvements to make it as convenient as possible for Illinoisans," he said. "We are seeking federal approval to make permanent many of the capacity and efficiency boosting practices that we adopted."

Since last May, the Department of Human Services reported taking more than 75,000 medical redetermination phone calls, where IDHS workers can provide technical assistance and allow customers to submit information required for redetermination.

Redeterminations of Medicaid customers will continue on an annual basis, HFS said. People in need of immediate assistance with insurance coverage can visit getcovered.illinois.gov or abe.illinois.gov to apply for state benefits.

Ballot

from page 1

During Monday's hearing, attorney Jeffrey Schwab said his clients – four Republican candidates from Chicago and its suburbs – weren't arguing that the law itself is unconstitutional, but that its application to the current election cycle is.

"It's unreasonable to change the law in the middle of the game," he said. "It's, of course, extremely unreasonable for them to have known that a law was going to be passed and enacted and go into effect before the timeline that they had to submit their petitions today."

When the petition filing window closed at 5 p.m. Monday, 16 candidates filed petitions to get on the November ballot, including the four plaintiffs in the case. All 16 were Republicans.

Though the lawsuit was only filed against the Board of Elections and Attorney General Kwame Raoul, House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch sought to intervene in the case. Democratic election law attorney Mike Kasper argued on Welch's behalf that the law was a boon to democracy because candidates used the slating process to escape a tough primary battle.

"It not only encourages and empowers independent and third-party candidates to gain ballot access, it eliminates the party bosses, as they've been called, from this process," Kasper, a longtime lawyer for former House Speaker Michael Madigan, said during Monday's hearing over videoconference.

Schwab, who has sued the state numerous times in his career as an attorney for the Chicago-based libertarian-leaning Liberty Justice Center, hit back at Kasper's claims.

"It's very weird to say that it somehow empowers voters by giving them less choice – giving them no Republican candidate in the election," he said.

The four plaintiffs in the suit were all designated by their local parties in March and April, but none of them filed their nominating petitions before the law, which only applies to General Assembly races, went into effect.

One of the four – Republican Daniel Behr of Northbrook – claimed he attempted to file petitions the afternoon before Pritzker signed the bill into law, but he alleged the Board of Elections Springfield office closed at 4:30 p.m. that day.

Board spokesperson Matt Dietrich, however, said that seemed unlikely because "during filing periods we always have somebody there (collecting petitions) until 5."

Behr ended up filing them just six minutes after the governor's signature was recorded on the bill the morning of May 3.

Monday's arguments referenced another GOP candidate – Jay Keeven of Edwardsville – who was able to turn in his nominating petitions the day before Pritzker signed the law. Keeven is challenging Democratic Rep. Katie Stuart, also of Edwardsville.

Judge Noll said she would have a written decision "in the next couple of days." Meanwhile, Dietrich said the Board of Elections is proceeding as usual with the one-week period where candidates' nominating petitions are challenged, which will conclude at 5 p.m. next Monday, June 10.

FOR RENT 1415 Maryland Ct. Three bedroom duplex bath and a half, central air, basement with washer dryer hookup, stove and refrigerator furnished. No pets non smoking. \$1,100. Per month plus deposit. 815-547-3357

ROOM FOR RENT: Belvidere: Nice furnished room w/ fridge, near downtown, bus stop, Aldi, Drug & Dollar Stores. No Sec. Deposit. \$102/wk. or \$430/mo.
Call (815) 544-4466

Education

from page 1

records. First came COVID-19. Then, in August 2021 when he was going to have to repeat the third grade, his mother and her boyfriend decided that L.J. would be homeschooled and that they would be his teachers. In an instant, his world shrank to the confines of a one-bedroom apartment in the small Illinois college town of Charleston — no teachers, counselors or classmates.

In that apartment, L.J. would later tell police, he was beaten and denied food: Getting leftovers from the refrigerator was punishable by a whipping with a belt; sass was met with a slap in the face.

L.J. told police he got no lessons or schoolwork at home. Asked if he had learned much, L.J. replied, "Not really."

Police Report

Reporters are using the first and middle initials of the boy, who is now 12 and remains in state custody, to protect his identity.

While each state has different regulations for homeschooling — and most of them are relatively weak — Illinois is among a small minority that places virtually no rules on parents who homeschool their children: The parents aren't required to register with any governmental agency, and no tests are required. Under Illinois law, they must provide an education equivalent to what is offered in public schools, covering core subjects like math, language arts, science and health. But parents don't have to have a high school diploma or GED, and state authorities cannot compel them to demonstrate their teaching methods or prove attendance, curriculum or testing outcomes.

The Illinois State Board of Education said in a statement that regional education offices are empowered by Illinois law to request evidence that a family that homeschools is providing an adequate course of instruction. But, the spokesperson said, their "ability to intervene can be limited."

Educational officials say this lack of regulation allows parents to pull vulnerable children like L.J. from public schools then not provide any education for them. They call them "no schoolers."

No oversight also means children schooled at home lose the protections schools provide, including teachers, counselors, coaches and bus drivers — school personnel legally bound to report suspected child abuse and neglect. Under Illinois law, parents may homeschool even if they would be disqualified from working with youth in any other setting; this includes parents with violent criminal records or pending child abuse investigations, or those found to have abused children in the past.

The number of students from preschool to 12th grade enrolled in the state's public schools has dropped by about 127,000 since the pandemic began. Enrollment losses have outpaced declines in population, according to a report by Advance Illinois, a nonprofit education policy and advocacy organization. And, despite conventional wisdom, the drop was also not the result of wealthier families moving their children to private schools: After the pandemic, private school enrollment declined too, according to the same report.

In the face of this historic exodus from public schools, Capitol News Illinois and ProPublica set out to examine the lack of oversight by education and child welfare systems when some of those children disappear into families later accused of no-schooling and, sometimes, abuse and neglect.

Reporters found no centralized system for investigating homeschooling concerns. Educational officials said they were ill equipped to handle cases where parents are accused of neglecting their children's education. They also said the state's laws made it all but impossible

Continued on Page 5

Education

from page 4

to intervene in cases where parents claim they are homeschooling. Reporters also found that under the current structure, concerns about homeschooling bounce between child welfare and education authorities, with no entity fully prepared to step in.

“Although we have parents that do a great job of homeschooling, we have many ‘no schoolers’” said Angie Zarvell, superintendent of a regional education office about 100 miles southwest of Chicago that covers three counties and 23 school districts. “The damage this is doing to small rural areas is great. These children will not have the basic skills needed to be contributing members of society.”

Regional education offices, like the one Zarvell oversees, are required by law to identify children who are truant and try to help get them back into school.

But once parents claim they are homeschooling, “our hands are tied,” said Superintendent Michelle Mueller, whose regional office is located about 60 miles north of St. Louis.

Even the state’s child welfare agency can do little: Reports to its child abuse hotline alleging that parents are depriving their children of an education have multiplied, but the Department of Children and Family Services doesn’t investigate schooling matters. Instead, it passes reports to regional education offices.

Todd Vilardo, who since 2017 has been superintendent of the school district where L.J. was enrolled, said he is seeing more and more children outside of school during the day. He wonders, “Aren’t they supposed to be in school?” But I’m reminded that maybe they’re homeschooled,” said Vilardo, who has worked in the Charleston school district for 33 years. “Then I’m reminded that there are very few effective checks and balances on home schools.”

‘A huge crack in our system’

There’s no way to determine the precise number of children who are homeschooled. In 2022, 4,493 children were recorded as withdrawn to homeschool, a number that is likely much higher because Illinois doesn’t require parents to register homeschooled children. That is a little more than double the number a decade before.

In late fall of 2020, L.J. was one of the kids who slipped out of school. After a roughly five-month hiatus from the classroom during the pandemic, L.J.’s school resumed in-person classes. The third grader, however, was frequently absent.

At home, tensions ran high. In the 640-square-foot apartment, L.J.’s mother, Ashley White, and her boyfriend, Brian Anderson, juggled the demands of three children including two born just about 10 months apart.

White, now 31, worked at a local fast-food restaurant. Anderson, now 51, who uses a wheelchair, had applied for disability payments.

Anderson doesn’t have a valid driver’s license. The family lived in a subsidized housing complex for low-income seniors and people with disabilities.

In an interview with reporters in late February, 14 months after L.J. had been taken into custody by the state, the couple offered a range of explanations for why he hadn’t been in school. L.J. had been suspended and barred from returning, they said, though school records show no expulsion. They also said they had tried to put L.J. in an alternative school for children with special needs, but he didn’t have a diagnosis that qualified him to attend.

The couple made clear they believed that L.J. was a problem child who could get them in trouble; they said they thought he could get them sued. In the interview, Anderson called L.J. a pathological liar, a thief and a bad kid.

“I have 11 kids, never had a problem with any of them, never,” Anderson said. “I’ve never had a problem like this,” he said of L.J. The boy, he said, lacked discipline and continued to get “worse and worse and worse every year” he’d known him.

To support the idea that L.J. was combative, White provided a copy of a screenshot taken from a school chat forum in which the boy cursed at his schoolmates.

At the end of the school year, in spring 2021, the principal told White and Anderson that the boy would have to repeat the third grade. Rather than have L.J. held back, the couple pulled him out of school to homeschool. They didn’t have to fill out any paperwork or give a reason.

On any given day in Illinois, a parent can make that same decision. That’s due to a series of court and legislative decisions that strengthened parents’ rights against state interference in how they educate their children.

In 1950, the Illinois Supreme Court heard a case involving college-educated parents who kept their 7-year-old daughter at home. Those parents, Seventh-day Adventists, argued that a public school education produced a “pugnacious character” and believed the mother was the best teacher and nature was the best textbook. The judges ruled in their favor, finding that, in many respects under the law, homeschools are essentially like private schools: not required to register kids with the state and not subject to testing or curriculum mandates.

In 1989, the legislature voted to change how educational neglect cases are handled. Before the vote, DCFS was allowed to investigate parents who failed to ensure their child’s education just as it does other types of neglect. In a bipartisan vote, the General Assembly changed that, in part to reduce caseloads on DCFS — which has been overburdened and inadequately staffed for decades — and also in response to concerns about state interference from families who homeschool.

Since then, DCFS has referred complaints about schooling that come in to its child abuse hotline over to regional offices of education. The letter accompanying the educational neglect referral form ends with: “This notice is for your information and pursuit only. No response to this office is required.”

Neglect Report

Tierney Stutz, executive deputy director at

DCFS, said that regional education officials are welcome to report back findings, but that “DCFS does not have statutory authority to act on this information.”

“Unfortunately, this is a huge crack in our system,” said Amber Quirk, regional superintendent of the office of education that covers densely populated DuPage County in the Chicago suburbs.

To see how this system is working, reporters obtained more than 450 of these educational neglect reports, representing over a third of the more than 1,200 forwarded by DCFS over three years ending in 2023. About 10% of them specifically cited substandard homeschooling claims. But officials said that in many of the other reported cases of kids out of school, they found that families also claimed they were homeschooling.

Faced with cases of truancy or educational neglect, county prosecutors can press charges against parents. But if they do, parents can lean on Illinois’ parental protections when they defend themselves in court from a truancy charge.

That’s been the experience of Dirk Muffler, who oversees truancy intervention at a regional office of education covering five counties in west-central Illinois. “We’ve gone through an entire truancy process, literally standing on the courthouse steps getting ready to walk in to screen a kid into court and the parents say, ‘We are homeschooling.’ I have to just walk away then.”

More recently, the ISBE made one more decision to loosen the monitoring of parents who homeschool: For years, school districts and regional offices distributed voluntary registration forms to families who homeschool, some of whom returned them. Then last year, the state agency told those regional offices that they no longer had to send those forms to ISBE.

“The homeschool registration form was being misinterpreted in some instances that ISBE was reviewing or approving homeschool programs, which it does not have statutory authority to do,” an ISBE spokesperson told the news organizations.

Over the years, the legislature has taken up proposals to strengthen the state’s oversight of homeschooling. In 2011, lawmakers considered requiring parents to notify their local school districts of their intent to homeschool, and in 2019 they considered calling for DCFS to inspect all homeschools and have ISBE approve their curriculum.

Each time, however, the state’s strong homeschooling lobby, mostly made up of religious-based organizations, stepped in.

This March, under sponsorship of the Illinois Christian Home Educators, homeschoolers massed at the state Capitol as they have for decades for Cherry Pie Day, bringing pies to each of the state’s 177 lawmakers.

Cherry Pie

Kirk Smith, the organization’s executive director and former public school teacher, summed up his group’s appeal to lawmakers: “All we want is to be left alone. And Illinois has been so good. We have probably the best state in the nation to homeschool.”

‘Nobody knows. He’s not in school.’

Just days after child protection workers took 11-year-old L.J. into protective custody on his birthday, a 9-year-old homeschooled boy, 240 miles away, disappeared and was missing for months before police went looking for him.

Though the case of Zion Staples was covered in the media, it has not been previously reported that his homeschooling status delayed the discovery of his death.

Zion had been living in Rock Island, in the northwest part of the state, with his mother, Sushi

Continued on Page 8

ESTATE SALE LOG HOMES

PAY THE BALANCE OWED ONLY!

4 LOG HOME KITS SELLING FOR BALANCE OWED, FREE DELIVERY

1) MODEL #103 WACO	\$22,780 BALANCE OWED \$14,500
2) MODEL #202 TOPEKA	\$34,050 BALANCE OWED \$16,000
3) MODEL #403 AUGUSTA	\$42,450 BALANCE OWED \$16,500
4) MODEL #502 SANTE FE	\$44,950 BALANCE OWED \$20,500

BEFORE CALLING: VIEW at www.americanloghomesandcabins.com Click on House Plans

BBB A- Rating

NEW - HOMES HAVE NOT BEEN MANUFACTURED

- Make any plan design changes you desire!
- Comes with Complete Building Blueprints & Construction Manual
- Windows, Doors, and Roofing not included
- NO TIME LIMIT FOR DELIVERY!

Offer not available to American Log Home Dealers*

AMERICAN
LOG HOMES & CABINS

SERIOUS ONLY REPLY. Call (704) 602-3035 ask for Accounting Dept.

Get instant cash for your GOLD

WE PAY HIGHEST PRICES

Belvidere Collectible Coins

880 Belvidere Rd.
Belvidere, IL
815-547-7111

Additional 10% off Jewelry with this ad

Mon-Fri 10am - 5pm
Sat 10am - 2pm

Visit us Online at www.goldsilverjewelrycoin.com

LEGAL NOTICES

To: Jose Flores, THERESA BALK as RA for Candlewick Lake Association, Inc., Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, Unknown Occupants of 531 Bounty Dr. NE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065, Unknown Occupants of 523 Bounty Dr. NE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065, Unknown Owners and Parties Interested, Generally of 527 Bounty Dr., NE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065
TAX DEED NO.: 2024TX10
FILED: 5/15/2024

TAKE NOTICE

County of Boone
Date Premises Sold:10/28/2021
Certificate No. 2020-00018
Sold for General Taxes of: 2020
Sold for Special Assessment of (Municipality): N/A
And Special Assessment Number: N/A
Warrant No. N/A INST. NUMBER: N/A
THIS PROPERTY HAS BEEN SOLD FOR DELINQUENT TAXES
 Property located at: 527 Bounty Dr., NE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065
 Legal Description or Property Index No.: 03-22-478-026
 This notice is to advise you that the above property has been sold for delinquent taxes and that the period of redemption from the sale will expire on 10/23/2024.

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

This notice is also to advise you that a petition has been filed for a tax deed which will transfer title and the right to possession of this property if redemption is not made on or before 10/23/2024.

This matter is set for hearing in the Circuit Court of Boone County, 601 N. Main Street, Courtroom 3, Belvidere, Illinois, 61008 at 9:15 A.M. on 11/19/2024.

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

YOU ARE URGED TO REDEEM IMMEDIATELY TO PREVENT LOSS OF PROPERTY.

Redemption can be made at any time on or before 10/23/2024 by applying to the County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, at the Office of the County Clerk in Belvidere, Illinois.

For further information contact the County Clerk.

ADDRESS:
 1212 Logan Ave, Suite 103
 Belvidere, IL 61008
TELEPHONE: (815) 544-3103
 Everet Ltd.
 Purchaser or Assignee
 Dated: 5/20/2024
 6088-942878

Published in *The Boone County Journal* May 30, June 6, 13, 2024 sw

To: Ronald P. Balais, Darlyn P Asedillo, THERESA BALK as RA for Candlewick Lake Association, Inc., Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, Occupants of 211 Picadilly Dr. SE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065, Occupants of 217 Picadilly Dr. SE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065, Unknown Owners and Parties Interested, Generally of 213 Picadilly Dr., SE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065
TAX DEED NO.: 2024TX11
FILED: 5/15/2024

TAKE NOTICE

County of Boone
Date Premises Sold:10/28/2021
Certificate No. 2020-00027
Sold for General Taxes of: 2020
Sold for Special Assessment of (Municipality): N/A
And Special Assessment Number: N/A
Warrant No. N/A INST. NUMBER: N/A
THIS PROPERTY HAS BEEN SOLD FOR DELINQUENT TAXES
 Property located at: 213 Picadilly Dr., SE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065
 Legal Description or Property Index No.: 03-26-181-023
 This notice is to advise you that the above property has been sold for delinquent taxes and that the period of redemption from the sale will expire on 10/23/2024.

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

This notice is also to advise you that a petition has been filed for a tax deed which will transfer title and the right to possession of this property if redemption is not made on or before 10/23/2024.

This matter is set for hearing in the Circuit Court of Boone County, 601 N. Main Street, Courtroom 3, Belvidere, Illinois, 61008 at 9:15 A.M. on 11/19/2024.

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

YOU ARE URGED TO REDEEM IMMEDIATELY TO PREVENT LOSS OF PROPERTY.

Redemption can be made at any time on or before 10/23/2024 by applying to the County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, at the Office of the County Clerk in Belvidere, Illinois.

For further information contact the County Clerk.

ADDRESS:
 1212 Logan Ave, Suite 103
 Belvidere, IL 61008
TELEPHONE: (815) 544-3103
 Everet, Ltd.
 Purchaser or Assignee
 Dated: 5/20/2024
 6088-942879

Published in *The Boone County Journal* May 30, June 6, 13, 2024 sw

To: Unknown heirs at law and/or devisees of Joseph B Szymanski, Elizabeth Szymanski, Joey Szymanski, Douglas Szymanski, Denise Petersen, Matthew Calzia, Sara Hoskins, Erik Zitzer, THERESA BALK as RA for Candlewick Lake Association, Lakeshore Homes Properties LLC, PAUL J. HUBER as RA for Lakeshore Homes Properties LLC, Illinois Secretary of State for Lakeshore Homes Properties LLC, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, Occupant of 103 Bradford Pl SE, POPLAR GROVE, IL 61065, Occupant of 2403 Candle Wick Dr SE, POPLAR GROVE, IL 61065, Unknown Owners and Parties Interested, Generally of 101 Bradford Pl., SE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065

TAX DEED NO.: 2024TX13
FILED: 5/15/2024

TAKE NOTICE

County of Boone
Date Premises Sold:10/28/2021
Certificate No. 2020-00028
Sold for General Taxes of: 2020
Sold for Special Assessment of (Municipality): N/A
And Special Assessment Number: N/A
Warrant No. N/A INST. NUMBER: N/A
THIS PROPERTY HAS BEEN SOLD FOR DELINQUENT TAXES
 Property located at: 101 Bradford Pl., SE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065
 Legal Description or Property Index No.: 03-26-305-001
 This notice is to advise you that the above property has been sold for delinquent taxes and that the period of redemption from the sale will expire on 10/23/2024.

The amount to redeem is subject to increase at 6 month intervals from

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

This notice is also to advise you that a petition has been filed for a tax deed which will transfer title and the right to possession of this property if redemption is not made on or before 10/23/2024.

This matter is set for hearing in the Circuit Court of Boone County, 601 N. Main Street, Courtroom 3, Belvidere, Illinois, 61008 at 9:30 A.M. on 11/19/2024.

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

YOU ARE URGED TO REDEEM IMMEDIATELY TO PREVENT LOSS OF PROPERTY.

Redemption can be made at any time on or before 10/23/2024 by applying to the County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, at the Office of the County Clerk in Belvidere, Illinois.

For further information contact the County Clerk.

ADDRESS:
 1212 Logan Ave, Suite 103
 Belvidere, IL 61008
TELEPHONE: (815) 544-3103
 Estle, Inc.
 Purchaser or Assignee
 Dated: 5/20/2024
 6088-942883

Published in *The Boone County Journal* May 30, June 6, 13, 2024 sw

To: Daryl Dourado, THERESA BALK as RA for Candlewick Lake Association, Inc., Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, Occupants of 508 Atlantic Dr. NE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065, Occupants of 514 Atlantic Dr. NE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065, Unknown Owners and Parties Interested, Generally of 510 Atlantic Dr., NE, Poplar Grove, IL
TAX DEED NO.: 2024TX8
FILED: 5/15/2024

TAKE NOTICE

County of Boone
Date Premises Sold:10/28/2021
Certificate No. 2020-00015
Sold for General Taxes of: 2020
Sold for Special Assessment of (Municipality): N/A
And Special Assessment Number: N/A
Warrant No. N/A INST. NUMBER: N/A
THIS PROPERTY HAS BEEN SOLD FOR DELINQUENT TAXES
 Property located at: 510 Atlantic Dr., NE, Poplar Grove, IL
 Legal Description or Property Index No.: 03-22-452-005
 This notice is to advise you that the above property has been sold for delinquent taxes and that the period of redemption from the sale will expire on 10/23/2024.

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

This notice is also to advise you that a petition has been filed for a tax deed which will transfer title and the right to possession of this property if redemption is not made on or before 10/23/2024.

This matter is set for hearing in the Circuit Court of Boone County, 601 N. Main Street, Courtroom 3, Belvidere, Illinois, 61008 at 9:15 A.M. on 11/19/2024.

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

YOU ARE URGED TO REDEEM IMMEDIATELY TO PREVENT LOSS OF PROPERTY.

Redemption can be made at any time on or before 10/23/2024 by applying to the County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, at the Office of the County Clerk in Belvidere, Illinois.

For further information contact the County Clerk.

ADDRESS:
 1212 Logan Ave, Suite 103
 Belvidere, IL 61008
TELEPHONE: (815) 544-3103
 Auction Z-1, Inc.
 Purchaser or Assignee
 Dated: 5/20/2024
 6088-942881

Published in *The Boone County Journal* May 30, June 6, 13, 2024 sw

To: Tony Lee Long, Unknown Heirs at law/or Devisees of Marinella Long, Glenn Carlos, Wilbert C Carlos, THERESA BALK as RA for Candlewick Lake Association, Inc., PAUL J. HUBER as RA for Lake Land Investments, LLC, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, Occupants of 206 Kingsbury Dr., SE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065, Unknown Owners and Parties Interested, Generally of 206 Kingsbury Dr., SE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065

TAX DEED NO.: 2024TX12
FILED: 5/15/2024

TAKE NOTICE

County of Boone
Date Premises Sold:10/28/2021
Certificate No. 2020-00026
Sold for General Taxes of: 2020
Sold for Special Assessment of (Municipality): N/A
And Special Assessment Number: N/A
Warrant No. N/A INST. NUMBER: N/A
THIS PROPERTY HAS BEEN SOLD FOR DELINQUENT TAXES
 Property located at: 206 Kingsbury Dr., SE, Poplar Grove, IL 61065
 Legal Description or Property Index No.: 03-26-180-019
 This notice is to advise you that the above property has been sold for delinquent taxes and that the period of redemption from the sale will expire on 10/23/2024.

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

This notice is also to advise you that a petition has been filed for a tax deed which will transfer title and the right to possession of this property if redemption is not made on or before 10/23/2024.

This matter is set for hearing in the Circuit Court of Boone County, 601 N. Main Street, Courtroom 3, Belvidere, Illinois, 61008 at 9:30 A.M. on 11/19/2024.

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

YOU ARE URGED TO REDEEM IMMEDIATELY TO PREVENT LOSS OF PROPERTY.

Redemption can be made at any time on or before 10/23/2024 by applying to the County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, at the Office of the County Clerk in Belvidere, Illinois.

For further information contact the County Clerk.

ADDRESS:
 1212 Logan Ave, Suite 103
 Belvidere, IL 61008
TELEPHONE: (815) 544-3103
 Estle, Inc.
 Purchaser or Assignee
 Dated: 5/20/2024
 6088-942882

Published in *The Boone County Journal* May 30, June 6, 13, 2024 sw

To: Bonifacia M. Del Mundo, Isabelita R. Del Mundo, THERESA BALK as RA for Candlewick Lake Association, Inc., Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, Occupant of 215 Brandywine Dr. SE, Poplar Grove, IL 60165, Occupant of 210 Brandywine Dr. SE, Poplar Grove, IL 60165, Unknown Owners and Parties Interested, Generally of 214 Brandywine Dr., Se, Poplar Grove, IL 61065
TAX DEED NO.: 2024TX9
FILED: 5/15/2024

TAKE NOTICE

County of Boone
Date Premises Sold:10/28/2021
Certificate No. 2020-00029
Sold for General Taxes of: 2020
Sold for Special Assessment of (Municipality): N/A
And Special Assessment Number: N/A
Warrant No. N/A INST. NUMBER: N/A
THIS PROPERTY HAS BEEN SOLD FOR DELINQUENT TAXES
 Property located at: 214 Brandywine Dr., Se, Poplar Grove, IL 61065
 Legal Description or Property Index No.: 03-26-305-021
 This notice is to advise you that the above property has been sold for delinquent taxes and that the period of redemption from the sale will expire on 10/23/2024.

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

This notice is also to advise you that a petition has been filed for a tax deed which will transfer title and the right to possession of this property if redemption is not made on or before 10/23/2024.

This matter is set for hearing in the Circuit Court of Boone County, 601 N. Main Street, Courtroom 3, Belvidere, Illinois, 61008 at 9:15 A.M. on 11/19/2024.

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

YOU ARE URGED TO REDEEM IMMEDIATELY TO PREVENT LOSS OF PROPERTY.

Redemption can be made at any time on or before 10/23/2024 by applying to the County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, at the Office of the County Clerk in Belvidere, Illinois.

For further information contact the County Clerk.

ADDRESS:
 1212 Logan Ave, Suite 103
 Belvidere, IL 61008
TELEPHONE: (815) 544-3103
 Auction Z-2, Inc.
 Purchaser or Assignee
 Dated: 5/20/2024
 6088-942880

Published in *The Boone County Journal* May 30, June 6, 13, 2024 sw

STATE OF ILLINOIS
 IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF BOONE COUNTY
 IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF: ROBERT E. WAHLBECK,
 Deceased. No. 2024 PR 12

CLAIM NOTICE

NOTICE is given of the death of ROBERT E. WAHLBECK. Letters of Office were issued on March

5, 2024, to Robert W. Wahlbeck of P.O. Box 756, Land O'Lakes, WI 54540, as Independent Executor for the Estate. The attorney of record for the Estate is Cristina Alvarez, 1111 South Alpine Road, Suite 704, Rockford, IL 61108.

The estate will be administered without court supervision, unless under paragraph 28-4 of the Probate Act (755 ILCS 5/28-4) any interested person terminates independent administration at any time by mailing or delivering a petition to terminate to the clerk.

Claims may be filed on or before November 29, 2024, that date being at least six (6) months from the date of first publication, or within three (3) months from the date of mailing or delivery of notice to any known creditor required by Section 18-3 of the Illinois Probate Act of 1975 as amended (755 ILCS 5/18-3), whichever date is later. Any claim not filed by the requisite date stated shall be barred.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the office of the Winnebago County Circuit Clerk- Probate Division at the Winnebago County Courthouse, 400 W. State Street, Rockford, Illinois, or with the Executor, or both. Copies of any claim filed with the Circuit Clerk's Office - Probate Division must be mailed or delivered to the Executor and to its attorney within ten days after it has been filed.

Dated: May 24, 2024 Robert W. Wahlbeck Independent Executor
 Cristina Alvarez, (6345312) 1111 South Alpine Road Suite 704
 Rockford, IL 61108 (815) 968-7200

Published in *The Boone County Journal* May 30, June 6, 13, 2024

STATE OF ILLINOIS
 IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
 COUNTY OF BOONE

In the Interest of: D'Anthony Lamont Brown, A Minor.

Case no: 2024 GR 15

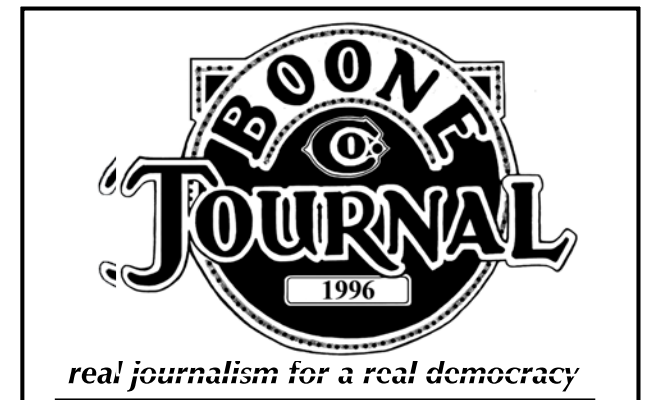
TO ANTHONY BROWN AND ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:
 Take notice that on the 28th day of May, 2024, a Petition to Appoint Guardian of the Person of the Minor was filed in the Circuit Court of Boone County, Illinois, 17th Judicial Circuit, and that in courtroom 3 of the Boone County Courthouse, on the 25th day of June, 2024 at the hour of 10:15 a.m., or as soon thereafter as this cause may be heard, a hearing will be held upon the Petition to Appoint Guardian of the Person of the Minor.

Now, unless you appear at the hearing and show cause against the Petition, the Petition may be taken for confessed as against you and an Order, Judgment or Decree entered.

Dated at Rockford, Illinois this 28th day of May, 2024.

Pamela Coduto
 Clerk of the Circuit Court
 ERIN L. NASH #6304953
 Nash Law Office, P.C.
 4615 East State Street, Suite 201
 Rockford, IL 61108
 (815) 397-7500

Published in *The Boone County Journal* May 30, June 6, 13, 2024



**Manchester Rural Fire Protection District #5
Public Notice**

Public Notice is hereby given that at 6:30 P.M. June 13, 2024 a meeting will be held at Clinton Fire Department, 145 Ogden Ave, Clinton WI. To consider an intergovernmental agreement between Clinton Fire Department and Manchester Fire District #5 for Clinton to cover entire Manchester District #5.

Joel Nussbaum
Secretary of Manchester Rural Fire Protection District #5.
Published in the Boone County Journal 06/06/24 B.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
BOONE COUNTY

Josefa Calderon, Petitioner and Erika Orgando Rosa, Respondent
No.24-DN-5

NOTICE OF PUBLICATION

Notice is given you, Erika Orgando Rosa, Defendant, that this cause has been commenced against you in this Court asking for Divorce and other relief. Unless you file your response or otherwise file your appearance in this cause in the office of the Circuit Clerk of Boone County, Boone County Courthouse, 601 North Main Street, Belvidere, Illinois, 61008, on or before the 17th day of July, 2024, A Judgment or other relief as prayed for by the Plaintiff may be granted.

Pamela Coduto
Clerk of the Circuit Court
17th Judicial Court
Boone County, Illinois
Published in the Boone County Journal 06/ 06,13,20 P

**TAKE NOTICE
CERTIFICATE NO. 2020-00141**

TO:
Timothy J Blodgett
Occupant
Lorri Blair
Union Savings Bank
Union Savings Bank
Boone County Clerk
Persons in occupancy or actual possession of said property;
Unknown owners or parties interested in said land or lots.
A Petition for Tax Deed on premise described below has been filed with the Circuit Clerk of BOONE County, IL as Case No. 2024TX6
The Property is located at:
1224 Union Ave., Belvidere, IL 61008
Property Index Number: 05-35-428-001
Said Property was sold on 10/28/2021 for Delinquent Real Estate Taxes and/or Special Assessments for the year 2020.
The period of redemption will expire on 10/4/2024. On 10/22/2024 at 9:15 AM the Petitioner will make application to such Court in said County for an Order for Issuance of a Tax Deed.
1095 Investments LLC, Petitioner
6088-943185
Published in the Boone County Journal 06/ 06,13,20

**TAKE NOTICE
CERTIFICATE NO. 2020-00056**

TO:
Mary Conklin
Mary Conklin
Occupant
Boone County Clerk
Spouse of Mary Conklin
Spouse of Mary Conklin
Persons in occupancy or actual possession of said property;
Unknown owners or parties interested in said land or lots.
A Petition for Tax Deed on premise described below has been filed with the Circuit Clerk of BOONE County, Ill. as Case No. 2024TX7
The Property is located at:
4.01 Acres W 17482 Burr Oak Rd, Capron, IL 61012
Property Index Number: 04-02-200-022
Said Property was sold on 10/28/2021 for Delinquent Real Estate Taxes and/or Special Assessments for the year 2020.
The period of redemption will expire on 10/4/2024. On 10/22/2024 at 9:15 AM the Petitioner will make application to such Court in said County for an Order for Issuance of a Tax Deed.
Ivy Jack, Inc, Petitioner
6088-943186
Published in the Boone County Journal 06/ 06,13,20

Notice

Pursuant to the Illinois Self-Service Storage Facility Act, notice is hereby given that the storage facility listed below will sell at public auction the personal property in the below listed occupants' leased spaces to satisfy the owner's lien. The personal property stored therein by the following occupants may include but is not limited to general household, office and personal items, furniture, boxes, clothes, and appliances. The unit will be sold at public auction through online auction services of <https://www.storageauctions.com> with bids opening at 10:00 AM on 06/10/2024 and closing at 10:00 AM on 06/20/2024. Strovo Management LLC d/b/a Belvidere Storage, 810 W. Locust Street, Belvidere, IL. 61008 Phone (815) 337-7398
Unit # 22 Shawwna R Palazzolo
Published in the Boone County Journal 06/ 06,13,

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
COUNTY OF BOONE - PROBATE DIVISION
In the Matter of the Estate of MARLENE M. LITTLE, Deceased.
2024-PR-27

NOTICE TO HEIRS

Notice is given to JANINE BARTLING, JANIS BARTLING, JO ETTA TAYLER, MARK DAVIS, JULENE DAVIS, STEVE DAVIS, KIM DAVIS, JEFF DAVIS, JORDAN CARVER, GENNA CARVER, BRENT CARVER, LANCE CARVER, RUSSELL CARVER, JOYCE DUEY, ALLAN HUSE, WILLIAM GREENFIELD, JR., MAC BARRETT, PATTY WAHLMAN, LINDA HILL, DAWN RICHTSMEIER, DARLA OELMANN, DENISE HARDER, DOUG BLEEKER, and DAN BLEEKER who are an heir or legatee in the above proceeding to probate a will and whose name or address is not stated in the petition to admit the will to probate, that an Order was entered by the court on May 28, 2024, admitting the will to probate.

Within 42 days after the effective date of the original order of admission you may file a petition with the court to require proof of the Will by testimony of the witnesses to the Will in open Court, or other evidence, as provided in Section 6-21 of the Probate Act 1975 (755 ILCS 5/6-21).

E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <https://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://www.illinoiscourts.gov/FAQ/gethelp.asp>, or talk with your local circuit clerk's office.

You also have the right under Section 8-1 of the Probate Act 1975 (755 ILCS 5/8-1) to contest the validity of the Will by filing a petition with the court within 6 months after the admission of the Will to probate. Attorney Adam M. Fleming
Williams McCarthy
Attorneys for Independent Executor
Published in the Boone County Journal 06/ 06,13,20

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
COUNTY OF BOONE - PROBATE DIVISION
In the Matter of the Estate of MARLENE M. LITTLE, Deceased.
2024-PR-27

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of MARLENE M. LITTLE of Belvidere, Illinois. Letters of Office were issued on May 28, 2024 to MIDLAND STATES BANK, as Independent Executor whose attorneys are WILLIAMS MCCARTHY LLP, 120 W. State St., P.O. Box 219, Rockford, IL 61105.

The estate will be administered without court supervision, unless under Section 28-4 of the Probate Act (755 ILCS 5/28-4) any interested person terminates independent administration at any time by mailing or delivering a petition to terminate to the Clerk.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the office of the Clerk of the Court, Boone County Courthouse, 601 N. Main St, Belvidere, IL 61008 or with the representative, or both, on or before December 9, 2024, or within 3 months from the date of mailing or delivery of notice to creditors, if mailing or delivery is required by Section 18-3 of the Probate Act, whichever date is later. Any claim not filed by the requisite date stated above is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.

MIDLAND STATES BANK
Independent Executor
Published in the Boone County Journal 06/ 06,13,20

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING BOONE COUNTY ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Notice is hereby given that the Boone County Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, June 25, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in the County Board Room, 1212 Logan Ave, Belvidere, IL 61008 upon the following petitions:

The applicant, Cristino Pacheco (property owner), is seeking a variance to allow for application for a temporary use permit information of 4.2.2 Temporary use permit applications, J. Fifty-foot setback from all right of ways and all other property lines for all sales areas, seating areas, activities, performance and event areas, and parking areas for an established arena located at ten-foot setback from the side yard. A variation of forty feet. For 4.2.3. Specific uses and regulations, 1. Animal Show/Rodeo in the A-1 District, pursuant to 2.8 (Variations) of the Boone County Zoning Ordinance, at 17783 Capron Road, PIN 04-02-100-009, in unincorporated Boone Township, Boone County, Illinois.

The applicant, Paul Nickel (property owner), is seeking a variance to construct an attached deck within the rear yard setback of thirty-five (35) feet down to twenty feet (20) a variation of fifteen feet (15) in the R-1, Residential Zoning District, pursuant to 2.8 (Variations) and Section 3.5.4 (Lot Development Standards) of Section 3.5 (R-1 Single-Family Residential District) of the Boone County Zoning Ordinance, at 114 Minarette Drive, PIN 03-27-378-007, in unincorporated Caledonia Township, Boone County, Illinois.

Craig Hale, Chair, Boone County Zoning Board of Appeals
Published in the Boone County Journal on June 6, 2024.

ASSUMED NAMES

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

No. DBA4195 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a LAWN CARE business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of A CUT ABOVE LAWN CARE that its location is or will be 9633 BEAVER VALLEY RD, 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: 815-262-7978
Daniel Joseph Hardt, 9633 Beaver Valley Road, 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: May 17, 2024

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder
Published in Boone County Journal 5/23, 5/30, 6/6/24 - P

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

No. DBA-4194 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a ECOMMERCE business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of THREAD START that its location is or will be 611 PEARL STREET APT 1 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: 815-988-9104
Zachary Charles Lynde, 611 Pearl Street, Belvidere, Illinois 61008
Joshua David Lynde, 6284 Abington Drive, Rockford, Illinois 61109

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: May 15, 2024

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder
Published in Boone County Journal 5/23, 5/30, 6/6/24 - P

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

NO. DBA4196 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a NUICANCE WILDLIFE ANIMAL REMOVAL business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of ASAP WILDLIFE REMOVAL AND REPAIR that its location is or will be 10255 Shaw Road in Rockford, 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: 815-978-6063
William (Bill) Eric West
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: May 31, 2024

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder
Published in Boone County Journal 06/ 06,13,20 P.

Gambling *from page 3*

sportsbook markets. Since Illinois launched its market, 21 other states and the District of Columbia have launched their online sports wagering markets.

At the time Illinois' market launched four years ago, the state's 15 percent tax rate was on the higher end of those that came before it, but nowhere near the 36 percent rate in Pennsylvania or the 51 percent tax adopted imposed by both Rhode Island and New Hampshire on online sportsbooks.

But since then, several more states have launched their online markets with tax rates higher than Illinois' 15 percent, including Delaware at 50 percent and New York with a 51 percent tax on online operators.

Sports Betting Timeline:

Ohio became the first state to hike its sports betting tax last year when Republican Gov. Mike DeWine pushed to double the state's tax rate from 10 to 20 percent just six months after its market launched, though he insisted it was motivated by concern over sportsbooks' aggressive advertising, and not a revenue decision. New Jersey lawmakers are also weighing hiking its tax on online operators from 14.25 to 30 percent.

Despite other states taking similar steps to Illinois, the companies threatened to push the nuclear button in the final days of session, with a source close to DraftKings and FanDuel telling Capitol News Illinois that "all options are on the table, including withdrawing from the state."

But skeptics say the companies are making more from Illinois' market than they let on, especially as parlay bets – multiple wagers bundled together into one bet – have overtaken any other sort of bet in popularity, upending models that were used to arrive at Illinois' 15 percent tax rate during negotiations five years ago. Parlay bets made up more than 60 percent of all sports wagers made in fiscal year 2023, according to state records.

Because bettors are more likely to lose their parlay bets than straight bets like on the outcome of one game or a point spread, the sportsbooks earn much more from these riskier bets. Sportsbooks also promote parlay bets, often enticing bettors with offers to make the parlays.

Sportsbooks – particularly ones focused on their retail operations – did end up getting a tiny concession in a last-minute amendment before lawmakers OK'd the new tax structure this week. Revenues made from in-person bets will be differentiated from revenues made from online wagers before they're taxed, meaning overall revenues will be slightly slower to cross higher tax thresholds in the graduated structure.

Unused licenses

State Rep. Bob Rita, D-Blue Island, a lead sponsor of the 2019 law that ushered in sports betting, was not buying the doomsday threats from the sportsbooks.

"Nope," he told Capitol News Illinois when asked whether he felt the sports betting companies' complaints had merit.

Instead, Rita said, lawmakers should focus on the number of sportsbook licenses made available under the 2019 law that still haven't been awarded. He speculated there could be many reasons sports betting companies haven't tried for the three online-only "master" licenses or six of the seven tied to sports venues.

Before session ended, a House committee focused on gaming issues convened just such a hearing, in which committee members were told the license fees were far too high. Rita asked those

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

Education*from page 5*

Staples. The family had a long history of abuse and neglect investigations by DCFS, and Staples had lost two kids to foster care in Illinois nearly two decades before because she mistreated them; the children were not returned to her. The most recent investigation by DCFS was in 2021. The department did not find enough evidence to find mistreatment and the case was closed.

Despite her past involvement with child welfare services, no Illinois laws restricted her from homeschooling the children who remained in her care, including Zion and five others who were then ages 8 to 14.

When reporters asked DCFS for his schooling status, the agency's responses revealed considerable confusion about where he was being educated. DCFS originally told the news organizations that Zion was enrolled in an online school program, but the company that DCFS said had been providing his schooling told reporters that Zion had never been enrolled. DCFS later clarified that his mother said he was leaving public school in August 2021 to attend an online program, but no one was required to verify this information.

On a December morning in 2022, Staples told police she returned home from running errands and found Zion dead. A coroner would later find that he died from an accidental, self-inflicted shot fired from a gun the children found in the house. His mother hid the body and later confided to her friend, Laterrica Wilson, that she did it because she did not want to risk losing her other children.

"She said: 'Nobody knows. He's not in school. He's homeschooled. I've got this figured out,'" Wilson recalled in an interview with a reporter about a conversation she had with Staples a few months after the child had died. "She said she had too much to lose."

Wilson, who lives in Florida, said it was one of several calls she had with Staples over the course of months as she tried to figure out what had happened and what to do about it. Police records indicate that in July, in response to a call from Wilson, they visited the home. Staples denied the child even existed. Later, when police executed a search warrant, officers found Zion's body in a metal trash can in the garage; he was still wearing his Spiderman pajama bottoms. He'd been dead for seven months, an autopsy revealed.

Staples was charged with concealing a death, failure to report the death of a child within 24 hours and obstructing justice. Staples pleaded guilty to felony endangering the health of a child in February and was sentenced to two years in prison in April.

Staples did not respond to a letter sent to her in prison seeking comment on this case.

DCFS and its university partners study all sorts of risks to children involved with the child welfare system, but they've never examined homeschooling and do not track the number of children the agency comes in contact with who are homeschooled. While the agency's inspector general is required to file reports on every child who dies in foster care or whose family the agency had investigated within the preceding year of the child's death, the children's schooling status is rarely noted in them.

For L.J., homeschooling rules also blinded school officials to abuse he suffered, although their administrative office is within sight of his apartment complex. About five months passed from when he was withdrawn to homeschool in the summer of 2021 before the first signs of help arrived. Following a call to its hotline in January 2022, DCFS found White and Anderson neglectful, citing inadequate supervision, but that did not result in L.J. returning to school. DCFS offered services, but Anderson and White

declined.

DCFS received more calls to its hotline in June 2022 and again that September, alleging that Anderson and White had mistreated L.J. In both of those cases, DCFS investigators did not find enough evidence to support those allegations and closed the cases.

The caller in September told DCFS the boy appeared malnourished. L.J. hadn't been in school since 2019, the caller reported. But DCFS said they did not pursue an investigation into his schooling matters because it wasn't in their policies to do so.

It did send an educational neglect report to Kyle Thompson, the superintendent of schools overseeing the regional office of education in Charleston. The form didn't mention physical abuse, but it did say that L.J. had begged for food from neighbors, that doctors were concerned about his weight and that a DCFS caseworker had recently visited the home but no one had answered the door.

Hotline Complaint

Thompson was in his office when the educational neglect report ended up on his desk on an October afternoon. Alarmed when he read the allegations, Thompson went to the apartment that same day. White and Anderson came to the door, Thompson recalled, and eventually agreed to meet with school officials.

"I really feel like we may have saved that kid's life that day," Thompson said.

But Anderson and White continued to keep L.J. at home.

In November, a grocery store manager found L.J. in the parking lot begging for quarters and called police, who took L.J. home and later issued a ticket to White and Anderson for violating a city truancy ordinance. L.J. hadn't been to school the whole year — 70 days.

Anderson said he didn't know why he was cited, since he was homeschooling. "Apparently, it wasn't good enough for the school system," he told reporters.

A few days later, police and child welfare services again visited the home and found welts and bruises on L.J.'s back. L.J. said Anderson had beaten him with a belt as punishment for eating leftover Salisbury steak and potatoes without permission. The boy also told child welfare workers he had not showered for two weeks.

Anderson and White would later tell reporters L.J. was on a diet of fruits and vegetables because he was too fat and prediabetic, but L.J. told police he ate mostly cereal. Though DCFS found credible evidence of both neglect and abuse in its November and December investigations, the couple said they did not abuse L.J. or deny him an education. They are still trying to get the two younger children back, but they say they don't want L.J. In an April court custody hearing, a judge in their child welfare case admonished them for not accepting responsibility for their treatment of L.J., including keeping him from school.

For its part, the state did ultimately take responsibility for L.J.'s schooling: Caseworkers took the children into custody on a Friday. The following Monday, L.J. returned to public school.

Mollie Simon of ProPublica contributed research. Andrew Adams of Capitol News Illinois contributed data reporting.

Have a news tip regarding homeschooling, chronic truancy or educational neglect? Email them to Molly Parker or Beth Hundsdorfer at investigations@capitolnewsillinois.com.

Gaming*from page 7*

testifying to the panel to identify problems in the current law that allowed the licenses to go unused.

John D'Alessandro, representing the ownership

of the Chicago Wolves minor league hockey team, said the organization had mostly stopped pursuing a venue-specific sports betting license because the team would likely never see a return on the \$10 million investment in a license fee — especially because bets could only be placed in person or within a roughly five-block radius of the venue.

"It's very overpriced in the market," he said of licenses compared with those in other states. "You have a very high fee, you have no online capabilities... the economics don't make sense."

Only DraftKings has pursued a venue-specific sportsbook. Last summer, it opened a 17,000-square-foot space adjacent to Chicago's Wrigley Field offering bar and restaurant service to customers while it awaited final licensure from the Gaming Board, which came in March.

Illinois' license fees are some of the highest in the nation. Pennsylvania also charges \$10 million for an initial license fee and New York charges a \$25 million fee for online operators, other states charge in the hundreds of thousands, or even have no license fees. New York does not charge land-based sportsbook operators a license fee or charge for renewals, while Illinois charges \$1 million every four years for license renewals.

A representative from the state's Gaming Board testified that only one sportsbook has even applied for the \$20 million online-only master sports betting license but ended up withdrawing.

Video gaming

Taxes on Illinois' ever-growing video gambling industry will grow to 35 percent — up from the 34 percent rate it's been sitting at since 2020.

That extra tax would generate an estimated \$35 million next year, according to estimates from Pritzker's office. The \$814 million in taxes video gambling terminals generated for the state in the 2023 fiscal year is part of \$4.8 billion the industry has made for state infrastructure projects since the very first gaming terminals launched in 2012, according to the Illinois Gaming Board.

Upping the tax on video gaming was a last-minute addition to Democrats' revenue package in recent days; Pritzker had not mentioned any desire to do so earlier this spring.

The 2009 law that legalized video gambling implemented a 30 percent tax on the industry and limited most establishments to five terminals apiece. But as part of a massive gambling expansion in 2019, the General Assembly upped the tax to 33 percent with an automatic bump to 34 percent in 2020.

In exchange, restaurants, bars and gaming cafes have been allowed to add a sixth terminal, while so-called "large truck stops" were allowed to install up to 10 machines. In addition, the maximum bet for each hand doubled from \$2 to \$4.

Despite the pandemic shutting down video gaming terminals for months at a time in 2020 into 2021, the industry's growth was undeterred, with revenues rebounding to near-double pre-COVID levels by the end of last fiscal year.

Nearly 46,000 video gaming terminals were in operation statewide at the end of the 2023 fiscal year, according to state records. On average, 238 new terminals came online each month last year.

Though the video gambling industry balked at the proposal to once again hike taxes on its terminals, a last-minute counterproposal to allow bars and restaurants to increase the maximum number of terminals to seven didn't pan out.

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government. It is distributed to hundreds of print and broadcast outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, along with major contributions from the Illinois Broadcasters Foundation and Southern Illinois Editorial