

## Ground Observer Corps

*The Russians Are Coming!*

by David Larson

During World War II, the Civil Defense program, Ground Observer Corps, administered by the United States Army Air Force, formed a civilian effort to do coastal observation at 14,000 locations in the United States with the help of 1.5 million volunteer observers to spot enemy aircraft. Using binoculars, if an object was identified the observation was telephoned to a central location, which coordinated authentication efforts. The early 1940s witnessed the birth of radar. It had limited usefulness, thus the naked eye filled the gaps. The Ground Observers Corps was dissolved in 1946 after the war.

Four years later, the program was re-instituted as the Ground Observers Corps as the Cold War developed with the potential of a nuclear threat. Simultaneously, Canada created a similar organization, the RCAF Ground Observer Corp. Radar's limitations in the face of a threat from Soviet bombers encroaching Canadian and United States' air space flying over the north pole. Again, volunteers were called upon, and by 1952 with 750,000 volunteers, 7-86 years of age,

*Continued on Page 4*



*A 1950s era Soviet bomber*

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## After Pritzker's Budget Address, Lawmakers Jockey For Their Own Spending Priorities

*Budget season opens with revenue estimates remaining near record high*

By Hannah Meisel & Nika Schoonover  
Capitol News Illinois

Even factoring in the possibility of a "mild recession" this year, the proposed budget Gov. JB Pritzker laid out on Wednesday includes nearly \$50 billion in state spending, bolstered by projections of continued near record-high tax revenues.

Without invoking partisan labels, the governor painted Democrats as the party of fiscal responsibility, contrasting the dysfunction of a two-year budget impasse under his predecessor, Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner, with the rosy budget outlook predicted for the coming year.

"You, the majority of the General Assembly, are succeeding," Pritzker said Wednesday, speaking to the Democratic lawmakers who comprise supermajorities in both the Illinois House and Senate. "You, the majority of the people of Illinois who elected the General Assembly, the constitutional officers, and me, are succeeding. Together, we've slogged through

*Continued on page 2*

## Illinois Earns 7th Credit Upgrade in Less Than Two Years

*S&P cites recent early debt retirement, buildup of rainy day fund*

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

S&P Global Ratings announced Thursday that it had raised Illinois' long-term credit rating to A-, up from BBB+, marking the seventh upgrade the state has received from a major rating agency in less than two years.

The rating applies to roughly \$27.7 billion in outstanding general obligation, or GO, bonds.

"The upgrade on the GO debt reflects our view that Illinois' commitment and execution to strengthen its budgetary flexibility and stability, supported by accelerating repayment of its liabilities, rebuilding its budget stabilization fund to decade highs; and a slowing of statutory pension funding growth, will likely continue during the outlook period," S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Geoff Buswick said in a news release.

Bonds are a tool that governments and businesses use to borrow money, typically for long-term capital projects such as building construction or other kinds of infrastructure. GO bonds are backed by the government's general taxing authority but other bonds may be backed by more specific revenue sources, such as sales or motor fuel taxes. Higher bond ratings generally mean the borrower – in this case the state – pays lower interest rates.

Before the recent string of upgrades, all three major rating agencies – including Moody's Investors Service and Fitch Ratings – had rated Illinois' bonds at one notch above "junk" status,

the point at which large institutional investors will no longer purchase them.

During the last two years, however, Illinois has used higher-than-expected revenues to pay off its backlog of past-due bills and retire other short-term debt early. In addition, it has set aside \$1.9 billion for the state's budget stabilization

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## Senator Syverson Statement on Governor's Budget Address

*(Press Release)*

State Sen. Dave Syverson (R-Cherry Valley) released the following statement after Gov. JB Pritzker delivered his annual Budget Address to a joint session of legislators Feb. 15 in the House of Representatives at the Capitol.

"Gov. Pritzker has been able to balance the state's budget the last two years with the help of billions of federal tax dollars that are now ending," Sen. Syverson said. "Yet even with a looming economic slowdown, his spending proposal for next year seeks to increase permanent spending by \$3 billion. That, by any financial measurement, is not sustainable and means Illinois' working families will be facing a major tax increase very soon."

As the legislative budget process gets under way, Sen. Syverson says he stands ready to work with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to make the tough decisions necessary to pass a truly balanced budget with structural reforms that will boost the economy and jobs.

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

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

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

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



David E. Richter, 78, of Belvidere, IL, passed away on February 25, 2023. He was born on July 10, 1944 in Columbus, Wisconsin. The son of Kenneth and Lorretta Richter. David was a deeply devoted husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. On December 26, 1964 he married the love of his life, Pat Richter, and together they shared 3 children and 58 years in marriage. David worked alongside his family managing the business side of Pat's artistry. He had a strong work ethic and would facilitate the art show rooms and manufacturing of products. He was the "Sir Master Chief" of all the inner workings of the business. He loved to go golfing and ride his motorcycle. David also took pride in maintaining the yard and spending time outdoors. He knew how to lighten the mood with a joke or teasing nature. He will be missed by many.

He is survived by his wife, Pat; their children, Kevin (Linda) Richter, Brenda Richter, and Kristin (Barton) Richter-Tope; brother, Dan Richter; 5 grandchildren; numerous great-grandchildren; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, and extended family members whom he loved dearly.

He is predeceased by his parents, Kenneth and Lorretta Richter; grandson, DJ Richter; and sister, Sharon McCormick.

Cremation rites have been accorded with private family memorial.

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**Reaction**

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the tough times and are making the responsible decisions for our future.”

But as Illinois' recent history indicates, state government controlled by one party doesn't mean negotiations are easy. And with an expanded Democratic majority in the House – 78 members, up from 73 after November's election – intra-party disagreements on state budget priorities could be a test of Democratic unity this spring.

**New spending**

Pritzker's \$49.6 billion budget proposal includes a host of new programs in addition to expanding existing spending, especially in the areas of education and human services.

The governor's early childhood education plan, dubbed Smart Start Illinois, would funnel \$250 million annually toward expanding both preschool and child care programs statewide. During the pandemic, child care programs suffered while many mothers left the workforce in the face of limited access to child care.

Pritzker also proposed spending nearly \$250 million more in higher education and job training programs, including a \$100 million boost to the state's Monetary Award Program, known as MAP grants, which sends low-income students to state schools. Another \$100 million of that chunk would be spent on increasing funds for community colleges and public universities' operating budgets – the largest cash infusion for higher education in two decades.

While Democrats applauded Pritzker's vision, some also noted the governor's proposal would only spend the minimum dollar amount – \$350 million – required by state law to increase Illinois' funding for K-12 education, as outlined in a landmark 2018 law overhauling school funding.

While he celebrated his efforts, Rep. Will Davis, D-Homewood, said the state needs to invest \$200 million more in the funding formula to address the Black community's lack of resources and disproportionate impact, particularly in education.

“Part of our desire is to make sure that (Pritzker) acknowledges that Black communities are the ones that have been left behind more so than any other community,” Davis said. “We need to put those resources or make sure those resources touch Black communities in a greater way than they have in the past.”

State Sen. Cristina Pacione-Zayas, D-Chicago, agreed.

“We are fully aware that if we only do a \$350 million increase annually, we're not going to reach adequacy by 2027,” she said. “I think that's very well-established. So we will definitely be deep in those negotiations to see how much more we can add on top of that.”

Members of the General Assembly's powerful Black Caucus, as well as its growing Latino Caucus, have demands of their own.

The Latino Caucus, for example, will be seeking a major expansion of Medicaid coverage to undocumented immigrant adults – those not currently covered by laws passed in the last few years aimed at coverage of undocumented youth and seniors. Details on that plan – including cost – will be introduced at a later date, caucus members said Wednesday.

Rep. Fred Crespo, D-Hoffman Estates, the chair of the House's General Services Appropriations Committee, said with so many new members of his party comes increased demands on resources. And Crespo warned that Democrats should not be blind to the source of the state's recent surpluses.

“Consumer spending is driven by the pandemic,

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**Reaction**

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so that's not going to last," he said. "(Pritzker) had a lot of positive things to say today but he added a lot of new spending...two years of surpluses does not make a pattern. That's not a trend and we should not look at it that way."

Crespo ticked off a list of coming budgetary pressures, including a drop-off in the COVID-era extra federal Medicaid dollars coming later this spring, money needed to fund pretrial services under the state's law eliminating cash bail if the Illinois Supreme Court upholds it this spring, and contract negotiations with the state's largest public employee union, AFSCME.

Comptroller Susana Mendoza, who in recent days had warned members of her own party that creating new spending programs wasn't the fiscally prudent thing to do, changed her tune after Pritzker's speech Wednesday.

"My concern has always been to make sure that we're not frivolously spending money, that we have to hold the line on making sure that we don't overextend ourselves financially," Mendoza said. "Funding those specific programs strategically means there are other dollars that are freed up to do things like increase payments for our developmentally disabled providers, teacher shortage areas...being able to invest some dollars in economic growth with business grants and things like that."

After his graduated income tax plan failed at the ballot box in 2020, Pritzker warned "there will be cuts, and they will be painful." But so far, better-than-expected revenues have meant that warning has not borne out, and the governor has mostly stayed away from talking about revisiting the issue in the last two years.

But Sen. Rob Martwick, D-Chicago, recently floated the idea again, and he maintains Illinois will eventually reach a fiscal cliff without it – especially if the state doesn't start paying more toward its unfunded pension liability year over year.

"All this progress we've made, a graduated income tax structure could put us on the path to better revenue growth, but it's in a position to solve our problems and give the middle class what it needs: serious tax relief," Martwick said.

**GOP response**

Republicans, who have been in the superminority for much of the last 15 years in the Senate and most of the past decade in the House, were silent for the majority of Pritzker's speech, contrasting Democrats' frequent cheering for the governor's proposal.

After the speech, some praised the governor's focus on early childhood education and initiatives to lower the costs of higher education. But many more were skeptical of the state's ability to fund those plans.

"How we're going to pay for it is where we fall short," House Minority Leader Tony McCombie, R-Savanna, said after the budget address. "There's absolutely no structural reforms in this budget proposal."

McCombie emphasized House Republicans

also want to invest in the state's vulnerable populations, but her party needs to be invited to budget negotiations to do so.

"We have a lot of resources within the Republican Caucus," McCombie said. "Take our ideas and let us help you."

Republicans warned that implementing new programs could inevitably lead to a fiscal cliff if the economy turns or Illinois' finances deteriorate, leaving the state with two options: cut off that spending or raise taxes to support it.

"This is the governor's wishlist and I am concerned that there are some things in there that we would be committing long-term spending to that we may not have revenue in the future to fund," said Rep. Norine Hammond, R-Macomb.

While Hammond commended the governor's proposed investments in higher education and K-12 education funding, she said she'd like to see more focus on programs serving disabled individuals and long-term care programs.

The governor's proposal does, however, include \$450 million that would be allocated over several years toward preserving and growing the health care workforce, focusing particularly on Medicaid providers and providers in rural and other underserved areas across the state.

Other Republicans balked at Pritzker's repeated emphasis on social issues throughout his speech, including the continued expansion of reproductive health care in Illinois as other Midwestern states restrict abortion access.

"I'm a pro-life guy, have been all my life," said Rep. Dave Severin, R-Benton. "Those agendas that the governor has...are disappointing to me that we're drawing people from all over the Midwest to come to the state for (access to abortions)."

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**Statement from IL AFL-CIO President Tim Drea on Governor Pritzker's Budget Address**

(Press Release)

Illinois AFL-CIO President Tim Drea issued the following statement in response to Governor J.B. Pritzker's budget address.

"Governor J.B. Pritzker's proposed budget is a win for working families in Illinois. It is a sound and fiscally responsible budget that meets the needs of working families and prepares our workforce for an ever-changing economy."

"Governor Pritzker is ensuring that Illinoisans across all sectors, zip codes and education

levels can experience economic stability and security. There are commitments to fully fund our infrastructure, pay down the state's pensions liabilities and significant investments to our early childhood education, apprentice-

ship programs and our health and human service workforce."

"The Illinois AFL-CIO looks forward to continuing to work with Governor Pritzker and calls on the General Assembly to pass a responsible budget that addresses the needs of working people."

**Credit**

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fund – commonly known as the "rainy day" fund – and the state is projected to deposit another \$138 million into that fund in the upcoming fiscal year, according to Gov. JB Pritzker's latest budget proposal.

"I am thrilled to see our hard work at righting the past fiscal wrongs of our state reflected in today's action by S&P with another credit rating upgrade – the third such upgrade in just two years," Pritzker said in a statement. "Our continued fiscal responsibility and smart budgeting will save Illinois taxpayers millions from adjusted interest rates, and my partners in the General Assembly and I look forward to building on that success."

In its announcement Thursday, S&P credited the state's "deep and diverse economic base" as well as the state government's access to readily available cash, including the rainy day fund and untapped interfund borrowing authority. The agency also said it expects ongoing union contract negotiations to be settled in a timely manner.

Offsetting those factors, S&P said, is the state's high unfunded pension and other postemployment benefit liabilities such as health care. The agency also dinged Illinois on its practice of releasing annual financial audits later than most other states and population declines, which it warned could impact future economic growth.

S&P said it could further upgrade Illinois' rating if the state continues paying down unfunded pension liabilities and building up its rainy day fund while shrinking its structural deficit. S&P said that deficit was in large part caused by not contributing to its pension funds at actuarially determined levels.

On the other hand, S&P said it could downgrade the state's rating in the future if the structural deficit were to increase due to economic uncertainties or if its pension and other fixed-cost obligations exceed expectations.

Pritzker's recent budget proposal seeks to add an extra \$200 million to the pension fund beyond statutory levels for the current fiscal year.

For now, S&P said the state's near-term credit outlook is "stable."

In addition to upgrading the state's general obligation bond rating, S&P also raised its rating on the state's Build Illinois sales tax bonds to A, up from A-.

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16,000 observation posts were being established, one of which was in Belvidere.

Allies during World War II, the Soviet Union had also developed the nuclear bomb, and the makeup of international relationships changed; thus, the Cold War began. With the threat came the opportunists who stoked fear to acquire power. Beginning in 1950, Senator Joe McCarthy, became the most visible public face of the period in the United States. Cold War tensions fueled fears of widespread Communist subversion. McCarthy was known for alleging that numerous Communists and Soviet spies and sympathizers had infiltrated the United States federal government, universities, film industry, and elsewhere. Ultimately, he was censured for refusing to cooperate with, and abusing members of the committee established to investigate whether or not he should be censured. Nevertheless, his self-serving grandstanding left the country confused and paranoid. Many communities formed their own anti-Communist committees, usually led by a mayor or prominent figure, to hunt people in their community thought to be Communist.

Others communities found more constructive ways to deal with the perceived threat. In Belvidere, a branch of the Ground Observers Corps (GOC) was invented by citizens who felt the need to serve.

Local officials cooperated with the newspaper at the time, *Belvidere Daily Republican*, and volunteers were invited to watch a movie at the VFW Club on the program in the summer of 1956. Murray Quincer, GOC supervisor, with the help of Mrs. Robert "Dutch" Keating, worked to set up an observation post on the roof of the American Legion building on South State Street, fully staffed with round the clock volunteers. Leroy Merritt, a local GOC organizer, estimated Belvidere would need 200 members to take turns on a 24 hour-7 day a week schedule. Because of Belvidere's location, so close to Chicago, it was viewed as an important post.

The plan was to establish 350 posts surrounding Chicago in concentric rings to provide advanced notice and authentication of an object so as not to confuse a Soviet bomber with a weather balloon. On one occasion a mistaken weather balloon was sited over Belvidere and jets intercepted it within minutes. Once an object had been identified as an enemy bomber a call would be sent out from the Chicago central coordinating station and jet fighters would scramble out of O'Hare Air Force base. Jets fighter could set up a fighter umbrella around the city within 6 mins or 14 minutes from Selfridge Air Force base near Detroit, once the call came in and had been authenticated.

Where the lookout post was located in Belvidere is not clear or may have been moved from time to time. Originally, it has been reported to have been on top of the American Legion building on South State Street. Life long resident John Wendell, who brought this story to the *Journal*, remember it being on South State Street approximately where the Hub Barbershop or the Chamber of Commerce is today. Perhaps that is where the American Legion was located then. In a newspaper article from 1958 the local civil defense director J.C. Wolf announced that a tower would be built next to Burton Motors on North State Street for the purpose of observation. The aforementioned Mr. Wendell said he remembers Belvidere's call letters were BN11B. In a 1956 newspaper article it was reported that a John Wendell at 1020 Pearl Street joint the GOC, along with Duane and Helen Dittbenner, Jim Johnson, Francis Walker, and Jiles Cob.

# OP-ED

## Better Politics, Smarter Government: A bipartisan project worthy of the Land of Lincoln

By John T. Shaw

I'm teaching a class on statesmanship at Southern Illinois University this spring and one of my recurring themes is that statesmanship can take place not only on national and international stages but also in city councils, schools boards, and state legislatures.

Statesmanship, at its essence, is the determination of leaders to look to the long term and a disposition to take difficult and politically unpopular actions to advance the public good.

Illinois' state budget cries out for statesmanship.

It's important to note that there has been substantial fiscal progress in Illinois over the past several years. In late February, S&P Global, a top global rating agency, raised Illinois' long-term credit rating to A- from BBB.\* This represented the seventh upgrade the state has received from a rating agency in less than two years. S&P Global cited the state's "accelerating repayment of its liabilities, rebuilding its budget stabilization fund to decade highs, and a slowing of statutory pension funding growth."

This is positive and most budget experts agree that Illinois' fiscal future is better than it has been in some time. However, this is a low bar.

The state still faces formidable budgetary challenges. If the economy weakens significantly, today's surpluses will be quickly transformed into deficits. The state's long-term pension challenges remain enormous, and Illinoisans continue to want more state services than they are willing to pay for.

In my discussions with members of the Illinois General Assembly, I often hear that there is more bipartisan cooperation in Springfield than the public assumes but that this cooperation largely occurs on narrow issues.

On budget policy, there is a familiar and dispiriting pattern. The majority party examines revenue estimates, tallies up spending requests, and assembles a budget that satisfies as many in its party as possible while remaining in balance, at least on paper. The minority party typically sees the budget not as opportunity to present an alternative vision but as an opening to criticize the majority.

It would be inspiring and important if a small group of Democratic and Republican lawmakers formed a bipartisan Future of Illinois caucus that worked thoughtfully and diligently on a long-term budget plan. This group would carefully examine the medium- and longer-term budget outlook and probe revenue projections and spending programs. It would not just "cut and paste" ideas from past budget cycles but contemplate major reforms of taxes and spending. It would honestly frame alternatives for Illinois voters.

This Future of Illinois project could accomplish two significant things: generate substantive and creative fiscal proposals and establish a habit of bipartisan cooperation on large issues.

The group might

begin its deliberations by reviewing a recently issued report by the Civic Federation that persuasively argues that a successful fiscal plan for Illinois should eliminate structural budget deficits for the foreseeable future, reform pension funding, and set a goal of Illinois achieving an AA credit rating in five years.

How would the public react to this budget caucus? Would members get a hearing? Would they get a primary opponent for the impertinence of working with members of the other party?

I don't know. However, I can make this modest pledge. They will be invited to the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute for a public event and offered a platform to present their ideas and explain the state's fiscal predicament.

Paul Simon understood that sound and future-oriented budget policy was the foundation of successful governance. "Anything worthwhile requires sacrifice. The worst course is drifting," he once wrote. Policymakers, he said, should "be builders of the future, not simply custodians of what we inherited from the past."

*John T. Shaw is the director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois Carbondale. Shaw's monthly column explores how Illinois can work toward better politics and smarter government.*



Elections are right around the corner. As a former employee of Community Unit School District #100 (CUSD#100), I wanted to share why I will be voting for Allison Reid-Niemiec in the Boone County school board election on April 4th. I have known Allison for many years. In that time she has proven herself to be thoughtful in her decisions and conversations, meticulous in her research, and passionate about continuing to improve the learning environment of the students in CUSD#100. Allison has been an active member of the board since April 2015 and though it is a volunteer position, Allison routinely spends upwards of 20 hours a week working on school board related items. This encompasses a wide variety of responsibilities including taking calls, responding to emails, researching topics for upcoming discussions and votes (grading systems, compensation analysis, post-pandemic return to school plan), and attending meetings. Since May 2021, Allison has served as the President of the school board. Her exemplary leadership continues to move the district forward in a positive direction (strategic planning initiatives and engaging parents, students and community members on committees). Please join me in voting for Allison Reid-Niemiec on April 4<sup>th</sup>!

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# House Dems' Cannabis Working Group Will Engage Industry, Equity Advocates

*Group to consider cannabis oversight commission, other industry reforms*

By Nika Schoonover Capitol News Illinois

Illinois House Democrats announced the formation of a cannabis working group Thursday that will aim to steer the burgeoning industry's expansion in a business-friendly way while still satisfying the equity goals of the landmark 2019 legalization law.

The group is led by Rep. La Shawn Ford, D-Chicago, who has sponsored numerous cannabis-related bills and is an outspoken advocate for racial equity.

The working group's main priority, according to Ford, is to make sure individuals who have invested in the newly-created industry are successful. A part of that is to address the disproportionate impact the war on drugs had on communities of color, particularly when it comes to cannabis-related arrests.

According to the ACLU, Black people in Illinois were 7.5 times more likely than white people to be arrested for cannabis-related offenses prior to the state's decriminalization of the drug in 2016.

The same law that legalized recreational cannabis use in 2019 also made individuals previously charged with minor cannabis offenses eligible to have their records expunged. At the end of 2020, Gov. Pritzker announced 492,129 cannabis-related convictions had been expunged and 9,219 low-level cannabis convictions had been pardoned.

The recreational cannabis law was also designed to give "social equity" applicants – or those whose ownership consists of minorities, people with drug convictions or individuals hailing from disproportionately impacted areas – easier access to new dispensary licenses.

"Our goal was to make sure that those communities that were hardest hit by the war on drugs actually were able to benefit from this industry by having the ability to open up in those communities and hire people from those communities," Ford said in an interview.

Ford was the sponsor of House Bill 1443 in the previous General Assembly, a measure that created 110 additional "social equity" dispensary licenses beyond the initial 75 created by the

original legalization law.

Over 30 cannabis-related bills have already been filed in the current General Assembly which began in January, addressing areas including licensing, distribution of cannabis tax revenue and the expungement of past offenses. The working group will comb through these measures to more effectively address the industry's most pertinent issues.

Illinois recorded a record-high \$1.5

billion of recreational cannabis sales in Fiscal Year 2022, generating about \$445 million in tax revenue. Under law, 25 percent of the taxes collected from recreational cannabis sales are to go to economically distressed communities or those impacted by the war on drugs. In Fiscal Year 2022, about \$115 million in tax revenue went to the state's General Revenue Fund.

Beyond an equity focus, Ford said the working group will also aim to make state policy more accommodating to the industry from a business perspective.

"We have to make sure that we legislate with the industry because they are the investors," Ford said. "If we could empower the businesses, it's going to mean more revenue, and we're going to realize what we intended for the [cannabis legalization] law to do. And that is increase employment, develop communities, reduce crime in the state."

Ford is joined on the working group by Assistant Majority Leader Marcus Evans, D-Chicago; Assistant Majority Leader Barbara Hernandez, D-Aurora; Assistant Majority Leader Bob Rita, D-Blue Island; Rep. Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz, D-Glenview; Rep. Sonya Harper, D-Chicago; and Rep. Bob Morgan, D-Deerfield.

They'll work with other lawmakers, state agencies, businesses and associations that work directly with the cannabis industry.

One of the involved organizations is the Cannabis Business Association of Illinois, a statewide trade association for cannabis businesses.

The association's legislative priorities include re-implementing curbside pickup and drive-thru services after pandemic-era measures expired, decoupling Illinois' cannabis tax code from the federal tax code, and extending the right to work in the medical cannabis industry for those who have previous cannabis-related convictions.

"Currently, the recreational statute allows individuals with previous drug convictions to gain access to the cannabis industry," Pamela Althoff, executive director at the Cannabis Business Association of Illinois, said in an interview. "That is prohibited in the compassionate and medical statute. We'd like to see both of them mirrored."

The Cannabis Equity Illinois Coalition, a grassroots nonprofit that advocates for cannabis-related reform, has their own priorities for the legislative session, including expanding support for the craft grow industry, creating a singular cannabis oversight commission to streamline cannabis programs, and creating licenses for clubs and lounges so people other than homeowners are able to legally consume cannabis.

"The goal is moving away from having 13-plus state agencies who are not talking to each other," Peter Contos, deputy director of the coalition, said in an interview. "We need one cannabis body who just does all the work, similar to what the state did with the liquor commission."

Evans and Ford have both introduced bills – House Bills 1436 and 1498 – to create a cannabis oversight commission. Contos said the coalition is currently trying to work with both lawmakers to reach an agreement on the legislation.

Contos added they're excited to be involved with the working group because it shows there's a concerted effort to continue cannabis-related reforms.

"We have a long way to go in Illinois to get back to the goals we set a few years ago when we legalized [cannabis] but this is definitely the first step we need to take," Contos said.

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

## Court Rulings Supercharge Illinois' Strongest-in-Nation Biometric Privacy Law

*Law's critics want to reopen debate, but backers say law is working as intended*

By Hannah Meisel Capitol News Illinois

In the wake of a pair of recent decisions from the Illinois Supreme Court strengthening the state's law governing how companies must treat employees' and customers' biometric data, longtime critics of the law see an opening to weaken it.

But backers of Illinois' Biometric Information Privacy Act are reluctant to renegotiate the strongest-in-the-nation privacy protections laid out in the law, and they characterize opponents' uproar following the court decisions as "fear mongering."

Nearly 15 years after the law's initial passage, legal interpretations of BIPA are still taking shape, as widespread use of the technology that collects biometric data such as fingerprint and facial

Continued on Page 6



### Looking for a tax preparer? My clients file with confidence.

I have over 35 years of experience as a tax attorney with an advanced law degree in taxation. My clients know that their taxes are prepared professionally, getting all the deductions and credits that they deserve, and they don't have to fear a letter from the IRS. I can e-file any prior-year or current-year tax return. My overhead is low, my rates are reasonable, and handle things privately.

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**When was the last time you had a legal question?** Or had some large organization try to intimidate you, and you really weren't sure of your rights. Did you know someone you could ask? Or did you just "wing it" and hope for the best? My clients know they can call me anytime for some quick advice.

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# LEGAL NOTICES

TAX DEED NO 2023TX3  
FILED JANUARY 6, 2023

**TAKE NOTICE**

County of Boone, Illinois  
Date premises Sold October 29, 2020  
Certificate No. 2019-00384.  
Sold for General Taxes of 2019.

THIS PROPERTY HAS BEEN SOLD FOR DELINQUENT TAXES  
Property Located at 3515 Partridge Ln, Belvidere, Illinois 61008  
Legal Description 3-44-3 BE-VER KREEK 2ND ADD KTS 4 & 5  
(EX BEG SW COR LOT 4 SE 601.84' N 50' NW618.83' SE TO POB) or  
Property Index No. 05-03-326-015.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For further information contact the County Clerk

ADDRESS: Boone County Clerk's Office

1212 Logan Ave, Suite 103,

Belvidere Illinois 61008

Telephone 815-544-3103

Laura Jo Larke

Purchaser

Dated 2/23/2023

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

TAX DEED NO 2023TX4  
FILED JANUARY 6, 2023

**TAKE NOTICE**

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

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

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

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

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1212 Logan Ave, Suite 103,

Belvidere Illinois 61008

Telephone 815-544-3103

/s/ Laura Jo Larke

Purchaser

Dated 2/23/2023

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

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL  
BOONE COUNTY  
REBECCA ELAINE CORDOVA  
Plaintiff  
-VS- CASE # 2022-DC-55  
ELIAS MAX CORDOVA  
Defendant  
NOTICE OF PUBLICATION  
Notice is given to you, ELIAS MAX CORDOVA, Defendant that this cause has been commenced against you in this Court asking for DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE 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 N. Main St., Belvidere, Illinois, 61008 on or before the 19th day of APRIL, 2023 a Judgment or other relief as prayed for by the Plaintiff may be granted.  
Dated: 2/22/2023  
Pamela Coduto  
Clerk of the Circuit Court  
17th Judicial Court  
Boone County, Illinois  
Published in The Boone County Journal 3/2, 3/9, 3/16 (P)

STATE OF ILLINOIS IN THE CIRCUIT COURT  
WINNEBAGO COUNTY  
DATE FOR REQUEST OF NAME CHANGE (ADULT):  
BETHANY ANNE RITTER  
Case No. 2023 MR 15  
There will be a court date on my Request to change my name from: BETHANY ANNE RITTER to the new name of BETHANY ANNE RITTER-BLOMQUIST. The court date will be held on 04/12/2023 at 10:00a.m. At 400 W State St., Rockford IL, 61101 in Courtroom #426  
Published in the Boone County Journal - 03/02,09,16

# ASSUMED NAMES

ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION  
STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY OF BOONE  
This is to certify that the undersigned intend to conduct and transact a carpentry business said County and State under the name of R&R REMODELING at the following post office address: 1316 11th Avenue, Belvidere, IL 61008 that the true and real full names of all persons owning, conducting or transacting such business, with respective residence address of each, are as follows: Alexus B. Rodriguez, 1316 11th Avenue, Belvidere, IL 61008; phone # (815) 543-3924.  
Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 9th day of February, A.D. 2023  
Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk  
Published in Boone County Journal 2/16, 2/23, 3/2 - P

ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION  
STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY OF BOONE  
This is to certify that the undersigned intend to conduct and transact a sale of handmade crafts business in said County and State under the name of THE SPIRIT OF SIRENS at the following post office address: 14288 KB Road, Capron, IL 61012 that the true and real full names of all persons owning, conducting or transacting such business, with respective residence address of each, are as follows: Jessica Lynn Smith, 14288 KB Road, Capron, IL 61012; phone # (815) 312-6525.  
Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 13th day of February, A.D. 2023  
Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk  
Published in Boone County Journal 2/16, 2/23, 3/2 - P

ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION  
STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY OF BOONE  
This is to certify that the undersigned intend to conduct and transact a barbershop business said County and State under the name of UNDERGROUND BARBER SHOP at the following post office address: 2030 North State Street, Belvidere, IL 61008 that the true and real full names of all persons owning, conducting or transacting such business, with respective residence address of each, are as follows: Angel Garcia, 119 West 4th Street, Belvidere, IL 61008; phone # (815) 494-1717.  
Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 10th day of February, A.D. 2023  
Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk  
Published in Boone County Journal 2/16, 2/23, 3/2 - P

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
COUNTY OF BOONE  
No. DBA4131  
ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION  
The undersigned person or persons do hereby certify that a ONE LINE RESALE business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of TK FLIPS. That its location is or will be 415 BIESTER DR. in BELVIDERE in the County of BOONE COUNTY, State of Illinois, and that the true or real full name or names of the person or persons owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person or persons is shown as below  
TRAVIS JAMES TOLLSMA, 415 BIESTER DR., BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS 61008.  
Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 14th day of February, A.D. 2023  
Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk  
Published in Boone County Journal 2/16,23 03/02

**Biometric** *from page 5*  
scans has only recently caught up to the law's forward-looking language. The wide adoption of such technology has led to the proliferation of class action lawsuits under BIPA, creating what opponents of the law have called a cottage

industry for ambitious attorneys.  
A constant refrain in those suits has been that if an individual's social security number is stolen, it may be a nuisance to get a new one but not impossible. But there's no remedy for a stolen fingerprint, retinal, voice or face scan, they argue. Under the law, companies deploying this technology must obtain employees' or customers' written consent before their biometric information is collected.

While two other states have imitated Illinois' first-in-the-nation biometric privacy law, Illinois is the only of the three states that allow individuals the right to sue over the improper collection and mishandling of biometric data.

Since about 2018, upwards of 2,000 suits have been filed under BIPA, followed by several high-profile, high-dollar settlements – including the \$650 million Facebook paid out after settling a class action suit in 2020. Those legal developments, in addition to a series of Illinois Supreme Court decisions interpreting BIPA's limits in ways that favor plaintiffs, have all spooked the business community.

Fast food chain White Castle, the defendant in the most recent case decided by the state's high court, claims the court's ruling could cost the company \$17 billion – a figure that businesses warn could bankrupt entire industries.

But even in deciding against White Castle, the majority on the court sought to assuage fears that future damage awards in BIPA cases would force a company to shutter. The court wrote "there is no language in the Act suggesting legislative intent to authorize a damages award that would result in the financial destruction of a business."

The opinion did, however, "respectfully suggest" the General Assembly review BIPA "and make clear its intent regarding the assessment of damages under the Act."

Whether the court's advisory will open the door to bigger changes in BIPA – or whether it will be heeded at all this year – remains to be seen, as proponents say litigation over biometric privacy means the law is working exactly as it should.

**Recent decisions**  
Two major BIPA-related decisions from the state's high court were issued in February. A unanimous majority found the law unequivocally provided for a five-year statute of limitations on lawsuits against companies that collected biometric information from employees or customers without proper notice – instead of the one-year time limit argued by the business community.

And two weeks later, a divided court ruled that each time someone's biometric data is collected constitutes a separate violation of BIPA, which under the law means \$1,000 in damages for "negligent" violations or \$5,000 for "reckless" or "intentional" violations. However, the court didn't rule on the question of damages specifically, which means the legal question of how damages can accrue under BIPA is still unsettled.

In that case, the justices were charged with deciding whether White Castle violated BIPA each time its employees scanned their fingerprints to access work computers and pay stubs or, as White Castle contended, whether only the initial collection of fingerprints without proper notice constituted a single violation under the law.

In a 4-3 opinion, the majority of the seven-member court – four of whom were not yet on the court when the case was argued last May – reasoned they could not limit BIPA claims to just "the first time a private entity scans or transmits



**Notice of Public Hearing - Boone County Subdivision Code Amendment**  
A public hearing will be held on Thursday, March 16, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. in the County Board Room of the Boone County Administration Campus located at 1212 Logan Ave, Belvidere, IL 61008 upon the following:

- Amending Section 506 of the Boone County Subdivision Code to allow for the adoption of a temporary moratorium on Impact Fees collected by the County.

All persons interested may appear at the hearing and be heard at the stated time and place.

## Biometric

from page 6

a party's biometric identifier or biometric information."

"No such limitation appears in the statute," the majority wrote. "We cannot rewrite a statute to create new elements or limitations not included by the legislature."

Taken together, both the White Castle decision and the unanimous opinion solidifying the assumption of a five-year statute of limitations under BIPA have strengthened the law, but the full effects of those decisions won't be felt until those cases wind their way back down to trial court – if the parties even choose to continue litigation instead of settling. So far, BIPA has only seen one jury test: a federal jury in October granted \$228 million in damages in a class action case against BNSF Railways.

Despite the Illinois Supreme Court's decision in the White Castle case, plaintiffs aren't guaranteed a win when it returns to trial court; the lawsuit has yet to be certified as a class action, and would also need to go through a lengthy discovery process before going to trial.

The long road ahead for these cases is why State Rep. Ann Williams, D-Chicago, said she won't be diving headfirst into negotiations to tweak the law any time soon. Williams, who wasn't yet in office when BIPA passed in 2008, has taken the lead on biometric information and other privacy measures in the House. She said she's wary of those calling for changes to the law, characterizing them as "sky-is-falling" alarmists who merely want to strip BIPA of its protections before letting the litigation continue to unfold.

"So to react immediately by making a quick change in the law without saying how things play out seems a bit premature to me," Williams said in an interview.

But Mark Denzler, president and CEO of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association, said he and other business leaders aren't sounding a false alarm but are instead heeding very real warning bells.

"I had a conversation with an auto company (recently) that's no longer going to test autonomous vehicles in Illinois because of this ruling," Denzler told Capitol News Illinois.

He cautioned that companies becoming fearful of facing expensive BIPA lawsuits in the course of doing business – like collecting images of pedestrians while testing autonomous vehicles – will hinder goals Denzler shares with Gov. JB Pritzker, including making Illinois a leader in high-tech manufacturing.

"Certainly these decisions (from the Illinois Supreme Court) throw cold water on that," Denzler said.

### 15 years of BIPA

When then-Gov. Rod Blagojevich signed BIPA into law in 2008, it was a novel concept meant to guard against technologies that, at the time, were still mostly the stuff of science fiction.

The legislation passed with unanimous support in both the Illinois House and Senate, with bipartisan sponsorship. Legislative records at the time indicate there was no debate on the floor of either chamber. The introduction from then-State Rep. Kathleen Ryg, D-Vernon Hills, cited the recent bankruptcy of Pay By Touch, a tech company that allowed grocery store customers to complete their purchases with a scan of their fingerprint.

"This pullout leaves thousands of customers from Albertsons, Cub Foods, Farm Fresh, Jewel, Osco, Shell, and Sunflower Market wondering what will become of their biometric and financial data," Ryg said at the time.

BIPA didn't face much legal scrutiny in the

first decade or so of its existence. But around 2017 and 2018, a trickle of BIPA-related lawsuits quickly became an explosion as attorneys such as Chicago-based Jay Edelson pioneered biometric privacy litigation in his own small firm, while larger firms created practice areas specializing in the law.

Technology, too, has caught up with what was merely theoretical at the time of BIPA's passage; both employees and customers are regularly subjected to the collection of their biometric privacy data, through means such as fingerprint scan, time clocks and closed-circuit video systems with facial recognition abilities.

In early 2019, the Illinois Supreme Court issued the first of its opinions reviewing BIPA, unanimously finding that a plaintiff doesn't need to plead "actual harm" in order to prove a company violated BIPA. In other words, whether an employee or customer's fingerprints or other biometric data was hacked, stolen or sold is irrelevant; merely the act of having one's biometric data collected without their express consent was enough to warrant up to \$5,000 in damages per violation.

One of the earliest legal tests of BIPA – a suit Edelson filed against Facebook in 2015 for the tech giant's use of facial recognition technology – would also become one of the biggest. The \$650 million settlement agreed to by Facebook in 2020 catapulted the relatively unknown law into the headlines when Illinoisans signed up for their share of the money, and again when they received those \$397 checks last May.

Plaintiffs' firms took advantage of the buzz around BIPA and started recruiting potential class members for new suits against social media and other tech companies last year.

But long before the crush of BIPA-related lawsuits began, lobbying efforts unsuccessfully tried to weaken the law. In 2016, then-state Sen. Terry Link, D-Vernon Hills, who had been the Senate sponsor of BIPA in 2008 and has since been indicted for unrelated tax evasion charges, sponsored a bill that would have retroactively excluded photos posted online from being subject to the law. Had it passed, the measure would have ended the ongoing lawsuit against Facebook.

Democrats introduced similar bills in 2018, but they didn't go very far, while BIPA-related bills filed by superminority Republicans have also been left on the cutting room floor.

### BIPA moving forward

In its decision last week, the Illinois Supreme Court noted that its prior opinions in BIPA-related cases have "repeatedly recognized the potential for significant damages awards" under the law, which the justices said were intended to give companies "the strongest possible incentive to conform to the law and prevent problems before they occur."

However, the justices also said they believed the legislature intended to make damages "discretionary rather than mandatory." The high court also agreed that a trial court "would certainly possess the discretion to fashion a damage award that fairly compensated claiming class members and included an amount designed to deter future violations, without destroying defendant's business."

That's cold comfort for defense attorneys like Danielle Kays of Chicago-based firm Seyfarth Shaw LLP, who represents companies facing BIPA lawsuits. Kays said the decision was "extremely disappointing" and could result in businesses having to pay out "draconian" damages. But, she noted, multimillion or -billion dollar damages could lead to a constitutional challenge of the law.

Before it gets to that point, Kays said, she would rather see the legislature address issues brought to the surface by legal challenges. She suggested allowing businesses to "cure" their violation of BIPA once it was brought to a company's attention, especially since she noted the vast majority of biometric privacy litigation does not involve hacking, stealing or sale of that data.

But that's a non-starter for Williams, who characterized the compliance standards laid out in BIPA as "not difficult." However, she said she'd be willing to discuss clarifications and small tweaks to the law.

While Williams, who is an attorney, noted that many plaintiffs' lawyers aren't arguing for the accrual of damages on a per-scan basis, she said the specter of having such personal biometric data stolen or misused is reason enough to maintain the potential for "significant damages."

"If you don't, these big tech companies that are billion-dollar companies are going to look at violations just as a cost of doing business, and not be concerned about compliance," Williams said.

A spokesman from the ACLU of Illinois echoed Williams' sentiments, saying the organization – an architect and backer of the law – doesn't see any urgency to change it.

But Denzler, whose organization is one of the most influential business lobbying groups in Illinois, does.

"(There will be) billions paid out," Denzler said of settlements and future damage awards. "That money could've gone to capital investments or higher wages for workers. Instead, it's going into the pocketbooks of trial lawyers."

State Rep. Jeff Keicher, R-DeKalb, said he believes a bill he's put forward could strike the right balance in tweaking the law. House Bill 3199 would allow companies to obtain consent electronically for collecting and using employees' and customers' biometric data, in addition to clarifying that consent is only needed for the first time a company collects it.

Keicher said he's sensitive to biometric privacy concerns because of the massive data center Facebook is building in his district. He called BIPA a "bragging point" because "we don't allow Illinois citizens to be manipulated in the fashion that some other (states) do."

"We have technology and we need to adapt to it, but at the same time, we have to be very sensitive to the abuses that some unscrupulous large technology firms may take," Keicher said in an interview. "And so where that center line is, I think we owe it to the people of Illinois to investigate."

Stephan Zouras, who represented the former White Castle manager at the center of the most recent case, is also involved with two other BIPA-related cases set for hearings in front of the high court in the next year or so. Those cases concern whether the Labor Management Relations Act preempts BIPA claims, and whether the law provides an exemption for employees in the health care industry.

"The decision is a win for the workers and all other citizens of Illinois who are understandably fed up with the cavalier and irresponsible disregard of their privacy rights by wealthy, powerful corporations, especially when those rights are trampled upon as a condition of employment at the workplace," Zouras said in an email.

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

# BOONE COUNTY LICENSE & TITLE

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