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Boone County Begins Courthouse Renovation, Work on Other Facilities

By John Tuttle

Construction on the Boone County Courthouse is one of several public works planned by the county that begins next month. “These building projects have been long overdue,” Boone County Administrator Becky Tobin told the Journal in an email. “Many departments have been operating in spaces that are too small or do not function well for staff or the public that they serve. The County has been fiscally responsible with taxpayer dollars and financially, this is the first opportunity the County has had to complete these projects.”

The total cost of the courthouse project is \$13 million. The Biden Administration’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) paid for \$6 million of this cost, according to Tobin.

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The Courthouse as it looks today, with 1970s improvements connecting the original County Clerks Building with the original Boone County Courthouse



A rendering of the finished courthouse remodeling

Pritzker Positions Himself at Forefront Of Trump Opposition By Invoking Nazis’ Rise to Power

Governor quest to project pragmatic progressivism present in budget, other policy proposals

By Hannah Meisel *Capitol News Illinois*

A month into President Donald Trump’s second term in the White House, Gov. JB Pritzker last week warned that the breakneck pace at which the Trump administration has been remaking federal policy could be a harbinger of something darker.

“It took the Nazis one month, three weeks, two days, eight hours and 40 minutes to dismantle a constitutional republic,” the governor said near the end of his annual combined State of the State and Budget Address on Wednesday.

Pritzker’s speech to a packed Illinois House chamber marked the start of the usual monthslong process of crafting a new state budget for the coming fiscal year. More than any budget or policy proposal, though, the governor used his annual public address to take aim at Trump in a way other high-profile Democrats have largely shied away from: discussing the rise of Adolf Hitler.

“The seed that grew into a dictatorship in Europe a lifetime ago didn’t arrive overnight,” he said. “It started with everyday Germans mad about inflation and looking for someone to blame.”

Pritzker, Illinois’ third Jewish governor whose ancestors fled religious persecution in Ukraine in the late 1800s, said he didn’t “invoke the specter of Nazis lightly” but cited his experience working with survivors to help found the Illinois

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Pritzker Calls \$55.2B Budget ‘Responsible And Balanced’ – But Warns Trump Policies Could Upend It

Proposal shaves \$1.2B from November spending estimate, doesn’t include new income or sales tax

By Ben Szalinski, Peter Hancock & Jerry Nowicki *Capitol News Illinois*

An improved revenue forecast is helping ease pressure on state finances as Gov. JB Pritzker calls for tightened spending to balance the budget without tax increases on everyday Illinoisans.

During his annual state of the state and budget address on Wednesday, Pritzker called for a roughly 3% spending increase to \$55.2 billion in fiscal year 2026 that will be supported by a similar increase in state revenue to \$55.5 billion.

The plan factors in a better-than-expected economic outlook for the coming fiscal year after the governor’s office originally projected a multi-billion-dollar shortfall in November. Pritzker also

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Gov. JB Pritzker enters the House chamber on Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025, for his annual budget address. (Capitol News Illinois photo by Andrew Adams)



Jack and Peggy Wolf

Scholarships Established in Honor Of Peggy and Jack Wolf

Press Release

The Boone County Community Foundation is pleased to announce the establishment of two scholarships in honor of Peggy and Jack Wolf. Both lifelong residents of Belvidere, Peggy and Jack were dedicated business owners, community leaders, and unwavering supporters of their local area.



- Dennis Balk, 65, Poplar Grove, Feb. 18
- Lois Boese, 81, Formerly of Harvard, Jan. 29
- James Botts, 83, Belvidere, Feb. 18
- Harriet Glass, 96, Belvidere, Feb. 16
- Gladys Gustafson, 98, Formerly of Marengo, Feb. 18
- Karen Lee, 88, Marengo, Feb. 20
- Menolascino, 58, Marengo, Feb. 24
- "Kipp" Ellen Smith, 86, Harvard, Feb. 19
- Diane Zerby, 68, Harvard, Feb. 20

The Peggy Wolf Scholarship will support a student intending to pursue a career in nursing. Peggy, a proud graduate of Belvidere High School, attended Presbyterian Saint Luke's School of Nursing in Chicago. She went on to have a distinguished career as a nurse, and this scholarship aims to continue her legacy by helping students who share her passion for healthcare.

The Jack Wolf Scholarship honors Jacks enduring love for the Belvidere and Boone County communities and his dedication to supporting a variety of causes. A graduate of Belvidere High School, Jack spent over 60 years in the automotive business and placed a high value on education. This scholarship is intended to provide opportunities for students pursuing careers in vocational fields, such as automotive, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and other trade-based programs.

Jack Wolf was a founding member of the Boone County Community Foundation, and the Foundation is proud to partner with the Wolf family in creating these scholarships. These funds are designed not only to support local students in furthering their education but also showcase Peggy and Jack's deep commitment to their community.

To find out more detailed information on eligibility requirements, please visit www.boonecountycf.org/scholarships for more information.

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

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

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

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

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

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

"There are 24 states across the country that have this type of policy in place, including Indiana, Missouri and Michigan just in the Midwest," he said in an interview with Capitol News Illinois. "There are almost 200 community colleges across the country who are doing this today. And so the concept is certainly not new. It's something that's

been advocated for here by our own community colleges. And we really felt like it was time to do everything we can to reduce barriers across the state in earning a B.A. in high-need areas."

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

"What we've observed of the student profile
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real journalism for a real democracy

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The Death Tax – What It Means to You!

Dear Editor,

For many years, politicians have waged war against the Estate Tax a.k.a. the Death Tax. They have used rhetoric aimed at talking about how the government is taking money from everyone that inherits. But is this true? According to the official IRS website, the Death Tax only applies to the transfer of inheritance valued at over \$13,990,000 for 2025. According to his recent weekly email newsletter from February 24, 2025, Congressman LaHood of Illinois' 16th district has made the repeal of this tax one of his top priorities, saying it negatively impacts his constituents. However, how many of his constituents are expecting an inheritance of over approximately \$13 million? Furthermore, what happens if that tax is repealed.

Our tax money is used mainly to fund Health programs, Social Security, and Defense. What happens if this money that is gained from these Death taxes disappears? There are several scenarios: The taxes upon the rest of us (the middle class and below) will be raised, the health programs (Medicare, Medicaid, WIC, CHIP) will be terminated, social security (which is our money that we pay into) is dismantled. We know that the defense budget will not be reduced as it increases every year regardless of which political party is in power.

The 16th congressional district of Illinois has a median income of \$80,425 and a poverty rate of 7.7% according to the most recent census data. Less than 30,000 people in the 16th district earn over \$200,000 per year in income. While the data do not break this down further, the Death Tax will only apply to a very small portion of this 30,000 people – likely only those who are earning over \$5 million per year.

It is past time to say that we are being lied to by our representatives. Congressman LaHood claims repealing the Death Tax will benefit his constituents. But the numbers do not add up. The implications of such a repeal will cause further poverty and debt to his constituents. The current administration promised to reduce grocery prices, yet now say they cannot do so. However, they were able to find money to buy out federal workers' pay for 8 months. The current administration claims to be saving Americans money but their 2025 budget adds \$4 trillion to the national deficit while making severe cuts to Medicaid and other programs. We are being lied to. Our representatives are not representing our interests and it is time we let them know that we do not agree with their actions. We need to call and write to our representatives and let them know that the repeal of the Death Tax will harm us, not help us. It is not in our best interests to support the repeal of the Death Tax.

Respectfully,
Colleen M. Kennedy, PhD

College

from page 2

across the country where this is done is that those students tend to be older, they tend to be more diverse, and they tend to have personal logistics and circumstances that just don't allow for them to up and move to wherever a four-year public university may be," he said.

It was not immediately known prior to the governor's address, however, whether state

universities will support the idea of allowing community colleges to offer degree programs that might duplicate, or even compete with, established programs at the universities.

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

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

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

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As Federal Deadline Approaches, Illinois Secretary Of State Urges Residents to "Get Real"

Deadline for federally compliant ID May 7
By Jade Aubrey *Capitol News Illinois*

With a deadline approaching for U.S. citizens to obtain Real IDs, Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias is urging Illinois residents to "Get Real."

Real ID is a federally-standardized identification card that requires stricter proof of identity to obtain than the regular state driver's licenses or ID cards. All Drivers Services facilities in Illinois are issuing Real IDs, except for mobile units and express facilities.

Last May, Giannoulias' office launched the "Get Real Illinois" campaign to raise awareness about the requirements and deadline of the Real ID implementation. During a news conference Tuesday, he continued to urge

Illinoisans to obtain the new ID soon, as a federal deadline approaches.

On May 7, state-issued driver's licenses will no longer be accepted as a valid form of identification for domestic flights or at certain federal facilities such as military bases or federal courthouses. Although U.S. citizens will need a Real ID to visit those facilities, they will not need a Real ID to fly domestically if they have a valid passport.

A Real ID is signified by a gold star on the upper right corner of the ID card.

"We know for sure that as May 7 approaches, demand for Real ID drivers' licenses and state IDs will inevitably increase," Giannoulias said. "What we don't want are crazy, unmanageable lines at our facilities and major issues for individuals and their families at our airports."

He said the news conference aimed to "clear up confusion" over the technicalities of the Real ID.

"Since the new administration has taken over in D.C., we've seen an influx of people who are

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County**from page 1**

Work on the courthouse begins March 3. The project is expected to take 18-24 months. During this period, the public is asked to come inside via the back entrance. According to Tobin, Sheriff Dwayne Carey “is making safety throughout the construction process his top priority.”

A press release reads: “All public spaces including floors, walls, and ceilings will be updated. All restrooms will also be updated.” These facilities, said Tobin, “have not been updated since 1986.” The building will be expanded by approximately 12,000 square feet to allow more space for offices already located in the courthouse and to accommodate Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and the Public Defender’s Office, which will be moved there once alterations are complete.

Currently, these two offices are housed in suites at the PNC Bank on South State Street in Belvidere, an arrangement that the county deems inconvenient for both its staffers and their clients. The CASA Program connects children who have encountered abuse or neglect and adult volunteers who comfort and assist them during the court process, making sure their best interests are safeguarded.

According to the Public Defender’s Office website, their department “represents those individuals that have been accused of a crime which carries with it the potential for jail or prison time and cannot afford to retain private counsel.” They often represent cases dealing with felonies, misdemeanors, and juvenile and traffic crimes. In some instances, their office is also assigned to abuse and neglect cases in which parental rights and the well-being of the children are defended.

At present, the PNC Bank is also home to the Veterans Assistance Commission (VAC). But that will soon change as the VAC moves later this year to the administration building, where an addition will provide some much-needed room for their office.

Elizabeth Carville, superintendent of the VAC as well as a veteran, said her department is excited about the move. Carville told the *Journal* in a phone call that it will allow their office to supply better services to veterans. The space they have at PNC right now feels cramped. Once they move, however, they will have more room for basic services like the year-round food pantry the VAC organizes.

Carville says the department will save money since, relocating to a larger facility, there will be less of a need for renting out other spaces. They will have an open house after the move. This expansion, as well as another in front of the Health Department and Assessment Office on Logan Avenue, will be bundled with the remodeling of the Health Department facility. About 9,000 square feet will be renovated. The two new add-ons will provide more than 6,000 square feet of extra space. This project is slated for a spring or summer starting date.

Also on the horizon is a new transit facility for the 11 buses owned by the county, for which a \$3 million Rebuild Illinois Grant will help cover expenses. These buses suffer from acts of vandalism and severe weather. The future transit garage, where these vehicles would be kept, will be on Logan Avenue adjacent to the administration building. This is another positive development for Carville. The public transportation’s proximity to her office will provide an easy commute for employees and veterans.

Meanwhile, in addition to the updates on the courthouse, March will see the construction firm Ringland-Johnson begin work on a new stor-

age building and on renovating two pre-existing buildings on a county-owned property at the corner of McKinley Avenue and US 20 Bypass. The property was purchased in 2023. A separate building on the campus has already been updated. The facilities at this location that will be added and renovated this year are intended for Emergency Management and the Coroner’s Office. Ringland-Johnson has a history of working on health-care buildings such as various OSF Hospital and UW Health clinics in the Rockford area. As with the courthouse, construction is expected to begin on or close to March 3. The estimated completion date lands in August 2025.

Another project the county will undertake affects law enforcement. While the Sheriff’s Patrol and Detectives units have been located in the lower level of the courthouse for 15 years, they used to be housed at the Public Safety Building. Once the Coroner, the Emergency Management Agency, and the IT department move out of the Public Safety Building, the Sheriff’s offices will be free to return to the basement of their previous headquarters.

The winds of change are blowing through the offices of Boone County, Illinois. Many departments are in a state of flux, either in the middle of moving, preparing for the move, or coping with the construction that will span the coming months.

“Most county employees will be working through some kind of construction zone over the next 12-24 months,” said Tobin, “since basically every county campus is having some sort of construction project going on. Employees know things will be somewhat difficult, but they will be able to envision the finish line which will make it all worth it.”

**Prizker****from page 1**

Holocaust Museum in suburban Skokie as basis for his warning message.

“I’m watching with a foreboding dread what is happening in our country right now,” he said. “The authoritarian playbook is laid bare here: They point to a group of people who don’t look like you and tell you to blame them for your problems. I just have one question: What comes next?”

As the governor presented his seventh budget proposal last week, he nodded to the very real possibility that it could all be blown up by the Trump administration and a Republican-controlled Congress.

“For all the Illinoisans watching at home, let me be clear: this is going to affect your daily lives,” Pritzker said. “Our state budget can’t make up for the damage that is done to people across our state if they succeed.”

Instead of his usual post-Budget Address whistle-stop tour of Illinois promoting his agenda, the governor spent Tuesday in the U.S. Capitol with Illinois’ congressional delegation “to press the Trump admin on the more than \$1.8 billion they are withholding from Illinoisans,” according to a social media post from a spokesman.

It’s unclear whether Pritzker’s fiery rhetoric will help him pass the budget blueprint and legislative agenda he laid out last week in Springfield. But it did garner him national attention, including on The Rachel Maddow Show and earning millions of ‘likes’ on TikTok.

The governor insisted he wasn’t “speaking up in service to my ambitions – but in deference to my obligations.”

But the spotlight moment comes as years of speculation over the governor’s political future as a presidential candidate may come to a head later this

year as Pritzker decides whether to run for a third term as governor in 2026.

‘On the federal chopping block’

The second-term governor went on to urge political leaders to “be strong enough to learn from” history in order to prevent repeating it.

But Pritzker also cited more recent history, drawing parallels between Trump’s move to slash federal spending and a budget fight that crippled much of Illinois government under his predecessor, Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner.

This year marks a decade since Rauner’s political fight with Democratic majorities in the General Assembly launched the state into a two-year budget impasse that decimated social services in Illinois. It also ballooned Illinois’ unpaid bill backlog to \$17 billion and earned the state multiple credit downgrades.

“Here in Illinois, 10 years ago we saw the consequences of a rampant ideological gutting of government,” Pritzker said. “It genuinely harmed people. Our citizens hated it. Trust me: I won an entire election based in part on just how much they hated it.”

Pritzker, who is now the nation’s second-wealthiest elected official after Trump, said in his speech Wednesday that tech billionaire Elon Musk – the richest person on earth – plans to “steal Illinois’ tax dollars and deny our citizens the protection and services they need.”

“They say they’re doing it to eliminate inefficiencies,” Pritzker said of Musk’s so-called “Department of Government Efficiency.” “But only an idiot would think we should eliminate emergency response in a natural disaster, education and healthcare for disabled children, gang crime investigations, clean air and water programs, monitoring of nursing home abuse, nuclear reactor regulation, and cancer research.”

Despite campaign promises to not touch entitlement programs, Trump has endorsed congressional Republicans’ plans to shrink federal spending to pay for an extension the president’s 2017 tax cuts over the next decade at a cost of \$4.5 trillion. Advocates worry the GOP framework would leave Congress little choice but to gut Medicaid, a joint program between states and the federal government that supports 3.3 million Illinoisans who are either low-income, have disabilities or meet other qualifications for benefits.

Illinois is one of 40 states plus the District of Columbia that have adopted Medicaid expansion programs authorized under the Affordable Care Act that extend Medicaid coverage to low-income childless adults who don’t otherwise qualify for the program.

But like other states, Illinois has a trigger law in place that would effectively cancel its Medicaid expansion program if federal reimbursement falls below 90%, making it likely more than 700,000 Illinoisans would lose health coverage if congressional Republicans target ACA expansion first.

Pritzker warned Medicaid cuts would mean rural hospitals in Illinois would be shuttered.

Meanwhile the governor said popular programs like Meals on Wheels “are on the federal chopping block” as the Trump administration briefly blocked routine federal payments for many services last month.

Even so, Pritzker last week presented no contingency plans for federal funds potentially disappearing. Instead, he proposed a \$55.2 billion budget that would see discretionary spending – including state programs targeted at everything from economic development to violence prevention – grow at about 1% from the current fiscal year, which ends June 30.

Fixed costs, including pension payments, K-12

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Pritzker

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education spending and state employee health care costs – drive the rest of the \$2 billion in spending growth from this year’s enacted budget.

Reaction to invoking Nazi history

While some members of the General Assembly’s influential Latino and Black caucuses were less than thrilled with Pritzker’s budget proposal, some in his own party praised the framework – including moderate members who held up last year’s late night budget vote in protest.

But reactions were mixed when it came to the governor invoking the rise of the Nazis in 1930s Germany. Many Democrats clapped when Pritzker urged learning from history to avoid repeating it.

Rep. Bob Morgan, D-Deerfield, who co-chairs the General Assembly’s Jewish Caucus, and whose great-grandparents perished in the Holocaust, was among them.

“I think we are seeing some ignoring of those rising elements of extremism and hate,” he said. “The confidence that white supremacists feel to march in state capitals around the country is relatively recent, and it’s absolutely happening, and I think we have to call it out ... That was the lesson I’ve always taken from the Holocaust – it’s that people didn’t speak up.”

To critics’ ears, however, Pritzker’s speech signaled he has his eye on the White House in 2028.

The governor was vetted as a possible running mate for former Vice President Kamala Harris’ presidential run last summer. He’s also expanded his political influence in recent years, spending big for Democrats in other states and even launching a nationwide “dark money” 501(c) organization focused on progressive policies, starting with abortion protections.

Rep. Ryan Spain, R-Peoria, warned that the governor’s rhetoric may put Illinois squarely in the Trump administration’s crosshairs.

“He is not going to be running against Donald Trump in 2028 and he needs to understand that as soon as possible, because there’s a lot at risk for the state of Illinois by continuing to play the part of antagonist to the president of the United States,” he said.

Even Democrats who had previously been more outspoken in their opposition to Trump have been more muted since the president’s inauguration last month.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who just last summer made references to the spread of fascism in 1930s Europe in his 2024 State of the State speech, needs federal disaster funding to help the state recover from January’s devastating wildfires. Earlier this month Newsom met with Trump about disaster relief, thanking the president and his administration for their assistance.

Trump has directly threatened funding to blue states in the last month, including directly to Maine Gov. Janet Mills last week over her state’s laws aimed at protecting transgender people from discrimination.

Federal funding to Illinois has also been threatened in Trump’s second term. Though courts blocked the president’s 2017 attempt to withhold funding from “sanctuary cities,” an executive order the president issued on his first day back in office calls for the same halt to funding on any local government that has enacted policies restricting local law enforcement agencies from cooperating with federal immigration enforcement actions.

And earlier this month, Trump’s Department of Justice sued Chicago, Cook County and Illinois over their “sanctuary” laws.

Illinois’ senior U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, with whom Pritzker has publicly disagreed with over politics in the past, last month was roundly criticized for saying he didn’t know who would be leading Democrats’ charge against Trump.

“I can’t answer that. Give us a little time,” he told Semafor. “This is brand new.”

Pritzker on Wednesday used his bully pulpit to challenge his fellow Democrats, who are facing intraparty criticism for failing to do much to stop or slow the Trump administration’s consolidation of power.

“There are people – some in my own party – who think that if you just give Donald Trump everything he wants, he’ll make an exception and spare you some of the harm,” Pritzker said, launching into an abbreviated version of a story he’s told publicly several times about the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.

In the governor’s telling, he offered to praise Trump on Sunday news shows in exchange for N95 masks and ventilators. But when the supplies arrived, the crates were instead filled with surgical masks and broken BiPAP machines, which are most commonly used to treat sleep apnea and other breathing disorders.

“Going along to get along does not work,” he said. “Just ask the Trump-fearing red state governors ... Those Trump state – red state governors are dealing with the same cuts that we are, and I won’t be fooled twice.”

Aside from accusations that Pritzker used inflammatory comparisons to grow his national platform, some Republicans said they were offended Wednesday. Six GOP House members left their desks on the House floor, walking toward the back exit when the governor began talking about the 1978 Nazi march on Skokie.

Though most of them were members of the ultraconservative “Illinois Freedom Caucus,” Rep. Jeff Keicher, R-Sycamore, one of the more moderate Republicans in the General Assembly, said his walkout was spurred by “emotional frustration” borne of what he felt was a sort of cognitive dissonance in Pritzker’s speech.

“We still have all this money to spread all over the place,” Keicher said of Pritzker’s spending plan, even as social services in Illinois face persistent funding challenges. Keicher cited ongoing state funding challenges to services including domestic violence shelters, nursing homes and “a seven-year backlog” for adults seeking “for developmental disabilities services. developmental disabilities services in Illinois – though the state’s official estimate has fallen to roughly five years.

“And then I hear the governor lay into what he’s calling Illinois Nazis, and the way that we slip into Nazism is by having high inflation,” he continued. “As a man who has stood up repeatedly in his public role and defended the plight of Israel and Jews in this country – to be called a Nazi is beyond the pale.”

David Shyovitz, the director of Northwestern University’s Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies and an associate professor of history, said careful study of how Hitler consolidated power through “constitutional means” – “basically uprooting and eventually eliminating any legal impediments that stood in their way” – can be instructive.

But he said Nazi Germany is not the only example of strongmen leaders seizing power, and pointed to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, whom Trump has said he personally admires.

While Shyovitz said invoking Hitler has a “certain rhetorical thrust,” he said there is a risk to “devaluing what made that historical period so horrible” and warned that overuse, particularly in online discourse, could zap it of its power.

“As a historian, I think it’s appropriate for us to try and learn from the historical past and apply it in the present,” Shyovitz said. “As a voter, I would be worried that using that example is going to end up alienating the very people that you need to convince.”

‘It’s not a scare tactic’

Rep. Terra Costa Howard, D-Glen Ellyn, the chair of the New Democrats caucus, a group of more than 20 more moderate Democrats in the Illinois House, agreed. She said she understood why Pritzker would choose to invoke Nazism because “it is the only reference in modern times that people can connect to.”

But she said Democrats will see more success messaging against Trump if they put the focus on the ways in which decisions from the White House affect Americans.

“If we lose Medicaid dollars, everybody knows somebody in a nursing home,” Costa Howard said. “That is going to have a direct impact to people we know and love in our community. People are not making that connection. We need to explain what that is. It’s not a scare tactic. It is a reality. And that is what people need to hear.”

In an op-ed for MSNBC and a longer podcast interview with one of its hosts published Monday, Pritzker agreed with Costa Howard’s assertion, saying Democrats should focus on “affordability” instead of expending the party’s rhetorical power on “threats to democracy.”

To that end, the governor also backed an array of legislative proposals in his speech last week, including cracking down on pharmaceutical benefit managers in an attempt to hold down prescription drug costs. Pritzker’s campaign last week also put out a poll showing that of Trump’s recent moves, Illinoisans are most concerned about rolling back former President Joe Biden’s initiative to lower drug costs.

Another Pritzker-backed idea would build on last year’s Healthcare Protection Act, requiring insurers to reimburse travel costs to get to medical appointments at certain distances and barring insurance companies from spending less than 87% of premiums on health care services.

Another affordability-focused proposal would have Illinois follow 24 other states that already allow community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees. As proposed, the program would authorize community colleges in Illinois to offer four-year degrees specifically tailored to meet the employment needs of their communities, including in fields like health care, early childhood education or advanced manufacturing.

Rep. Fred Crespo, D-Hoffman Estates, said he’s “excited” about that proposal after having twice passed legislation in the House to allow Harper College in Palatine to offer nursing degrees, only to see the bills die in the Senate.

“So getting the governor’s backing on this – I’m hoping really moves the needle because I think really that that’s where the future of education is,” he said, noting that enrollment in Illinois’ community colleges has increased more than the national average in recent years.

Pritzker’s other proposals range from progressive priorities like further expanding abortion care availability and protections to ideas that could appeal to voters in both parties, including banning cell phones during instructional time in Illinois schools. At least 11 other state legislatures have passed legislation on school cell phone use in the last two years.

Improving and then selling off unused state property, lowering the petition signature threshold for a township consolidation ballot question and regulating cryptocurrency ATMs are also on the governor’s list.

Bridgette Fox and Jade Aubrey contributed.

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

LEGAL NOTICES

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

**IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF HELEN W. JOHNSON,
Deceased.
IN PROBATE No. 2025 PR 8
CLAIM NOTICE**

NOTICE is given of the death of HELEN W. JOHNSON. Letters of Office were issued on February 12, 2025 to ROBERT BRADY JOHNSON, who is the Independent Executor of the Estate. The attorney for the estate is David L. Davitt, 6072 Brynwood Dr., Suite 206, Rockford, IL 61114.

NOTICE is given to KRISTAL HELENE JOHNSON, and GARRETT A. JOHNSON, heirs and legatees, whose addresses are not stated in the petition, that an order was entered by the Court on February 12, 2025 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 5/6-21 of the Probate Act (755 ILCS 5/6-21). You also have the right under Section 5/8-1 of the Probate Act (755 ILCS 5/8-1) to contest the validity of the will by filing a petition with the court within 6 months after admission of the will to probate.

Claims against the estate may be filed on or before August 20, 2025, 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 creditors, if mailing or delivery is required by Section 18-3 of the Illinois Probate Act, 1975, as amended, whichever date is later. Any claim not filed by the requisite date stated above shall be barred.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Boone County Circuit Clerk--Probate Division at the Boone County Courthouse, Belvidere, IL 61008, or with the estate legal representative, or both.

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

DATED: February 18, 2025
David L. Davitt, Attorney for Executor
6072 Brynwood Dr., Suite 206
Rockford, IL 61114
(815) 229-5333
Published in The Boone County Journal Feb 20, 27, March 6, 2025

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

WELLS FARGO BANK, N.A., Plaintiff,
-v.-
24 FC 27
NICHOLAS HAILEY, MICHELE HAILEY, Defendant
NOTICE OF SALE

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on September 11, 2024, an agent for The Judicial Sales Corporation, will at 1:00 PM on March 24, 2025, at the Advocus National Title Insurance, 530 S. State, Suite 201 (Logan Avenue entrance), Belvidere, IL, 61008, sell at a public in-person sale to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate:

LOT FIFTEEN (15) AS DESIGNATED UPON THE PLAT OF TIMBER CREEK ESTATES, BEING A SUBDIVISION OF PART OF THE WEST HALF (1/2) OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER (1/4) OF SECTION 7, TOWNSHIP 44 NORTH, RANGE 3 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED MARCH 17, 1978 AS DOCUMENT NO. 78-820 AND AMENDED BY AMENDMENT TO THE PLAT OF SUBDIVISION RECORDED JULY 14, 1978 AS DOCUMENT NO. 78-2301, IN BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS; SITUATED IN THE COUNTY OF BOONE AND STATE OF ILLINOIS.

Commonly known as 10915 WHISPERING PINES WAY, ROCKFORD, IL 61114

Property Index No. 05-07-201-003
The real estate is improved with a single family residence.
The judgment amount was \$375,947.80.
Sale terms: 25% down of the highest bid by certified funds at the close of the sale payable to The Judicial Sales Corporation. No third party checks will be accepted. The balance, in certified funds/or wire transfer, is due within twenty-four (24) hours. The subject property is subject to general real estate taxes, special assessments, or special taxes levied against said real estate and is offered for sale without any representation as to quality or quantity of title and without recourse to Plaintiff and in "AS IS" condition. The sale is further subject to confirmation by the court.

Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser will receive a Certificate of Sale that will entitle the purchaser to a deed to the real estate after confirmation of the sale.

The property will NOT be open for inspection and plaintiff makes no representation as to the condition of the property. Prospective bidders are admonished to check the court file to verify all information.

If this property is a condominium unit, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and the legal fees required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(1) and (g)(4). If this property is a condominium unit which is part of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1).

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

You will need a photo identification issued by a government agency (driver's license, passport, etc.) in order to gain entry into our building and the foreclosure sale room in Cook County and the same identification for sales held at other county venues where The Judicial Sales Corporation conducts foreclosure sales.

For information, contact The sales clerk, LOGS Legal Group LLP Plaintiff's Attorneys, 2801 LAKESIDE DRIVE, SUITE 207, Bannockburn, IL, 60015 (847) 291-1717 For information call between the hours of 1pm - 3pm. Please refer to file number 24-100912.

THE JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION
One South Wacker Drive, 24th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606-4650 (312) 236-SALE

You can also visit The Judicial Sales Corporation at www.tjsc.com for a 7 day status report of pending sales.

LOGS Legal Group LLP
2801 LAKESIDE DRIVE, SUITE 207
Bannockburn IL, 60015
847-291-1717
E-Mail: ILNotices@logs.com
Attorney File No. 24-100912
Case Number: 24 FC 27
TJSC#: 45-418

NOTE: Pursuant to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, you are advised that Plaintiff's attorney is deemed to be a debt collector attempting to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose.

Case # 24 FC 27 6088-950427
Published in The Boone County Journal Feb 20, 27, March 6, 2025

The following amount must be received in CASH or MONEY ORDER at the office of H&H Mini Unit Storage LLC, at 4760 IL Rt. 173, Ste. 3, Poplar Grove, IL 61065

Or the contents of the below listed units, located at 4760 IL Route 173, Poplar Grove, IL 61065 will be sold or otherwise disposed of on or after 03/14/2024.

Ida Loiz Herrera, 811 West Thompson St. Harvard, IL 60033 for Unit CW049, \$1100.00 plus the cost of postage and advertising.

Published in the Boone County Journal Feb 27, March 6, 2025

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SELF STORAGE AUCTION

Notice is hereby given that Boxed Up Self Storage, or its affiliates, on behalf of the Owner of the facilities indicated below, intends to hold a public sale to satisfy a lien by selling personal property belonging to those individuals listed below for cash on April 02, 2025, at approximately 7pm CST.

Boxed Up Self Storage – Popular Grove
4431 IL Route 173 Popular Grove IL, 61011-9754
Unit #-Tenant
#323- Nowicki, Scott
#320- Nowicki, Scott
Boxed Up Self Storage - Belvidere
1930 W. Chrysler Dr. Belvidere, IL, 61008
Unit #-Tenant
#506- Swanson, Mike

The auction will be listed and advertised on www.storage-treasures.com. See website for terms and conditions. Units will be available for viewing prior to the sale on www.storage-treasures.com. A buyers premium, up to 15%, and a cleaning deposit will be charged per unit. Purchases must be made with cash only and paid at Boxed Up Operations Center located at 1511 E. Riverside Blvd. Loves Park, IL 61111 in order to complete the transaction. Boxed Up Self Storage may refuse any bid and may rescind any purchase until the winning bidder takes possession of the personal property. All sales are final.
Published in The Boone County Journal Feb 27, March 6, 2025

Belvidere CUSD 100 Public Notice

Public Notice: Request for Proposal (RFP) for Student Information System

Belvidere Community Unit School District 100 is seeking proposals from qualified vendors for the implementation of a comprehensive Student Information System (SIS). The SIS will support the district's goal of enhancing student data management and improving educational outcomes.

Key Dates:
• RFP Issuance Date: **Friday, February 28, 2025, by 5:00 pm** Central Standard Time
• Proposal Submission Deadline: **Friday, March 28, 2025, 2:00 pm** Central Standard Time

Scope of Work: The selected vendor will be responsible for providing a robust, user-friendly SIS that includes, but is not limited to, the following features:

- Student enrollment and registration
- Attendance tracking
- Gradebook and report card management
- Parent and student portals
- Data analytics and reporting

Submission Requirements: Interested vendors must submit their proposals electronically by **2:00 pm on Friday, March 28, 2025**, to the Secure Bids Website:

<https://colbisecurebids.com/agency/bcUSD100>
Proposals should include detailed information on the vendor's qualifications, experience, and a comprehensive plan for the implementation of the SIS.

Public Opening: All submitted proposals will be publicly opened and read aloud at **3:00 pm on Friday, March 28, 2025**, at the District Central Office Building.

For more information or to request a copy of the RFP document, please contact the District Office at 815-544-8616 or via email at Purchasing@District100.com.

Belvidere Community Unit School District 100 reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to waive any informalities or irregularities in the proposal process.

Jorge Herrera, Clerk
Board of the Education
Published in The Boone County Journal Feb 27 2025

Public Hearing Notice

Meeting Date: March 11, 2025 at 10:00am
Agenda Item: Grant application to the Illinois Department of Transportation
Staff Contact: Erin Marshall, PCOM Grant Manager

Boone County Government will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, March 11, 2025 at 10:00am at the Boone County Administration Campus located at 1212 Logan Ave., Belvidere, IL 61008.

The purpose of the hearing is to consider the grant application to the Illinois Department of Transportation for Section 5311 and Downstate Operating Assistance Program (DOAP) public transportation funding. The public is invited to attend and comment.

Karl Johnson
Boone County Board Chair
Published in The Boone County Journal Feb 27 2025

ASSUMED NAMES

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

No. DBA4221 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a VEGETABLE AND SMALL GRAIN FARMING AND MILLING business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of PIXOR PAX FARM that its location is or will be 4649 BATES 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: 815-703-2639
Kristine Marie Ramsay-Schnor 4649 Bates Rd., Belvidere, Illinois 61008

I, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk And Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do the hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: February 5, 2025.

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder
Published in Boone County Journal 02/13,20,27 - P

REAL ESTATE

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

WELLS FARGO BANK, N.A., Plaintiff,
-v.-
24 FC 27
NICHOLAS HAILEY, MICHELE HAILEY, Defendant
NOTICE OF SALE

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Commonly known as 10915 WHISPERING PINES WAY, ROCKFORD, IL 61114

Property Index No. 05-07-201-003
The real estate is improved with a single family residence.
The judgment amount was \$375,947.80.

Sale terms: 25% down of the highest bid by certified funds at the close of the sale payable to The Judicial Sales Corporation. No third party checks will be accepted. The balance, in certified funds/or wire transfer, is due within twenty-four (24) hours. The subject property is subject to general real estate taxes, special assessments, or special taxes levied against said real estate and is offered for sale without any representation as to quality or quantity of title and without recourse to Plaintiff and in "AS IS" condition. The sale is further subject to confirmation by the court.

Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser will receive a Certificate of Sale that will entitle the purchaser to a deed to the real estate after confirmation of the sale.

The property will NOT be open for inspection and plaintiff makes no representation as to the condition of the property. Prospective bidders are admonished to check the court file to verify all information.

If this property is a condominium unit, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and the legal fees required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(1) and (g)(4). If this property is a condominium unit which is part of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1).

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

You will need a photo identification issued by a government agency (driver's license, passport, etc.) in order to gain entry into our building and the foreclosure sale room in Cook County and the same identification for sales held at other county venues where The Judicial Sales Corporation conducts foreclosure sales.

For information, contact The sales clerk, LOGS Legal Group LLP Plaintiff's Attorneys, 2801 LAKESIDE DRIVE, SUITE 207, Bannockburn, IL, 60015 (847) 291-1717 For information call between the hours of 1pm - 3pm. Please refer to file number 24-100912.

THE JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION
One South Wacker Drive, 24th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606-4650 (312) 236-SALE

You can also visit The Judicial Sales Corporation at www.tjsc.com for a 7 day status report of pending sales.

LOGS Legal Group LLP
2801 LAKESIDE DRIVE, SUITE 207
Bannockburn IL, 60015
847-291-1717
E-Mail: ILNotices@logs.com
Attorney File No. 24-100912
Case Number: 24 FC 27
TJSC#: 45-418

NOTE: Pursuant to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, you are advised that Plaintiff's attorney is deemed to be a debt collector attempting to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose.

Case # 24 FC 27 6088-950427
Published in The Boone County Journal Feb 20, 27, March 6, 2025

Real ID from page 3

confused about what real ID means and think they need it as a form of identification," Giannoulis said. "And our point that we're trying to hammer home today is that that's not the case. You do not need a Real ID to drive a vehicle."

Other qualms about the new identification have arisen, including issues around gender identity and the likelihood of the May 7 deadline holding firm. Although Giannoulis didn't directly address the first issue, he said multiple times that Illinoisans should use their own discretion to decide if the Real ID is right for them.

"I don't want to discourage anyone from getting a Real ID, but the fact is that not everyone needs a Real ID on May 7, and in some cases, might not ever need one," Giannoulis said.

However, he did address growing skepticism that the deadline won't hold firm.

"I know many of you are asking yourselves, after years of blown deadlines, delays and extensions, why should we trust the Department of Homeland Security," he said. "The reasons for the delays have run the gamut, ranging from partisan politics to a lack of coordination among the federal government and various states."

In direct response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Congress passed the REAL ID Act in 2005,

Continued on page 7

Real ID

from page 6

which established “minimum security standards for state-issued driver’s licenses and identification cards.” The effective date of the law has been extended multiple times, most recently to 2025 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Now I get asked on a regular basis, is this real ID deadline for real this time,” Giannoulis said. “The one thing that’s different this time around is that TSA just recently published a ‘final rule,’ rejecting the option for another extension and requiring the regulation to finally take effect.”

TSA’s final rule, which they published on Jan. 13, 2025, stated the agency will begin enforcing the law on May 7, taking what they call a “phased enforcement approach” to implement enforcement until May 2027.

The Secretary of State’s website has an interactive checklist where Illinoisans can find out what documents they need to obtain a Real ID. The required documents include proof of identity, proof of full Social Security number, and two documents providing proof of current address.

Budget

from page 1

proposed a significant spending reduction compared to the November estimate while still increasing spending over current-year levels.

But administration officials also warned that the state is in large part at the whim of President Donald Trump’s onslaught of federal policy changes.

The governor’s plan assumes a \$173 million increase in federal funding, though Pritzker named several enacted or feared Trump policies that could alter estimates, including tariffs, food safety deregulation and potential health care cuts.

“Let me be clear, this is going to affect your daily lives,” Pritzker said, citing the efforts of Trump advisor Elon Musk via the federal Department of Government Efficiency. “Our state budget can’t make up for the damage that is done to people across our state.”

The governor called his proposal “responsible and balanced,” pointing out that it doesn’t raise taxes on Illinoisans, though he did propose a tax hike on certain casino profits.

“If there’s one thing I’ve learned as governor, there are no magic bean fixes,” Pritzker said. “And each year there’s some difficulty that requires us to work hard to overcome it.”

Part of the spending plan includes significant changes to immigrant health care programs, including eliminating a program for low-income noncitizens living in the U.S. without legal permission between ages 42 and 64.

Ultimately, lawmakers and the governor will have to come to an agreement on a spending plan by the end of May. But the governor’s opening salvo could meet opposition from Democratic lawmakers in the General Assembly – especially members of the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus – due to what it doesn’t fund.

“All of us have been hearing that it was going to be a tough budget year. I think that we expected there to be some things in the budget that we weren’t going to be happy with,” Sen. Karina Villa, of West Chicago, said. “But I think completely removing a program is not anything that we were expecting.”

Tightened spending

Despite the roughly 3% spending increase, most areas of the state budget would see little growth under Pritzker’s plan. About 75% of the spending increase comes from increased funding for education, pensions and growing health care costs.

Outside those areas, spending is up just 1% across the board.

The most notable spending change is the elimination of the Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults program that provides Medicaid-style benefits to certain low-income noncitizens ages 42 to 64. Pritzker proposed leaving the Health Benefits for Immigrant Seniors program intact to serve certain low-income noncitizens age 65 and older, which will cost the state \$132 million.

The programs unexpectedly stretched the state budget in spring 2023 when costs were projected to potentially reach \$1 billion. Lawmakers gave the governor authority to control costs by pausing enrollment and enacting copays, and projected program costs are now at \$558 million in the current fiscal year. Enrollment in the programs, meanwhile, has remained paused.

Eliminating the program for middle-aged adults is projected to save the general revenue fund about \$330 million, according to the governor’s office. Pritzker told reporters later Wednesday he expects the federal government will stop reimbursing states for costs associated with programs providing services to noncitizens.

While Pritzker signified he’s open to working with lawmakers on what programs will ultimately be funded, he said his overarching goal is a balanced budget.

“If you come to the table looking to spend more – I’m going to ask you where you want to cut,” Pritzker said. “I have made difficult decisions – including to programs I have championed, which is hard for me, just as I know some of the difficult decisions you will have to make will be hard for you.”

One of the priorities Pritzker put on hold is an increase in spending on the state’s Early Childhood Block Grant program. In the past two years, the state has helped more than 11,000 children access child care as part of a multi-year plan. But the governor did not request another \$75 million increase this year that would have helped add more.

Pritzker also proposed redirecting funds previously appropriated for asylum seekers to other services. That includes reducing funding to \$40 million from \$139 million for “welcoming centers” that helped the state handle migrants bused here from Texas and other states.

Pritzker proposed allocating \$282.7 million for Home Illinois, a program that provides services for the homeless and also provided assistance to new arrivals, keeping the program relatively flat from a year ago despite advocates’ calls for \$100 million in new funding. The governor’s office said funds that were previously directed toward asylum seekers in Home Illinois would be redirected to homeless shelters and other services for Illinois’ homeless populations.

Pritzker’s proposal calls for allocating \$2 million toward maintenance in the Department of Corrections, the minimum amount recommended. The move comes a year after the state allocated \$900 million to rebuild the Stateville and Logan prisons after years of deterioration and behind-schedule repairs.

Pritzker also proposed increasing the “rainy day” fund by \$154 million, bringing its balance to \$2.5 billion at the end of FY26.

Notably absent from the proposal, however, was any new funding for public transportation. Chicago-area transit agencies face a more than \$700 million shortfall in the coming year. Pritzker told reporters there still needs to be negotiations with the agencies about reforms before the state commits to new funding.

Education and human services

One of the few areas of the budget targeted for a substantial increase is PreK-12 education.

Pritzker’s plan includes the statutory minimum increase of \$350 million for the Evidence-Based Funding formula, a plan lawmakers enacted in 2017

to focus new education spending on the neediest districts.

That would bring the total funding under the EBF formula to \$8.9 billion, a \$2.1 billion cumulative increase since the program began. Pritzker credited that funding for helping raise student test scores and improving graduation rates.

“I believe in building on what works,” he said. “So, despite the challenge we are facing this year, my budget proposal increases our commitment to Evidence-Based Funding for public education so that we put new resources in underfunded schools first.”

His plan also calls for adding \$1.3 million for career and technical education and maintaining spending of \$3 million next year to implement the state literacy plan.

But it also calls for flat funding of \$748 million for Early Childhood Block Grants, which help subsidize the cost of preschool for at-risk and low-income children.

All told, Pritzker’s plan would bring total general revenue fund spending on PreK-12 education to just under \$11.2 billion, or about \$200 million less than the Illinois State Board of Education had requested.

State Rep. Will Davis, D-Homewood, who chairs the House appropriations committee that deals with public schools, said after the speech that he thought Pritzker’s plan was insufficient, “for the simple fact that I think we can be better at EBF.”

“Last year, I wanted to argue for \$450 million,” he said in an interview of the standard yearly increase in EBF funding. “I think that’s doable. I mean, if we’re ever going to have a real conversation about getting to full funding in K-12, we’re going to have to increase the EBF allocation more than what it is right now.”

The governor is also continuing his effort to increase the number of employees at the Department of Children and Family Services. Pritzker proposed adding 100 new employees to increase staffing to 4,100 at the department, the most since 2002. Under his proposal, overall funding for DCFS will have increased by 100% since Pritzker took office.

The Department of Human Services would receive \$7.9 billion, including \$20 million to fund 50-cent-per-hour wage increases for direct service providers.

With most of the state’s federal pandemic relief funds now spent, Pritzker proposed allocating some state funding to keep up affected programs. That includes appropriating \$40 million from the state’s general fund to implement the Reimagine Public Safety Act, a program designed to reduce gun violence.

Revenue changes

The governor’s budget office typically makes conservative estimates about revenue. The November forecast from the Governor’s Office of Management and Budget had projected revenues to remain flat, driving a deficit of \$3.2 billion.

But it relied on a September economic forecast from the financial services company S&P Global. The governor’s office says S&P has since revised its forecasts, leading the GOMB to increase its estimate by \$1.6 billion. Pritzker’s office also now expects strong personal and corporate income tax growth next year in addition to limited sales tax growth.

The revenue outlook for the current FY25 budget was also revised upwards by \$421 million thanks to personal income growth, consumer spending and a stable job market. The governor’s office plans to use the extra revenue to introduce \$550 million in additional spending for the current fiscal year.

But Pritzker also proposed spending about \$1.2 billion less than what the GOMB projected in its November estimate.

Another \$469 million in revenue would be raised

continued on page 8

Budget

through other changes to law, including adjusting tax rates on electronic gambling and table games at casinos to generate \$100 million in revenue. The plan also calls for pausing the transfer of \$171 million in sales tax collected on motor fuel to the road fund and raising \$198 million by providing temporary amnesty for individuals making delinquent tax payments.

But much uncertainty still surrounds how much federal funding Illinois will receiving going forward as the Trump administration pledges to cut federal spending. "Only an idiot" would think cutting off critical federal funding is a good idea, Pritzker said.

His proposal still anticipates roughly the same level of federal support in FY26 as the state currently receives. Pritzker's office stressed it's impossible to predict what Trump's administration will do, but they believe the federal government must honor longstanding agreements.

State government efficiencies

Pritzker also emphasized making state government more efficient to save costs during his speech.

The governor announced new site readiness and surplus property programs that are designed to spark economic development, which ultimately could also amount to savings for the state. Pritzker proposed allocating \$300 million to the Illinois Department of Central Management to repurpose five shuttered state prisons and developmental centers to ultimately attract new private economic development at the sites.

"This proposed budget enacts cost-saving operational efficiencies, improves productivity, curtails new hiring at agencies, consolidates unnecessary segregated funds, eliminates dormant boards and commissions, and overhauls state purchasing to save taxpayers money," Pritzker said.

This includes studies of CMS and the Department of

from page 7

Transportation to identify better hiring and contracting practices, merging the mental health and substance abuse divisions at the Department of Public Health and reviewing potentially overlapping responsibilities between townships and other units of government.

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

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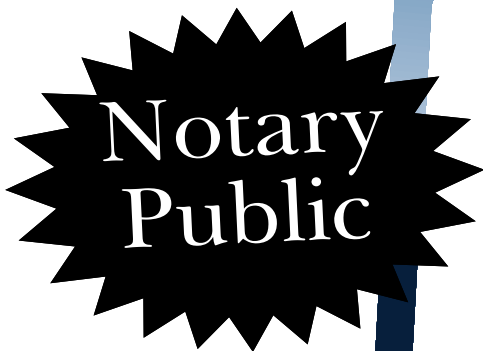
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