

Rock Valley College Opens in Belvidere

By Charles Herbst

Rock Valley College has officially opened their Advanced Technology Center at 1400 Big Thunder Boulevard in Belvidere. This is located along Bypass 20 on the northwest side of Belvidere at the site of the former Shopko Store.

Rock Valley College President Dr. Howard Spearman cut a ceremonial ribbon to celebrate the opening of the center on Wednesday, March 30. Stating that he was excited to be in Boone County, Dr. Spearman and several of his colleagues stressed their gratitude to the community, and how they regarded local School District 100 as a partner and a collaborator in this venture.

The process of selecting the site of the Advanced Technology Center was not without controversy. Several well-connected individuals and organizations in Winnebago County believed that the center should be located in Rockford, despite Rock Valley College's six other facilities in that community. District 100 submitted a proposal to use the former Shopko site, and acted as both a facilitator for acquiring the property and as a project manager for its construction. Rock Valley College's Board of Trustees unanimously accepted the school district's offer. The project stated within its \$15 million budget.

A community college serves many different types of students rather than the more homogeneous typical undergraduate institution. The Belvidere facility is not aimed at those wanting to pursue a typical baccalaureate degree. The Advanced Technology Center, known as the ATC, will focus on quickly teaching industrial skills that are greatly in demand in the area. Initially, the focus is on welding, CNC machining, and mechatronics. Classes teaching English as a second language are also being offered. Truck driving and forklift operations will be taught at the facility at a later date.

Considerable effort is being expended to ensure the success of the student body. High school students in District 100 will be able to take welding courses at the ATC, and presumably, any other classes being offered there. The school district is offering scholarships to its alumni to pursue training at the center. The Rock Valley College Foundation has set up a special fund to assist students who run into hard times and need financial assistance to continue their vocational training.

For Belvidere, the project eliminates a vacant, big-box storefront and features the work of a local Belvidere architect, who is also an alumnus of Rock Valley College.

The remodeling project, designed by Paul Ollmann of Belvidere's Ollmann Ernest Martin Architects & Engineers retains the basic exterior and entrance. Bright graphics identifying the college and its cylindrical logo cover the front of the building. Like its retail iteration, the building does not have exterior windows other than at its glassy entrance. An open plan with a high ceiling



Rock Valley College President Dr. Howard Spearman



ing and bright LED lighting compensate for the lack of natural daylight.

Upon entering the building, the visitor enters an ample lobby with artwork depicting the college and its programs. Flanking the lobby are several student lounges and a project display area. A curved wall on the right causes the space to flow into a large, central open area known as the "flex lab." Brightly lit with a high ceiling, this square space forms the nucleus of the building. The floor plan shows that this space can be divided into six separate areas. It was spacious enough to simultaneously accommodate a ribbon cutting and a large industrial display. Earlier, the flex lab held Governor Pritzker's press conference on electric vehicles, which displayed a Rivian truck and other Illinois-manufactured vehicles made by Ford and Stellantis.

On the north side of the flex lab, sitting behind the lobby, are five general-purpose classrooms. Behind the bank of classrooms is a space for future programs. To the east of the flex lab, there are two computer labs, suitable for classroom instruction and storage areas.

South of the flex lab is a welding lab with new equipment suitable for teaching students the trade of a welder. Immediately adjacent to the welding lab is a large CNC lab holding the latest gear to train workers how to machine metal parts using computerized control processes. Both of these labs appear to be focused on teaching custom design and manufacturing processes rather



than training for assembly-line production.

To the west of the flex lab are offices and areas geared for conference and collaboration. Most of the flex lab's perimeter is surrounded by glass, giving the entire building a sense of openness and spaciousness.

While it is impossible to predict the future with precision, as technology changes, the building appears to be designed with reasonably flexibility in an attempt to be future proof.

With a location that is convenient to both Boone County and Rockford, the center should help Belvidere distinguish itself as a center for industrial training. With a fair amount of industrial research in the area, the Advanced Technology Center can help make Belvidere a bigger partner in the higher end of that business.

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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.

OP-ED

You are Not Wrong We are Wrong

By Scott Reeder

A few months ago, I was pulled over by a Springfield-area police officer for a minor traffic violation.

He shined a flashlight in my car and said, "Mr. Reeder, are you carrying?"

I replied that "no," my firearm was home locked up in a safe.

He replied "You should always carry. It doesn't do you any good if its home locked up."

He gave me a verbal warning and sent me on my way.

I couldn't help but wonder how different that encounter might have been if I were Black.

In 2020, I wrote a piece about Rep. Curtis Tarver, D-Chicago, who was pulled over not far from his home for having a burned-out headlight. An officer asked him, "Do you have a gun in the car?" He responded he did and showed them his valid conceal carry permit.

But he says he was still hauled into a police station, handcuffed to a table for seven hours and not allowed to call an attorney. They treated him this way despite knowing he was a lawyer and a state lawmaker.

Nine months later, charges against him were dismissed because it was determined he hadn't broken any law. But the cops kept his gun.

Tarver is Black. I'm white. He was arrested despite being licensed to carry. I was scolded for not carrying.

That's the definition of white privilege.

I might add that white privilege isn't necessarily something someone seeks. And it doesn't mean you haven't had struggles in your life. It just means that one of those struggles wasn't related to the color of your skin.

Sometimes it manifests itself in big ways such as whether one is arrested. But often smaller things are more telling.

Last week, our puppy chewed up my well-worn pair of work boots. I went to my favorite shoe store, a place where I've always found the service to be excellent.

There was one other customer there, a Black man with his family. He has a good job as a union dry wall installer, and he too was buying a new pair of boots.

After trying a pair on, I asked if I made the purchase whether they could throw in a free pair of socks. In a rather officious tone – as if he were speaking to an audience, not just me – the manager told me, "We never do that."

And he pointed at my sales associate and said, "He could be fired if he did that."

I stepped into the washroom and when I returned the African American family had left. The associate had my boots boxed up and handed me a free pair of socks. He said, "You're a good customer – you deserve this."

My first reaction was, "That's nice, he changed his mind."

As I drove home, it dawned on me that whole charade was done so they wouldn't be obliged to also give a free pair of socks to the Black customer who was spending the same amount as me.

White folks, myself included, can be pretty clueless when it comes

to the privileges we are extended.

Several years ago, I was driving just south of Springfield Memorial Hospital when I came across a van that had broken down on a side street.

The driver was a young African American man who had recently graduated from high school. He said he had run out of gas and was worried about being late for his job working in a restaurant.

I had him climb in my truck and I drove him to a gas station several blocks away. I got out of the truck and grabbed a nozzle to fill up my gas can.

The young man said, "You can't do that. This is my neighborhood station and you have to pre-pay." But it was the station I stopped at routinely on the way to work, and I had never prepaid.

Sure enough, as soon as I stuck the nozzle in the can, gasoline flowed.

I looked at the young man who was dressed in a nice pair of jeans. I had been doing yard work that day and was wearing a pair of bib overalls. So, it wasn't how I was dressed that got me treated better.

He drove an old van, but I was driving an old pickup.

Perhaps I was treated better because I have some gray in my hair, but I doubt it.

It would seem my skin color offered me a privilege that's denied others. That's just not right but it won't change until more white people realize that the privileges they receive often are denied others.

Scott Reeder a staff writer for Illinois Times can be reached at: sreeder@Illinoistimes.com.

Illinois Doesn't Know Where It's Going

By Jim Nowlan

I spoke recently to an audience of attorneys and financial planners about the future of Illinois. I asked for a show of hands as to who thought our state would reverse the almost 1 percent decline in population we experienced in the past decade. Only 1 of 30 thought it was likely.

Why, I asked: high taxes; climate; business climate; corruption, and lack of state pride were responses from this highly educated group.

Yes, I agreed, Illinois has obvious shortcomings, yet the state has incredible strengths as well, which would make Illinois an economic powerhouse otherwise. And the problems are fixable, though politically daunting.

Now let's look at the positive side of the ledger, which is strikingly bright, in ways I rarely hear trumpeted. Former state commerce director Jim Schultz of Effingham sums it up succinctly: In each of the five critical Rs—roads, rails, runways, rivers and routers—Illinois is among the top three states in the nation. I called Jim and told him he should add a six R: research. A recent ranking

Continued on Page 3

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Illinois

from page 2

of graduate research universities found the universities of Chicago, Northwestern and Illinois to be among the top 20 in the world—3 of 20, not just in the nation, but in the world.

I could go through each of the Rs in detail, but space limits me: Yet, look at a highway map of the US. See the density of interstate highways crisscrossing Illinois—thicker than for just about any state. We have more miles, 2,200, of interstate highways than any states in the nation other than California and Texas. And, our state is located smack dab in the middle of the world’s largest market.

Our strengths would be the envy of most other states, if I weren’t for our weaknesses. Yet, the weaknesses can be addressed. Other states have done so.

I contend the biggest problem for Illinois is that the state doesn’t know where it is going. That is, there is no roadmap to where we want the state to be in 10 years, and of what it would take to get us there.

I continue to be confounded that the state has never—never—done any long-term thinking. The closest we have is the 6,000 disparate bills introduced into the legislature every two years. Crazy.

The singular piece of forward thinking in Illinois history was the Burnham Plan for Chicago of the early 1900s, led by the architect Daniel Burnham and commissioned by the Commercial Club of Chicago. The effort followed on the heels of the stupendous Chicago World’s Fair of 1893, visited by 27 million folks from around the world. So, the City of Big Shoulders, as Sandburg described the city, knew it could do big things.

After much work, the plan was presented to the City Council, which also labored over the plan, ultimately adopting about half the recommendations. But what marvelous results: A magnificent lakefront reserved, not for private property owners, but for the public. Wide boulevards and a spectacular park system, and more. Chicagoans and visitors have benefited every day since its adoption in 1909.

Texans think big. Their business leadership has been developing a Texas 2036 plan, for where they want Texas to be on the 200th anniversary of their nationhood. They have a Can-Do attitude.

Illinoisans are so down in the mouth about our future that we have a Can’t-Do frame of mind. There are, people think, too many political and interest group obstacles in our way. Elon Musk would be appalled at such thinking.

The business leadership of the 19th Century, such as Marshall Field, Potter Palmer, Bertha Honore Palmer, Julius Rosenwald (who built Sears), focused on the city they loved and built. Chicago’s bigtime CEOs today at such behemoths as McDonald’s, Boeing, CAT, United Airlines are up their eyeballs in alligators heading global companies; they don’t have much time to Illinois, even though if were a nation, the Illinois economy would be one of the top 20 in the world.

I have an idea of how to tap into an incredible underutilized resource. Former governor Jim Edgar’s greatest legacy may prove to be his Edgar Fellows Program. Each summer for a decade now, Jim gathers 40 of the state’s young leaders, including many lawmakers, from all walks of life, political persuasion and geography. For a week, the Fellows are sequestered at the U. of I. in Urbana, where they learn about our state and its government from experts and national leaders. Over bourbon and branch water at night, they bond, and come to appreciate one another.

But then they leave town, and fail to build on their relationships and any aspirations for a state they call home.

I propose that the 400 Edgar Fellows, rather than simply feel good about themselves, take on the task of creating a vision for Illinois, one they could then implement, as they are tomorrow’s leaders. This could be done outside the hurly burly of politics, after which they would take their vision into that hurly arena, where it would have to be wrestled with, and just maybe, ultimately adopted. We need to know where we’re going.

Why not, Elon Musk would say!
Chicago’s bigtime CEOs today at such behemoths as McDonald’s, Boeing, CAT, United Airlines are up their eyeballs in alligators heading global companies; they don’t have much time [to] for Illinois, even though if [were] a nation, the Illinois economy would be one of the top 20 in the world.

Thanks to editor/publisher Jon Whitney, who for more than half a century straight has been doing topnotch community journalism at the Carroll County Review, and is a former prexy of the IL Press Ass’n.

Nowlan is a former Illinois legislator, state agency director, aide to three unindicted Illinois governors, professor and author of a 2019 essay of the future of Illinois, done for the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University. Jim invites you to visit his new, interactive website at jimnowlan.net

Bill Would Provide \$500 Tax Credit to Volunteer Firefighters and EMS Workers

Senate Bill 3027 is estimated to cost about \$22 million to fully implement

By Grace Kinnicutt Capitol News Illinois

Members of the Illinois Firefighters Association joined state legislators at a news conference Wednesday to outline a measure that they claim would recruit more long-term volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel by offering them a tax credit.

Senate Bill 3027 would provide a \$500 tax credit to those who serve as volunteer firefighters or EMS personnel. To qualify for the tax credit, volunteers must work for a fire department or fire protection district for at least nine months and not receive more than \$10,000 in compensation for those services during the taxable year.

Sen. Christopher Belt, D-Swansea, chief sponsor of the bill, said offering the tax credit would help address the shortage of firefighter and EMS personnel at departments that rely on volunteers.

“These individuals give up their personal time that could be spent with their families to ensure the well-being of our state’s residents with no monetary incentive,” Belt said.

The bill states that if the tax credit exceeds the tax liability for the year, the excess can be applied to the earliest tax year in which there is a tax liability. The credit will not reduce a taxpayer’s liability to less than zero.

During a news conference March 18, Belt noted that if the bill is approved, it would cost about \$20 million to \$22 million in lost revenue to implement it. Belt said the cost upfront pales in comparison to the lives lost without volunteer firefighters and EMS workers.

Margaret Vaughn, government affairs director at the Illinois Firefighters Association, said the number of emergency calls to fire departments has tripled over the past 20 years, with most calls being for EMS, while the number of volunteer emergency workers continues to decrease.

Vaughn told the story of a fire at a 100-unit apartment dwelling

in Silvis, a blaze that, according to National Fire Protection Association standards, should have had 30 firefighters facing it. But only five firefighters showed up.

“That is a public safety crisis,” Vaughn said. Vaughn said the aging population, additional training requirements and new policies have been contributing factors in the plummeting number of emergency workers. Training requirements vary by the fire department and district, she said.

National Fire Protection Association standard 1710 sets the minimum requirements for the number of firefighters needed when deploying fire suppression operations, EMS operations and other operations. NFPA standard 1720 establishes the minimum number of volunteers needed to assist professional firefighters.

Rep. Tom Bennett, R-Gibson City, said passing the measure would help address staffing issues in rural areas that cannot afford full-time firefighters. He noted that the incentive can attract new volunteers to keep communities safe while showing appreciation for their service.

“They don’t do it for the money (or) do it for the glory,” Bennett said. “They do it because they are committed to their communities, their neighbors and their families and they want to help.”

The measure passed the Senate unanimously but awaits further consideration in the House. The House Revenue and Finance Committee is expected to discuss uncertainty as to how the tax credit would be implemented Thursday morning.

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State Supreme Court: Officials May, Sometimes, Use Campaign Funds For Criminal Defense

Former Chicago alderman avoided prosecution by cooperating in another corruption probe

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

The Illinois Supreme Court ruled Thursday that elected public officials and their campaign committees may, in limited circumstances, use campaign funds to pay criminal defense attorney fees.

The case involved a former Chicago city alderman, Danny Solis, who reportedly avoided federal prosecution by agreeing to cooperate with the FBI and Department of Justice in their investigation of another alderman, Ed Burke, who was indicted in May 2020 on federal corruption charges.

Ed Burke is married to Chief Justice Anne Burke, who recused herself from the case. Two other justices, Mary Jane Theis and P. Scott Neville Jr., also did not take part in the decision, leaving only four justices to decide the case – the minimum number needed to issue a majority opinion.

Solis served on the Chicago City Council from 1996 to 2019 representing the city's 25th Ward and for a time chaired the council's powerful Zoning Committee. He did not run for reelection in 2019 and was succeeded in office by current Alderman Byron Sigcho-Lopez.

According to published reports, Solis had been under investigation as part of the federal government's wide-sweeping probe into public corruption involving state and local elected officials. But in June 2016 he began cooperating with investigators by secretly recording conversations with other public officials.

When he first began cooperating with investigators, he retained the law firm of Foley & Lardner LLP. On May 21, 2019, the day after Sigcho-Lopez was sworn into office, the 25th Ward Democratic Organization – the committee that had backed his campaigns – paid the firm \$220,000 for legal fees.

What is known now, but was not publicly known then, is that on Jan. 3, 2019, Solis entered a deferred prosecution agreement with the U.S. Attorney's office. That was the same day prosecutors indicted Alderman Burke on 19 counts for allegedly using his position to corruptly solicit business for his private law firms from companies involved in redevelopment projects in his 14th Ward.

That information became public in August 2020 through court filings when Alderman Burke's attorneys sought to suppress some of the evidence that had been gathered against him.

In October 2019, Sigcho-Lopez filed a complaint with the Illinois State Board of Elections alleging that the expenditure violated provisions of the Illinois Election Code that regulate campaign disclosure and finance. Specifically, he argued, the payment was made to settle a personal debt that was not related to any of his campaigns or for governmental or political purposes directly related to his official duties or responsibilities.

The board, however, dismissed the complaint on the grounds that spending campaign funds for criminal defense was not specifically prohibited in the Election Code and that Solis' legal bill was not a personal loan or debt. Sigcho-Lopez then appealed that decision to the First District Court of Appeals which upheld the board's decision.

During oral arguments before the Supreme Court in January, much of the discussion focused on whether criminal defense fees constitute "customary and reasonable expenses" for an officeholder's governmental and public service functions.

Sigcho-Lopez's attorney argued that the whole purpose of campaign disclosure laws is to deter and mitigate political corruption, and so the use of those funds to defend an official against charges of political corruption would go against the intent of the law.

But an attorney for the 25th Ward committee argued that a public corruption investigation is, by definition, directly tied to an officeholder's official duties and, therefore, should be considered an allowable expense.

"Are we at that point in Illinois where we're going to say that that's an ordinary expense of holding public office?" Justice Michael Burke – who is not related to Anne or Ed Burke – asked during the hearing.

Other justices pointed out, however, that political campaigns retain attorneys for a wide range of reasons. They also noted that public officials are sometimes the target of baseless allegations of corruption from political rivals.

In the court's 17-page ruling released Thursday, the remaining four justices drew a narrow line between the arguments of Sigcho-Lopez and those of the 25th Ward committee.

They partially rejected the committee's argument that payment of criminal defense fees is always permissible solely because the General

Assembly did not specifically include them in the list of prohibited expenses. But it also partially rejected Sigcho-Lopez's argument that the legal fees were a prohibited "personal debt."

Instead, they found that because the General Assembly had not specifically prohibited the payment of criminal defense attorney fees from campaign funds, it is reasonable for the Board of Elections to rule on a case-by-case basis.

And in Solis' case, Justice David K. Overstreet wrote for the majority, the expense was permissible because Solis had not been indicted on criminal charges but had only worked with federal investigators "using his official capacity to expose public corruption."

"Considering the evidence before the Board, we find that the Board's conclusion—that Solis's legal fees amounted to a proper expenditure not prohibited as 'satisfaction or repayment' of a personal debt ... but incurred 'to defray the customary and reasonable expenses of an officeholder in connection with the performance of governmental and public service functions' ... — was not clearly erroneous," the opinion concluded. "Thus, we affirm the Board's decision, finding that the complaint was not factually and legally justified."

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Lawmakers Direct \$2.7 Billion in Federal Funds Toward \$4.5B Unemployment Deficit

Pritzker says he'll sign it as negotiations continue on addressing remaining debt

By Jerry Nowicki Capitol News Illinois

Illinois lawmakers this week advanced a measure to allocate \$2.7 billion in federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to pay down more than half of the state's outstanding \$4.5 billion Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund debt.

The measure, an amendment to Senate Bill 2803, also included over \$1.4 billion in general revenue fund spending to pay down other state debts.

Debate lasted nearly an hour in the House Wednesday as the bill passed 68-43 with only Democratic support. The Senate passed it Thursday on a 39-16 vote, also with only Democratic support.

Gov. JB Pritzker said at a news conference Thursday that he will sign the bill as soon as it hits his desk.

"Every Republican voted against paying down our state's debts," Pritzker said at the news conference in his office. "Clearly, they've decided that because it's an election year, they're willing to put politics ahead of the people of Illinois. It drives me crazy to see that it drives them crazy to acknowledge the Democrats have done what their



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party hasn't done – pay down debt and balance the budget while giving people real tax relief.”

Republicans, meanwhile, said that not allocating greater funding to the trust fund deficit will force some combination of tax increases on employers or benefit cuts to those on unemployment as a solution to paying down the remaining \$1.8 billion in trust fund debt.

Negotiations continue

The trust fund is the pool of money paid into by businesses that funds unemployment claims. The debt accrued as the state borrowed from the federal government at the height of the pandemic to keep the trust fund solvent amid an unprecedented crush of claims.

When states accrue trust fund debt, the ways to pay it down have historically included raising insurance premium rates paid by employers, decreasing unemployment benefits, or seeing a new influx of cash, such as federal, state or private funds.

Rep. Jay Hoffman, a Swansea Democrat who is a lead House negotiator on unemployment issues, said discussions continue with business and labor interests on addressing the remaining \$1.8 billion. But at least \$2.5 billion was needed to keep those negotiations moving forward.

“This is an agreed bill process. Business and labor have to agree or we’re not going to move the bill,” he said of ongoing negotiations to pay down the \$1.8 billion. “This was a budgetary measure in order to make it easier on the agreed bill process.”

Hoffman said in 2011 after the Great Recession, the state went to the private bond market to pay down a \$2.3 billion trust fund deficit and dedicated a revenue stream from increased employer premiums to pay it down. On Thursday, Hoffman said employers “took the entire responsibility to pay off the bonds” in 2011 and there were no benefit decreases.

In a July email to Capitol News Illinois, Illinois Retail Merchants Association president and CEO Rob Karr – a negotiator on behalf of business in 2011 and currently – said the only concession from labor at the time was agreeing to a slight decrease to the dependent child allowance for unemployed individuals.

IRMA is part of a group called the Joint Employers, which also includes the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association, Illinois Chamber of Commerce, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, the National Federation of Independent Businesses of Illinois, and the Associated General Contractors of Illinois.

They issued a statement regarding the ongoing negotiations.

“Today’s vote will inject \$2.7 billion from the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) into the Illinois Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund,” they said in the statement. “Illinois employers appreciate the governor and members of the General Assembly for taking this positive step in addressing the massive \$4.5 billion in outstanding debt. We’re hopeful that negotiations will continue to resolve the remaining balance of this unprecedented deficit.”

Private bonding is a path being considered again this time around. The state needed to act by April 1 to keep all options – including increasing premiums, lowering benefits or bonding – on the table moving forward, according to House Majority Leader Greg Harris, a Chicago Democrat who sponsored the bill. Hoffman said he is hopeful the parties will agree by the April 8 adjournment date.

The governor’s office held closed-door meetings throughout the day on Wednesday to discuss the debt retirement proposal. A late amendment increased the previously planned allocation to the trust fund from \$2 billion to the \$2.7 billion sum.

After the Governor’s Thursday news conference, the parties returned to negotiations.

Partisan disagreement

Democrats said the \$2.7 billion will come from an unallocated ARPA fund balance that sits at about \$3.5 billion. Illinois received \$8.1 billion

directly from the ARPA stimulus plan signed by President Joe Biden last year.

But Republicans urged full repayment of the \$4.5 billion, noting that about \$6.9 billion in ARPA funds remains unspent, even if more than that has been promised in previous spending plans that passed the General Assembly.

Before the pandemic, the state had \$1.2 billion in its trust fund, Rep. Tom Demmer, R-Dixon, said in a floor speech on Wednesday night. Republicans urged the state to use ARPA funds to replenish that amount as well.

“So you might ask what happens when our unemployment insurance trust fund is in debt?” Demmer said. “Two things: One, a major tax increase on every job in the state of Illinois; and two, a benefit reduction for every worker in the state of Illinois. It’s a lose-lose scenario. Taxes go up; benefits go down because the fund is in debt.”

Republicans urged reallocating other ARPA funds, particularly a \$1 billion sum allocated last year to capital projects, to pay down the entire debt to stave off the negative consequences for employers and workers.

Republican Senators, in a Thursday news conference after the vote, did not identify any other ARPA funds that they would like to see reallocated to be put toward the trust fund.

“If it was up to me, I would have taken \$5.5 billion a year ago – \$4.5 billion to completely wipe out this debt that we have to the federal government ... and \$1 billion to get back to our \$1 billion solvency target, which is part of the law today,” Sen. Win Stoller, R-East Peoria, said at the GOP news conference.

GOP Senators said a \$16 billion revenue windfall in recent years – including \$8.1 billion from ARPA, \$3.4 billion from a previous federal stimulus and \$4.6 billion in state revenue growth beyond what was projected for the current year – should have first been used to pay down the deficit before other allocations.

Democrats called their action a fiscally prudent measure that goes a long way to addressing the trust fund problem while allowing other necessary expenditures of ARPA funds.

“You know as well as I do that we’ve used the ARPA funding during this emergency to support those institutions and those businesses who have been on the frontlines and delivering health care in our communities,” Harris said in response to Republican criticisms Wednesday.

He pointed to spending for hospitals, nursing homes and purchases of personal protective equipment, as well as trust fund payments to gig workers and increased unemployment payments to workers which were paid by the federal government.

“And actually, I’m proud that we spent that money to be sure that these Illinoisans were protected, and the fact that you want to take it away from them, you think we should have shorted them – shame on you,” he said.

Pritzker on Thursday pointed to other expenditures of federal funds such as to aid child care providers, small businesses, homeowners and renters.

Interest accruing

As of Wednesday, the state had already accrued \$41 million of interest on the debt and it continued to accrue at a rate of 1.59 percent. That interest was due to be paid by Sept. 30, according to the U.S. Treasury.

By November, without action, that interest was expected to grow to \$80 million, Hoffman said. Interest can’t be paid through ARPA, so it would require a General Revenue Fund allotment, he added. Taking action by November would diminish that amount, he said.

GOP lawmakers argued that Democrats could have staved off some of that interest accrual by acting earlier. When lawmakers passed a budget last year, Sen. Chapin Rose, R-Mahomet, and other Republicans called out the majority party for not acting on the trust fund deficit.

“When I brought this up a year ago, and I said you are failing to take action, you are going to make this worse, and you’re going to hurt people,” he said Thursday. “And here we are a year later. That’s exactly what’s happened.”

Because Democrats put off action on the trust fund for over a year, the GOP said, interest not only accrued on the outstanding debt, but interest rates for the bonding the state is considering to pay down the remaining \$1.8 billion will have increased as well.

In July, Pritzker incorrectly told Capitol News Illinois that ARPA funds could not be used to pay down trust fund deficits although several states had already done so.

Other debt repayment

The measure also allocated \$898 million in general revenue funds to pay off old group health insurance bills, an added \$300 million to pension payments beyond statutory levels and \$230 million to pay off the unfunded liabilities of the College Illinois savings program – all cornerstones of Gov. JB Pritzker’s debt retirement initiatives put forth in his budget proposal. Those allotments will come from the state’s General Revenue Funds from the anticipated Fiscal Year 2022 surplus.

The pension spending would create \$1 billion in savings to the state’s pension system over its life, while the group health insurance payments would save over \$100 million in interest and the College Illinois payment would create a \$75 million savings, according to estimates from House Democrats.

“By following through on our commitments to dedicate one-time revenues to one-time costs or liabilities, we are delivering Illinoisans, a stronger budget and a stronger state for years to come,” Pritzker said.

This story has been updated from a previous version to not the Senate’s passage of the bill and include reaction from lawmakers and the governor.

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government that is distributed to more than 400 newspapers statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

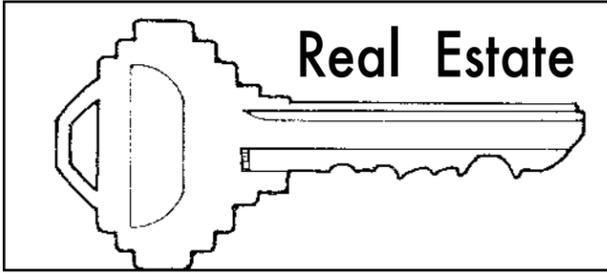
**Boone County License & Title
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Postcard Bill from the Secretary of State
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Vin# + Plate # + Expiration Date

419 S. State St. Bel
815-544-2075





IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS
 BMO HARRIS BANK N.A. F/K/A HARRIS N.A. Plaintiff,
 -v- 2019CH149
 CHICAGO TITLE LAND TRUST COMPANY AS TRUSTEE U/T/A DATED JANUARY 14, 2011 A/K/A TRUST NO. 8002356422 et al Defendant

NOTICE OF SALE
 PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on January 18, 2022, an agent for The Judicial Sales Corporation, will at 1:00 PM on April 20, 2022, at the NLT Title L.L.C., 530 S. State, Suite 201 (Logan Avenue entrance), Belvidere, IL, 61008, sell at a public sale to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate:

Commonly known as 410 TALLADEGA DR SOUTHWEST, POP-LAR GROVE, IL 61065

Property Index No. 03-27-451-022
 The real estate is improved with a residence.

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, including the Judicial Sale fee for the Abandoned Residential Property Municipality Relief Fund, which is calculated on residential real estate at the rate of \$1 for each \$1,000 or fraction thereof of the amount paid by the purchaser not to exceed \$300, in certified funds/or wire transfer, is due within twenty-four (24) hours. No fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. 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, examine the court file, CODILIS & ASSOCIATES, P.C. Plaintiff's Attorneys, 15W030 NORTH FRONTAGE ROAD, SUITE 100, BURR RIDGE, IL, 60527 (630) 794-9876

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.

CODILIS & ASSOCIATES, P.C.
 15W030 NORTH FRONTAGE ROAD, SUITE 100
 BURR RIDGE IL, 60527
 630-794-5300
 E-Mail: pleadings@il.cslegal.com
 Attorney File No. 14-19-01366
 Attorney ARDC No. 00468002
 Case Number: 2019CH149
 TJSC#: 42-327

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 # 2019CH149
 I3189893
 Published in *The Boone County Journal* March 17, 24, 31

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS
 BMO HARRIS BANK N.A. F/K/A HARRIS N.A. Plaintiff,
 -v- 2019CH149
 CHICAGO TITLE LAND TRUST COMPANY AS TRUSTEE U/T/A DATED JANUARY 14, 2011 A/K/A TRUST NO. 8002356422 et al Defendant

NOTICE OF SALE
 PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on January 18, 2022, an agent for The Judicial Sales Corporation, will at 1:00 PM on April 20, 2022, at the NLT Title L.L.C., 530 S. State, Suite 201 (Logan Avenue entrance), Belvidere, IL, 61008, sell at a public sale to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate:

LOT 41 AS DESIGNATED UPON THE PLAT OF CANDLEWICK LAKE UNIT NO. 4, BEING A SUBDIVISION OF PORTIONS OF SECTIONS 27 AND 28, TOWNSHIP 45 NORTH, RANGE 3 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED AS DOCUMENT 72-415 IN THE RECORDER'S OFFICE OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS; SITUATED IN THE COUNTY OF BOONE AND STATE OF ILLINOIS.

Commonly known as 410 TALLADEGA DR SOUTHWEST, POP-LAR GROVE, IL 61065

Property Index No. 03-27-451-022
 The real estate is improved with a residence.

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, including the Judicial Sale fee for the Abandoned Residential Property Municipality Relief Fund, which is calculated on residential real estate at the rate of \$1 for each \$1,000 or fraction thereof of the amount paid by the purchaser not to exceed \$300, in certified funds/or wire transfer, is due within twenty-four (24) hours. No fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. 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, examine the court file, CODILIS & ASSOCIATES, P.C. Plaintiff's Attorneys, 15W030 NORTH FRONTAGE ROAD, SUITE 100, BURR RIDGE, IL, 60527 (630) 794-9876

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.

CODILIS & ASSOCIATES, P.C.
 15W030 NORTH FRONTAGE ROAD, SUITE 100
 BURR RIDGE IL, 60527
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 Attorney File No. 14-19-01366
 Attorney ARDC No. 00468002
 Case Number: 2019CH149
 TJSC#: 42-327

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 # 2019CH149
 I3189893
 Published in *The Boone County Journal* March 17, 24, 31

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

IN RE THE ESTATE OF: DENNIS HILTON, SR., Deceased.
 CASE NO. 2022 PR 10

CLAIM NOTICE

NOTICE is given of the death of DENNIS HILTON, SR. Letters of Office were issued on February 25, 2022 to MAURICE HILTON, who is the legal representative of the estate. The attorney for the estate is Mark D. Brynteson, Brynteson Law Firm, 2969 Rolling Meadow Court, Belvidere, IL 61008. Claims against the estate may be filed on or before September 19, 2022, 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 755 ILCS 5/18-3 of the Illinois Probate Act, 1975 as amended, whichever date is later. Any claim not filed by the requisite date as 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, Illinois, or with the estate legal representative, or both.

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

Mark D. Brynteson
 Attorney for Administrator
 Brynteson Law Firm
 Mark D. Brynteson
 2969 Rolling Meadow Court
 Belvidere, IL 61008
 708-667-6868
 mdb@bryntesonlaw.com

Published in *The Boone County Journal* March 17, 24, 31

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Notice is hereby given to the legal voters, Residents of Flora Township, in the County of Boone and State of Illinois, that the Annual Town Meeting of said Town will take place on Tuesday, April 12, 2022, at the hour of 6:00 p.m. at Flora Township Office, 3100 Town Hall Road, Belvidere, for the transaction of miscellaneous business of said Town, and after a moderator having been elected, will proceed to hear and consider reports of officers, and decide on such measures as may, in pursuance of law, comes before the meeting.

Dated March 20, 2022
 Kenneth Freeman, Flora Township Supervisor
 Published in *The Boone County Journal* March 24 and 31

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

PENNYMAC LOAN SERVICES, LLC, PLAINTIFF,
 VS.
 SCOTT BEZIN A/K/A SCOTT A DEVIN A/K/A SCOTT A BEZIN A/K/A SCOTT ANTHONY BEZIN; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS, DEFENDANTS. NO. 22 FC 4
 115 EAST 4TH STREET
 BELVIDERE, IL 61008
 JUDGE
 PRESIDING JUDGE

NOTICE BY PUBLICATION NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO YOU,

Scott Bezin a/k/a Scott A Devin a/k/a Scott A Bezin a/k/a Scott Anthony Bezin Unknown Owners and Non-Record Claimants defendants, that this case has been commenced in this Court against you and other defendants, asking for the foreclosure of a certain Mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to wit:

The East Sixty (60) feet of the North Nine (9) rods of Lot Seven (7) (being Nine (9) rods long and Sixty (60) feet wide), in Block Four (4) of Cohoon's Addition to Belvidere as platted and recorded in the Recorder's Office of Boone County, Illinois, in Book O of Deeds, page 523. Situated in the County of Boone and the State of Illinois.

Commonly known as: 115 East 4th Street
 Belvidere, IL 61008

and which said Mortgage was made by, Scott Bezin a/k/a Scott A Devin a/k/a Scott A Bezin a/k/a Scott Anthony Bezin

Mortgagor(s), to
 Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. as nominee for Universal American Mortgage Company, LLC

Mortgagee, and recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds of Boone County, Illinois, as Document No. 2016R05864; and for other relief.

UNLESS YOU file your answer or otherwise file your appearance in this case, on or before May 2, 2022, A JUDGMENT OR DECREE BY DEFAULT MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST YOU FOR THE RELIEF ASKED IN THE COMPLAINT.

E-filing is now mandatory with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing,

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

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

McCalla Raymer Leibert Pierce, LLC
 Attorney for Plaintiff
 1 N. Dearborn St. Suite 1200
 Chicago, IL 60602
 Ph. (312) 346-9088
 File No. 22-08786IL-767449
 I3191200

Published in *The Boone County Journal* March 31, April 7, 14

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

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF: DORIS EDNA JOHNSON
 Deceased.

No. 2021-P-27

CLAIM NOTICE

NOTICE is given of the death of Doris Edna Johnson. Letters of Office were issued on April 15, 2021, to Janet Sue Gardner, 517 West 7th Street, Belvidere, Illinois 61008, who is the legal executor of the estate. The attorney for the estate is Nancy Grimme Schilling, Schilling Law, LLC, 973 Featherstone Road, Suite 350, Rockford, Illinois 61107.

Claims against the estate may be filed on or before October 1, 2022, 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, 601 N. Main Street, Belvidere, Illinois, 61008, or with the estate legal representative, or both.

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

Dated: March 29, 2022.
 Janet Sue Gardner, Executor,
 By: Schilling Law, LLC
 By: Nancy Grimme Schilling
 Schilling Law, LLC
 By: Nancy Grimme Schilling
 973 Featherstone Road, Suite 350
 Rockford, IL 61107
 (815) 977-5000 (telephone)
nancyschilling@schilling-law.com
 Published in *The Boone County Journal* March 31, April 7, 14

NOTICE TO CREDITORS; STATE OF ILLINOIS CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COUNTY OF BOONE NON-PROBATED WILL ESTATE OF: FREDERIC L. COUNTRYMAN, DECEASED.

NOTICE is given of the death of Fredrick L. Countryman on December 24, 2021. The Estate is administered through a Small Estate Affidavit and no Letters of Office were issued. Administrator of the Estate appoint ANTONETTE RAINES, and LENORE A. ROGMAN. Attorney Kathy McNeely-Johnson, Legal Serenity, PC, 403 Auburn St. Rockford, IL 61103 is representing the estate. Claims against the Estate are to be made before September 30th, 2022, or such date as being 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 made with Kathy McNeely-Johnson, Legal Serenity, PC, 403 Auburn St. Rockford, IL 61103 Attorney of record. with the Estate Administrator, or both. legalserenity@gmail.com

Published in *The Boone County Journal* March 31, April 7, 14

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 food trailer business in said County and State under the name of ALFREDO'S TACOS at the following post office address: 13012 Parkway, Poplar Grove, IL 61065 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: Lucerito Rocha, 13012 Parkway, Poplar Grove, IL 61065; phone # (779) 770-3774.

Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 18th day of March, A.D. 2022

Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk
 Published in *Boone County Journal* 3/24, 3/31, 4/7/22

ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY OF BOONE

This is to certify that the undersigned intend to conduct and transact a electrical business in said County and State under the name of SMART AMERICAN ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS at the following post office address: 1021 10th 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: Martin Ayala Proa, 1021 10th Avenue, Belvidere, IL 61008; phone # (630) 706-1001.

Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 24th day of March, A.D. 2022

Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk
 Published in *Boone County Journal* 3/24, 3/31, 4/7/22

ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY OF BOONE

This is to certify that the undersigned intend to conduct and transact a machine repair business in said County and State under the name of MORRALL MACHINE SERVICE at the following post office address: 816 East Pleasant 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: Colton Morrall, 6338 Centerville Road, Poplar Grove, IL 61065; phone # (815) 765-2330.

Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 24th day of March, A.D. 2022

Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk
 Published in *Boone County Journal* 3/31, 4/7, 4/14/22

ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION
STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE
This is to certify that the undersigned intend to conduct and transact an excavating business in said County and State under the name of WATSON AND SON EXCAVATING at the following post office address: 15718 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: Bradley D. Watson, 15718 Capron, IL 61008; phone # (815) 482-8425.
Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 10th day of March, A.D. 2022
Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk
Published in Boone County Journal 3/17, 3/24, 3/31/22

ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION
STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE
This is to certify that the undersigned intend to conduct and transact an online store - Ecommerce business in said County and State under the name of FREGOSO GROUP LLC at the following post office address: 401 Wheatland Drive, 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: Antonio Fergoso, 401 Wheatland Drive, Belvidere, IL 61008; phone # (815) 608-4866.
Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 17th day of March, A.D. 2022
Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk
Published in Boone County Journal 3/24, 3/31, 4/7/22

COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

Covid-19 Testing Sites:

For a full list of testing sites in Boone County and for further information, go to <https://dph.illinois.gov/Covid19/Testing.html>.

Boone County Volunteer Board's Vacancies:

Term Expires Length of Term

Regional Planning Commission

December 31, 2023 Remainder of Term

Capron Cemetery Association

February 1, 2027 (6) Year Term

Garden Prairie Street Light District

April 30, 2025 (3) Year Term

Ethics Commission

June 30, 2023 (2) Year

Boone County Committee Appointment Position Vacancies:

Regional Planning Commission

December 31, 2023 Remainder of Term

Planning Commission reviews and gives recommendations on various projects in the County based on their conformance to the Boone County Comprehensive Plan. Planning Commission is also charged with ensuring the Comprehensive Plan is current.

Capron Rescue Squad

February 1, 2027 Remainder of Term

Must live in the district for Capron Rescue Squad

Zoning Board of Appeals

June 1, 2024 Remainder of Term

Zoning Board of Appeals reviews and makes recommendations on zoning maps and text amendments applications, as well as recommendations on applications for zoning variations submitted in conjunction with rezoning, conditional use permit, and planned unit development applications.

Applicants for the Zoning Board of Appeals must reside in LeRoy, Boone, Belvidere, Flora or Spring Townships. The County Code states that each member must reside in a different township.

Interested parties are asked to send a letter and/or resume expressing your interest, qualifications along with your contact information and completed application to Boone County Administration Office, Administration Campus, 1212 Logan Ave., Suite 102, Belvidere, IL 61008, or e-mail info@boonecountyil.org

First United Methodist Church Grief Share Classes:

13-week Sessions, starting Thursday, March 24, 2022, located at the First United Methodist Church of Belvidere, 610 Bonus Ave., Belvidere. Day sessions starting at (10:00 A.M.- 12:00 P.M.) and evening sessions (6:30 P.M.- 8:30 P.M.). Contact the Church office to sign up at (815) 544-3479.

Analysis: Federal Deadline Looms Over Unemployment Trust Fund

State-imposed July 3 deadline is important too, but movable

By Jerry Nowicki Capitol News Illinois

The Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund was the talk of the Capitol this week.

Democratic lawmakers voted to dedicate \$2.7 billion toward filling a \$4.5 billion pandemic-driven hole in the fund which pays the unemployment claims of laid off Illinoisans. Gov. JB Pritzker signed the bill Friday.

The reaction was unsurprisingly partisan. Republicans called it a back-door tax hike, while Democrats said it was a necessary, realistic measure to reduce the mammoth trust fund debt and keep negotiations on further reductions from running off the rails.

Strictly speaking, the Democrats' action this week was simply a cash infusion into the fund. It used most of the remaining federal dollars from President Joe Biden's American Rescue Plan Act to cut the deficit to \$1.8 billion.

It didn't touch employer tax rates or unemployment benefits.

But it also didn't address the whole debt. That's an action that Republicans had been urging for nearly a year while Democrats waited in vain for further, targeted federal support for unemployment trust funds nationwide. It didn't come, and by the time the state acted this week, it had already appropriated all but \$3.5 billion of its ARPA funds.

And so it came to be that the partial debt paydown went ahead this week with only Democratic support nearly a full year after Republicans first started sounding alarms on the issue.

Partisan politics aside, there's truth to the Republican argument that the decision to allot \$2.7 billion will have consequences that could include benefit reductions for people claiming unemployment and insurance premium increases for employers.

The exact extent of those consequences, however, is not yet known. Business and labor remain at the negotiating table in what Illinois lawmakers refer to as the "agreed bill" process.

That means both sides must determine an acceptable level of benefit cuts and rate hikes to dig the state out of the remaining \$1.8 billion hole.

And lead Democrats in the negotiations made clear this week that going to the private bond market is another option at the table.

"There have in the past been shared sacrifice from business and labor," Rep. Jay Hoffman, D-Swansea, said in a news conference in the governor's office Thursday after the bill passed. "But remember this: When you talk about agreed bill process, that's just what it is. If labor doesn't agree ... to some type of share in paying for the bonds, if they don't agree to doing that, we don't have a bill."

When considering what's going to happen next, there are number of important deadlines to consider.

For starters, if lawmakers didn't act in time for ARPA payments to be made

to the fund by April 1, they would have lost the ability to decrease unemployment benefits until 2025. They hurried to act by that date, likely signifying that benefit cuts are on the table despite strong Democratic rhetoric against such an action throughout the pandemic.

There are at least two other looming deadlines to note, one of which is more "real" than the other.

The first is July 3, when a number of "speed bumps" are set to take effect.

What's a "speed bump?" It's legislative speak for about \$500 million each in benefit reductions and employer premium increases that lawmakers write into law routinely to encourage business and labor to come to the negotiating table in times like these.

Operationally, that amounts to a reduction to the wage replacement from 47 percent to 42.4 percent for unemployed workers, and a reduction to the benefit period from 26 to 24 weeks.

The rates at which businesses pay into Illinois' trust fund are determined by a complex statutory formula based on unemployment rates, the number of layoffs at a business, the number of employees and other factors.

But under the so-called speed bumps, employers would see their "adjusted state experience factor," which determines their insurance premiums, increase by 16 points above what it would otherwise be, and an additional surcharge of 0.325 percent would be added to the employer tax rates.

It's important to note that the speed bumps rarely take effect – business, labor and lawmakers from both parties agree that changes of that magnitude would be catastrophic. But, because it's written into law, all parties know they better get serious about negotiations before that date.

But even July 3 is a flexible deadline. Lawmakers need only erase the date and write in a new one. It's what they did in the fall veto session to push it back from January to July.

The deadline that's going to be more important for forcing action on this matter is a federal one – Nov. 10.

That pertains to the Federal Unemployment Tax Act, or FUTA, and what is called the FUTA credit.

Federal law requires an employer to pay the FUTA tax on an employee's first \$7,000 of wages at a rate of 6 percent. But it also offers businesses a 5.4 percent tax credit, putting the effective rate at 0.6 percent.

If a state has a negative balance in the trust fund on Jan. 1 for two consecutive years – as Illinois does – it has until Nov. 10 of the second year to retire that deficit, or the federal government will start clawing back 0.3 percent of the FUTA tax credit from employers each year until the deficit is gone.

So that means the effective FUTA tax rate

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Analysis*Continued from page 7*

would increase from 0.6 percent to 0.9 percent and on and on each year until it hits the full 6 percent or the debt is gone. That's an increase of \$21 in federal taxes per employee per each 0.3 percent rate hike, the first of which would apply in tax year 2022. Further reductions could take effect if the debt is outstanding for three years and again at five years.

And that leads back to the "agreed bill" negotiations between business and labor.

Benefit cuts, tax hikes and private bonds are all reportedly on the table as lawmakers look to act before the FUTA changes take effect. Another reason to act is that interest is accruing at a rate of 1.59 percent, and the \$41 million owed by Illinois as interest currently could reach \$80 million by November.

In 2011, following the Great Recession, Illinois went to the private bond market, swapping its federal interest rates for a lower rate from private investors. It dedicated a portion of the revenues from increased premiums to pay down that debt, and it took less than the 10-year life on the bonds to retire them.

Business and labor sources I've spoken to previously on this issue declined to speak publicly on it this week because they don't want to get in the way of the closed-door negotiations. I suppose that's a good sign, even if the talks have had their share of rough patches in recent days.

It's also a good sign that some of the state's major employer trade groups called the measure a "positive step."

"Today's vote will inject \$2.7 billion from the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) into the Illinois Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund," a group of business organizations said in a statement. "Illinois employers appreciate the governor and members of the General Assembly for taking this positive step in addressing the massive \$4.5 billion in outstanding debt. We're hopeful that negotiations will continue to resolve the remaining balance of this unprecedented deficit."

Labor, however, declined to issue a statement on the matter.

In a Wednesday news conference, Hoffman said he was hopeful the "agreed bill" process would conclude in the next three weeks. But lawmakers are deadline driven, so I suppose it's possible they'll be back in town this summer as they lumber toward the July speed bumps.

Jerry Nowicki is the bureau Chief of Capitol News Illinois, a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government that is distributed to more than 400 newspapers statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

Nutrient Pollution is Illinois' 'Most Widespread' Water Problem

By Andrew Adams *Capitol News Illinois*

Editor's Note: Andrew Adams is a student in the Public Affairs Reporting program at University of Illinois Springfield who is a reporting intern at the Capitol for the State Journal-Register in Springfield.

Off the southern coast of the U.S., there is an area six times the size of Rhode Island where every summer oxygen levels fall so low that it kills fish and plant life. Over the past five years, it's grown.

This "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico has caused between \$552 million and \$2.4 billion in damages, almost all of which could have been prevented by using farming techniques which rely less on fertilizers, according to a June 2020 report from the Union of Concerned Scientists.

This dead zone is largely caused by nutrient

runoff resulting from modern farming practices, which involve using fertilizers to introduce large amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus to the environment.

"It's becoming more of an issue since the late 1960s or thereabout," said Richard Cooke, an agricultural engineer and professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "There has been an increase in fertilizer use."

Over the past 30 years, this, as well as other sources of pollution, have caused nitrogen and phosphorus levels in Illinois waterways to increase, according to data from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

Nutrient movement in the environment is nothing new. It's a natural process that occurs everywhere there is soil and water, according to Cooke.

"Nutrients flow into water bodies. Organisms use this in their metabolic processes," Cooke said.

Nitrogen and phosphorus are often the limiting factor for the growth of aquatic organisms, like algae and bacteria. When more of these are introduced, they start to grow and multiply, eventually depleting oxygen.

When too much oxygen is depleted, the environment can become hypoxic, causing dead zones, like the one in the Gulf of Mexico.

"Anything that needs oxygen to live will need to move out of the area or die," Cooke said.

Beyond the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, runoff can disrupt freshwater bodies in the state, like lakes, rivers and streams.

Freshwater cyanobacteria, also called blue-green algae, can grow when excess nitrogen or phosphorus is introduced, such as from nutrient runoff. These cyanobacteria can produce microcystins, among other problems.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency monitors bodies of water in Illinois for these toxins, which they call "harmful algal blooms."

"Then they can reproduce rapidly and create a bloom, then that's it," said Alex Terlep, an environmental protection specialist with the IEPA.

Since 2015, there have been at least a dozen blooms which have enough toxins to be potentially hazardous to people each year, according to records obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

"Microcystin is a hepatotoxin — it's a liver toxin," Terlep said. "It can also cause skin rashes, irritation in your nostrils and lungs and at extremely high doses it can be a neurotoxin."

The IEPA advises managers of water bodies with high toxin levels to limit public access to water bodies with harmful algal blooms, which can be ingested accidentally while swimming. These toxins can be fatal for small animals like dogs.

Lowering nutrient levels

A group in Illinois has been aiming to identify and implement techniques to lower the amount of nutrients in Illinois waterways.

The Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy is an initiative involving more than 25 state agencies and organizations, including the IEPA and Sierra Club. Cooke is working on new techniques which he hopes will be added to the strategy during the next update.

The 2021 NLR report outlined dozens of programs to reduce nutrient loss from agriculture, urban stormwater systems and individual sources of pollution. Potential solutions include planting cover crops in the offseason to reduce soil erosion, using techniques that don't require tilling the soil and changing the way fields are irrigated.

Despite efforts, nutrient levels in Illinois water have generally increased in recent years, in part because of lower levels of implementation than the NLR report suggested.

Lawmakers are

working on a measure, Senate Bill 3471, to increase funding for reduction strategies in an effort to bring the state closer to outlined goals.

But there might be a new way to incentivize implementation of new techniques in the agricultural sector: big businesses paying farmers to sequester carbon to offset their emissions.

"My God, that's a big deal right now," said Mark Litteken, a farmer with 120 acres in Clinton County. "We're getting ready to try to be part of a program where we can measure carbon sequestration."

Major companies like Bayer and Cargill have started programs to pay farmers to implement new farming practices which capture carbon and improve soil health — which also reduces nutrient loss.

"The company will pay U.S. farmers for implementing climate-smart farming practices — such as cover crops or strip- or no-till," said Brian Leake, a representative of Bayer Crop Sciences.

Bayer's program pays \$9 per acre per year for implementing these practices. Leake claims that "more than 1,000" farmers around the U.S. are participating in the program.

"These two key practices lock carbon into the soil, helping with greenhouse gas reduction," Leake said. "Beyond generating additional income for farmers, these climate-smart farming practices help enable growers to benefit from improved soil health, which could lead to improved yield, profitability and sustainability in the future."

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