

BOONE COUNTY  
LOCAL NEWS, OPINION & HISTORY  
**JOURNAL**  
Real Journalism for a Real Democracy

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## The Age of Print Media

By Sofi Zeman

Mass media is perhaps the most notable aspect of human development. As time goes on, the world is becoming progressively smaller with each coming day. Whether it be via text, tweet or online news outlet, nearly every person living in modern-day America is able to know what is going on in the world at a moment's notice.

Given the technological depth that society has been plunged into, it seems nearly impossible to have functioned in a time before. And yet, the world existed without these "necessities" for centuries. While it seems that print is slowly becoming a less-common source, there was a time when the public relied majorly on the penny press for its news.

The first published newspaper in the States was called Publick Occurrences Both Foreign and Domestic. Though only four pages long, this product encouraged the circulation of many other papers just like it throughout the American Colonies. Unfortunately, Publick Occurrences met its end after one edition. Due to its being published without lack of approval, the paper was shut down by the Colonial Government four days after the initial publishing.

Though the first American newspaper entered press circulation in the 1690s, this historic phenomenon did not truly have its heyday until the 19th Century, upon the lifting of an expensive stamp fee.

History was truly made in 1880, when the first-ever photograph was printed in a newspaper by The New York Graphic- a paper that ceased publication in the 1930s. It was a publication that was appropriately named.) As time moved on, newspapers began to pop up all over. The Dai-

ly Mail, New York Times, Chicago Tribune, and other big-league papers began their rise to fame in the mid-to-late 1800s. Print news was a business on the rise. After all, it was something that every single person needed.

This image is of The Northwestern, a small, independent newspaper that was published in Belvidere long ago. Outside of the building stands the small staff of this publication. This paper was, by no means, one of the great news powerhouses in the country. It was much like any local business in a small town. But, that in no way discredits its value. Throughout the course of operation, the staff of this paper worked hard to ensure that the public was provided with necessary information. Over time, The Northwestern took on different form. After being purchased by the Daily Republican, it became the Republican-Northwestern, until its eventual closing in the mid-Twentieth Century.

## A Sloppy Kentucky Derby 145

by Charles Herbst

The 145th running of the Kentucky Derby is this Saturday, May 4. The run for the roses is known as the fastest two minutes in sports, and always held on the first Saturday in May at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky.

The race is 1-1/4 miles, carries a \$3,000,000 purse, and incalculable fame and glory for the winning trainer, jockey, and owners. Post time is 5:50PM, Belvidere time.

This year's favorite, Omaha Beach, has been scratched due to an entrapped epiglottis (an upper respiratory abnormality). The horse will not run in the Preakness or the Belmont either. After surgery, the horse is expected to make a full recovery.

Saturday's National Weather Service forecast for Louisville states that showers are likely, with thunderstorms also possible after 2PM. Light and variable wind becoming north around 6 mph in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation is 70 percent. New rainfall amounts between a half and three-quarters of an inch are possible.

Known mudders in the race are War of Will, Maximum Security, Improbable, and ironically, the scratched Omaha Beach. A mudder is a race horse that performs well on a wet, muddy track.

Continued on Page 2

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**Derby**

from page 1

**Here are the Derby odds at press time:**

Post	Horse	Trainer	Jockey	Odds
1.	War of Will	Mark E. Casse	Tyler Gaffalione	20 - 1
2.	Tax	Danny Gargan	Junior Alvarado	20 - 1
3.	By My Standards	W. Bret Calhoun	Gabriel Saez	20 - 1
4.	Gray Magician	Peter Miller	Drayden Van Dyke	50 - 1
5.	Improbable	Bob Baffert	Irada Ortiz, Jr.	6 - 1
6.	Vekoma	George Weaver	Javier Castellano	20 - 1
7.	Maximum Security	Jason Servis	Luis Saez	10 - 1
8.	Tacitus	William I. Mott	Jose L. Ortiz	10 - 1
9.	Plus Que Parfait	Brendan P. Walsh	Ricardo Santana, Jr.	30 - 1
10.	Cutting Humor	Todd A. Pletcher	Corey J. Lanerie	30 - 1
11.	Haikal	Kiaran P. McLaughlin	Rajiv Maragh	30 - 1
12.	Omaha Beach	Richard E. Mandella	Mike E. Smith	Scr
13.	Code of Honor	Claude R. McGaughey III	John R. Velazquez	15 - 1
14.	Win Win Win	Michael J. Trombetta	Julian Pimentel	15 - 1
15.	Master Fencer	Koichi Tsunoda	Julien R. Leparoux	50 - 1
16.	Game Winner	Bob Baffert	Joel Rosario	5 - 1
17.	Roadster	Bob Baffert	Florent Geroux	6 - 1
18.	Long Range Toddy	Steven M. Asmussen	Jon Kenton Court	30 - 1
19.	Spinoff	Todd A. Pletcher	Manuel Franco	30 - 1
20.	Country House	William I. Mott	Flavien Prat	30 - 1
21.	Bodexpress	Gustavo Delgado	Chris Landeros	30 - 1

**Graduated Tax Amendment Moves to House**

**Republicans remain unanimously opposed; Pritzker pitches plan to businesses**

by Jerry Nowicki and Peter Hancock  
Capitol News Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – A graduated income tax amendment is on the move at the Illinois State Capitol.

On a busy Wednesday afternoon, Senate Democrats advanced the proposal, House Republicans held a news conference bashing it, and Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker addressed two organizations composed of members who are vocally opposed to it.

Senate Joint Resolution Constitutional Amendment 1, which would allow

**Obituaries**

- Brown, Cheryl, 74, Belvidere, April 25
- Martinez, Blanca, 46, Belvidere, April 18
- Reimer, Thomas, 93, Belvidere, April 26
- Sorensen, Mona, 90, Belvidere, April 26
- Taylor, Melvin, 96, Belvidere, April 30

the placement of a graduated tax question on the November 2020 general election ballot, passed with support from all 40 Senate Democrats and no Republicans.

Senate Minority Leader Bill Brady, a Bloomington Republican, said his caucus opposed the graduated tax because the current mandated flat tax structure protects the middle class.

“I believe the crafters of our current Constitution, which included a flat tax and was embraced by the people of Illinois, designed it specifically to protect middle-income families from politicians,” Brady said.

Oak Park Democratic Sen. Don Harmon, SJRCA 1’s sponsor, said the flat tax, which is currently 4.95 percent on all Illinoisans, does the opposite.

“You are protecting the uber rich, not the middle class,” Harmon said.

Continued on Page 4



**Illinois State Police Troopers Deliver Baby Boy on I-57**


CHICAGO - Illinois State Police (ISP) officials announce the successful delivery of baby Carter Lee Smothers (7 pounds 5 ounces), on Sunday April 28<sup>th</sup> at 12:08 a.m., on I-57 northbound near 111<sup>th</sup> Street by ISP Trooper Edgar Valdez De Leon and ISP Trooper Michael Vodicka.

Trooper Valdez De Leon and Trooper Vodicka were on a traffic stop at above mentioned location at approximately 11:56 p.m., when another vehicle pulled in front of Trooper Valdez De Leon’s marked squad. The male driver, Roland Watkins, exited the vehicle and informed Trooper Valdez De Leon that his sister, Stacey Watkins, was in active labor. Approximately 10 minutes later at 12:08 a.m., Trooper Valdez and Trooper Vodicka successfully delivered baby Smothers. Mother and baby were transported to a local area hospital by ambulance.

On Monday afternoon, April 29, 2019, Trooper Valdez De Leon was able to visit the family at the hospital (see photo below). “I never thought I would get the opportunity to deliver a baby on the side of the road so early in my career with the Illinois State Police,” stated Trooper Valdez De Leon. “It was a high stress situation, but because of the First Responder training I received at the Illinois State Police Academy, I was confident enough to use the training I received and put it to good use, which led to a successful outcome,” he concluded.

“Trooper Valdez De Leon and Trooper Vodicka were able to demonstrate their dedication to service when they handled this incident,” stated ISP District Chicago Commander, Captain Margaret McGreal. “I am proud of their service and the service of all our men and women of the ISP,” she added.

Trooper Valdez De Leon is a one year veteran with the Illinois State Police. Trooper Valdez De Leon is a current Sergeant in the United States Army Reserves. He is also 16-year veteran of the United States Army and United States Marine Corps. Trooper Vodicka is an 8 1/2 year veteran with the Illinois State Police.



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Publisher/Editor Senior Writer/Editorial Reporter Advertising Manager Photography Office Clerk	David C. Larson Charles Herbst Sofi Zeman Dena Roethler Susan Moran Amanda Nelson
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David Grimm April 1938 - Dec. 2000  
Richelle Kingsbury Aug. 1955 - June 2013

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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.

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# THE BOONE COUNTY JOURNAL

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--In Our Opinion--

## Another Year In Illinois

With this issue, we begin our 24th year of publication.

We start by thanking our readers, subscribers and advertisers for their support. Without you, this newspaper would have little reason to exist. It is both a privilege and a responsibility to be able to come to you each week as your local newspaper.

We look at society today and we find ourselves deeply divided. It is practically irresistible to blame those who disagree with us as misguided, ignorant, prejudiced, or naive. While we may have learned in school that America is a nation of compromises, that common way forward seems to be, at least momentarily, eluding us.

But there seems to be one thing we all agree upon. From Chicago to Galena to Cairo, the people of this state are disgusted with Illinois Government. We feel taxed to death and believe the services we are getting are inadequate. We have lost faith in both parties and feel that the state lacks an honest broker. Regardless of the party in power, and despite endless, porcine grunting for even more, Illinois government is seriously bloated.

This state also has the most units of local government of any state in the US. Of course, we are frequently told by our school boards, township trustees, village presidents and county officials how fortunate we are to have their wise stewardship and how economically they provide services. Never mind that we pay some of the highest property taxes in America, particularly in Boone and Winnebago Counties.

In the past, we have given our elected state officials a wide berth. While we might disagree on individual issues, we have trusted them to use their good judgment to make decisions for our state and community. We feel that trust has been abused. We've examined our legislators' voting records and found that we have local members who sponsor bills to kick Chicago out of Illinois, vote against equal rights for women, vote to shame poor children who cannot afford a school lunch, and all manner of other extremist nonsense.

These legislators operate outside the mainstream of public opinion or the prevailing position of either party. This may endear these

local legislators to their most radical supporters, but their actions do nothing to help Boone County or its residents. When, on the basis of taxes paid, Boone County receives the lowest per capita return of state benefits of any non-collar county, it is clear that our interests are not being served by our local legislators.

We see the problems of Illinois government as a direct threat to the prosperity of Boone and McHenry Counties, as well as the rest of the state. As a result, The Boone County Journal has increased its coverage of Illinois issues. As a local newspaper, we cannot afford a Springfield bureau, but are trying our best to offer a balanced account of what is happening in state government. This is our contribution, albeit small, toward rectifying the situation.

Something has got to give. And, eventually, it will. In 1978, fed up California taxpayers passed Proposition 13, which froze local property taxes. It did not solve all of California's problems, but sent a clear message to elected officials and bureaucrats that Californians had had enough. Of course, local California governments retaliated by cutting the most visible agencies and causing the most harm possible to their residents. Much like the mischief of the Winnebago County Sheriff causing long security lines at the courthouse when his budget was cut.

Similarly, we are faced with legislators (including our own Joe Sosnowski) retaliating against community newspapers in this state for covering the antics of his fellow legislators in Springfield. He has sponsored legislation to end public legal notices in newspapers. The purported purpose of ending public legal notices in Illinois and hiding them on thousands of easily-manipulated websites is to save an amount of money that is an insignificant item in state and local budgets. It also serves the added purpose of helping Mr. Sosnowski and his cohorts keep the public's business clandestine. ("Go Joe!")

Such are the challenges we face as a newspaper in 2019. But we suppose past generations could tell us equally lurid tales. After all, Illinois was founded upon chicanery. Illinois all-but-stole a sixty-mile wide strip of land from the

Wisconsin Territory in 1818. The shenanigans of a Downstate lawyer, Nathaniel Pope, persuaded Congress to reverse course and give what is now Chicago, Belvidere, Rockford and Galena to Illinois. Even with the strip, there were serious doubts as to whether Illinois had the required 60,000 population to qualify as a state.

So, even at its founding, Illinois was corrupt.

Like California, Illinois is rich, but neither state not a bottomless money pit. Regardless of this state's tradition, if Illinois is to continue to prosper, it must be run for the benefit of its residents, not its employees.

## Newspapers

By Scott Reeder

Riverton, Ill. – Last week, I found a time capsule of sorts stashed away in the loft of a barn.

I climbed up into the loft on what had been my wife's parents' acreage.

It was a salvage mission. I was looking for things to keep before we sold the land. I loaded an old wheelbarrow, a spade and a couple of old gasoline cans into the back of my pickup.

And then I came across an old suitcase covered with dust and bird droppings stashed away in a corner amid rusting sickles, saws and farm implements.

It looked like a piece of luggage from the 1940s with a brass lock and leather trim. My wife calls it the "Indiana Jones suitcase."

I popped the lock open and found myself staring at a Chicago Daily News headline: "BURY KENNEDY TODAY; OSWALD SHOT, KILLED." That's right. Kennedy's dead, Oswald, too, and so is the Daily News.

I reached into the case and found it was filled with newspapers from that fateful week. Someone back in 1963 knew history was unfolding and wanted it to be saved for perpetuity.

Journalism is the first draft of history; or so the cliché goes that professors drive into the idealistic minds of would-be reporters and editors.

As I looked into the suitcase, history felt tangible.

I took the newspapers home and showed them to my 10-year-old daughter, Anna. She had just finished a report on John F. Kennedy and the yellowing broadsheets made what she learned in school come alive.

My wife's family was hardly unusual in saving back these fragments of history. My grandmother, Eva Reeder, had a similar stash of newspapers and magazines from that same week. Knowing that I was heading into journalism, she gave them to me several decades ago.

And I have my own cache from 9-11. When I was a kid, I had the Galesburg Register-Mail headline "Nixon Decides to Quit" thumbtacked to my bedroom bulletin board. Even at age 10, I could sense this was history.

I've learned in my years as a reporter and an editor that newspaper readers are far less tolerant of graphic images than television viewers. The best reason I can come up with for this is that newspapers have more permanence.

On television it's a fleeting image. But when it's in the newspaper folks can keep coming back to it again and again.

A couple of years ago, I was visiting a woman whose daughter's murder I covered decades before. She took me to a chest where she kept old report cards, school pictures, toys and, yes, newspapers.

She would unfold each newspaper with the care a rabbi might give a sacred scroll. On each page I'd see my name or that of my fellow journalists: Rod, Linda, Ed, Jennifer. It's doubtful it ever occurred to any of us 20-something reporters pounding stories out on deadline that our work would be stashed away for decades by a mother trying to hang on to every memory of a long-dead daughter.

Of course, death and memories go hand-in-hand.

After my father died, my sister and I waded through boxes of memories and newspaper clipping: Our parents' 1954 wedding announcement, a 1964 business story on the construction of my Dad's new veterinary clinic, a feature on my teenage sister heading to Germany, an obituary for my brother

It seems just about every family has a cache of yellowed newspaper clippings like this. As much as I hated writing obituaries as a summer intern in the 1980s, I imagine those are the only articles of mine that are tucked away in family Bibles.

As newspapers make the transition from print to online, I'm left wondering what future caches will look like. I suppose folks could print things off the internet and save them. But it seems hard to imagine they will conjure up the same nostalgia as lead on newsprint

Looking at that suitcase full of memories, I'm left wondering what the future has in store for an industry I love and what future moments of history will be saved for perpetuity.

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**Tax** *from page 2*

A graduated tax would allow the state to impose higher rates on greater margins of income. Senate Bill 687, carried by Olympia Fields Democrat Toi Hutchinson, contains the rate structure which would go into effect should the constitutional amendment become law. It passed with votes from 36 Democrats.

"The people who have been hit the most and the hardest with lack of opportunity and the loss of the services we all rely on, are the folks that everyone keeps saying we need to stand up and we need to protect," Hutchinson said. "So far this is the only plan that does that. There is no other plan on the table to deal with \$3.4 billion of a structural deficit that we all know we have."

Per the bill, single filers would pay the maximum rate of 7.99 percent on all income once their taxable income tops \$750,000. For joint filers, that rate takes effect once income tops \$1 million.

For joint filers outside of the top brackets, the rates in the Senate plan are 4.75 percent on taxable income from \$0 to \$10,000; 4.9 percent from \$10,001 to \$100,000; 4.95 percent from \$100,001 to \$250,000; 7.75 percent from \$250,001 to \$500,000; and 7.85 percent from \$500,001 to \$1 million.

For single filers, tax rates are the same as joint filers up to \$250,000; but the 7.75 percent rate applies from \$250,001 only to \$350,000, while the 7.85 percent rate applies from \$350,001 to \$750,000.

The bill also includes an increase in the property tax credit from 5 percent to 6 percent, and a \$100 per-child tax credit for couples earning less than \$100,000 and single persons earning less than \$80,000.

But Republicans, including Jason Barickman of Bloomington and Dale Righter of Mattoon, said there is no guarantee the rates provided in this plan will stay as advertised for any period of time.

Righter said other states with graduated tax structures have raised the top rate 24 times over the past 20 years and on several occasions the income threshold necessary to meet the top rate has dipped below \$100,000.

"We should not make it easier to raise taxes," Righter said. "The national experience comparing flat tax rates and graduated tax rates teaches us this will make it easier to do just that."

But Hutchinson said the threshold to raise taxes will remain the same as it was before the amendment, and a state-by-state comparison does not adequately sum up Illinois' situation. She said the "hollowing out of state government" has affected lower-income earners while the flat tax "worked just fine" for the wealthiest Illinoisans, who are trying to protect it.

Her bill also increases by \$100 million the state's investment in local governments and raises the corporate tax rate from 7 percent to 7.99 percent, with an existing corporate replacement tax up to 2.5 percent applying to businesses, making the top corporate rate 10.49 percent.

Senate Bill 690, carried by Democrat Andy Manar of Bunker Hill, and Senate Bill 689, carried by Senate President John Cullerton (D-Chicago) passed as part of the package as well.

SB 690 would provide for a property tax freeze on school districts if the state meets approximately \$650 million in annual K-12 education spending starting in 2021. The freeze would exclude levies for debt and pensions. SB 689 would eliminate Illinois' estate tax which currently applies to estates exceeding \$4 million.

No Republicans voted for either bill, as opponents said the property tax freeze would apply only in unlikely circumstances, while the estate tax repeal could be reversed at any time.

**Pritzker's pitch to business**

Prior to the Senate's vote, Pritzker addressed members of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association and Illinois Retail Merchants Association – two organizations opposed to his signature revenue proposal – at a business day event at a Springfield hotel.

Pritzker was warmly received despite the two groups' opposition to the graduated tax, and he said

the measure was needed to prevent "a hike in the flat income tax."

"The fair tax would stabilize our state's finances, eliminate the budget deficit, help balance future budgets and reduce the net pension liability," he said.

Pritzker drew applause when he touted funding increases for workforce development programs, vocational training, community colleges and apprenticeship programs. He also urged those in attendance to lobby legislators for an infrastructure bill and the revenue streams which would make it possible.

After Pritzker's pitch, IRMA Chairman Jim Havey signified those in attendance were unmoved by the arguments as he assailed the graduated tax and said there was "no limit" to the restrictions elected officials were willing to impose on Illinois businesses.

**House Republican opposition**

The constitutional amendment and package of tax bills now move to the Illinois House, where Republicans plan to keep up their unanimous opposition.

Speaking at a Statehouse news conference before the Senate vote, four House Republicans said the Senate version of the proposed rate structure, which is slightly different than the one Pritzker first proposed, proves how easy it would be for lawmakers to raise taxes on certain income classes in the future.

"We told you so," said Rep. Margo McDermed, a Mokena Republican. "We told you that the Democrat-controlled General Assembly would not be content once they had a right to have graduated tax rates. Yesterday, state senators released new rates that would put in place income tax rates even higher than what the governor proposed just two months ago. They could not maintain discipline for even two months before they raised rates."

Rep. Grant Wehrli, a Naperville Republican, offered a glimpse of the kinds of political attacks Republicans will use to challenge the validity of Pritzker's "fair tax" slogan.

"Just last week we learned that the governor and his family are under federal investigation for what the Cook County Inspector General's report calls a scheme to defraud," Wehrli said. "And yet he's looking for fairness. The scheme to defraud resulted in \$331,000 being due to the famous ripping out of toilets on an Astor Street mansion. So let me ask you this: If you rob a bank and then return the money, are you still not a criminal?"

In a separate statement, House Republican Leader Jim Durkin, of Western Springs, called the Senate vote "a slap in the face to thousands of Illinois families and businesses; just another step towards handing a blank check over to the Democrats and their reckless spending habits."

There are 74 Democrats in the House, which needs 71 votes to pass the amendment. Democratic House leaders have not yet announced when they plan to take up the package.

**Lawmakers Consider Eliminating Cash Bail**

**Bail critics say it's unfair to the poor, but prosecutors warn of fallout**

by Peter Hancock  
Capitol News Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – Two years after passing a significant bail bond reform law, some Illinois lawmakers are now considering doing away with cash bail altogether.

Supporters of that idea say it would bring greater fairness to the system, especially for low-income people charged with relatively minor offenses.

But prosecutors and law enforcement officials warn that such a move could

have far-reaching consequences, including putting victims of domestic violence at risk and taking away the ability of local courts to fund services for crime victims.

Those were some of the issues raised Tuesday in a House committee that is reviewing the impacts of the 2017 law and debating whether to continue down the path of bail reform, or whether to roll back some of the new limits on imposing cash bail.

Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx, who supports eliminating cash bail, said that before the 2017 reforms, the system of requiring people to post cash bonds was not keeping violent felons off the street.

"One of the costs of doing business in some of these violent enterprises is going to jail," she said. "And thus having money available to bail someone out of jail was accessible to them. So when we were looking at our population, we weren't finding that the majority of people in our jail were there for violent offenses. We found the majority of those who were in our jails were there for nonviolent offenses."

Under the 2017 Bail Reform Act, people charged with nonviolent misdemeanors or



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low-level felonies are presumed to be eligible for release without posting bail. Instead, judges can order them to wear electronic monitors, enforce curfews or impose a number of other restrictions that apply until their cases are resolved.

Sharlyn Grace, co-executive director of the Chicago Community Bond Fund, an organization that posts bond for people who are unable to pay it themselves, told the committee the system of cash bail has never worked the way it was intended.

“Requiring people to put up a sum of money to secure their release pretrial is based on habit and longstanding practice,” she said. “But every study that has looked at it has found that it doesn’t increase court appearance rates, and we know that continuing to use it has tremendous negative impacts – both the impacts of creating lost jobs, lost housing, for some people the risk of losing custody of their children because they’re unable to care for them. And also it increases recidivism, and it increases the racial disparities that are already prevalent in our criminal justice system.”

A number of law enforcement officials, however, said the 2017 law has had detrimental effects on their communities, and they warned of additional consequences if the state does away with cash bail altogether.

“You’ve essentially upended an entire system and not put in enough buttresses in place in order to protect from a lot of the fallout that happened,” said McHenry County State’s Attorney Patrick Kenneally.

He said there has been an 18 percent increase in the number of people who fail to appear in court after being released without posting bail in McHenry County.

Meanwhile, McDonough County Sheriff Nick Petitgout said doing away with cash bail would effectively defund a number of county services, including programs designed to help crime victims. That’s because when a person is convicted of a crime, any money paid for bail stays with the county and is applied toward fines, court costs and restitution.

“In our county, we take in roughly about a half million dollars in bond a year, and that money fuels our criminal justice system,” he said. “Things like victims services, court appointed special advocates, teen court, diversion programs, the treasurer’s office, the circuit clerk’s office, the sheriff’s office. There are many, many different parts of this system that rely on that money.”

Denton Aud, state’s attorney in White County in southeast Illinois, said the 2017 law was intended to address issues unique to Chicago and Cook County.

“If there’s one thing I could impress upon you, it’s that not every county is like Cook County,” he said.

Rep. Justin Slaughter, a Chicago Democrat who chairs the House committee that deals with criminal law, is the lead sponsor of House Bill 3347, which would do away with cash bail in Illinois.

Meanwhile, Rep. Steven Reick, a Woodstock Republican, is the lead sponsor of House Bill 221, which would allow any county other than Cook to opt out of the 2017 Bail Reform Act.

And Rep. Patrick Windhorst, a Metropolis Republican, is sponsoring House Bill 912, which would scale back the 2017 law by exempting people who are charged with felonies that were committed while they were released on bond, in a pretrial release program, in pretrial detention, or serving a sentence of incarceration for a separate offense.

## Seeking Building Vertical in Potential Capital Bill

Senator optimistic ‘bipartisan agreement’ can be reached for infrastructure funding, revenue

by Jerry Nowicki  
Capitol News Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – As discussions of the state’s first capital improvements bill in more than a decade continue, a new coalition launched an effort Wednesday to increase the focus on vertical infrastructure projects.

The coalition calls itself Build Up Illinois and is composed of representatives of K-12 education, higher education, union groups, hospital advocates

and more. Their goal is to put a focus on funding for new buildings in addition to road and bridge projects.

According to a news release from the coalition, the Illinois Capital Development Board estimates repairs would cost \$7.8 billion at state facilities, just under \$6.7 billion for public universities and \$9.4 billion for preK-12 schools. The funding needed for road, bridge, sewer and water projects numbers in the billions as well.

State Sen. Andy Manar, a Bunker Hill Democrat, is a member of the Senate committee that has been touring the state to hear about infrastructure needs. He acknowledged it will be nearly impossible for the state to fund all infrastructure needs brought to the committee in the six meetings it has hosted.

Still, he said he was optimistic that some type of capital bill would get done by the time the General Assembly adjourns May 31.

“I would expect within the next few weeks we would see ... the beginning phases of a bill that would represent, I would hope, some bipartisan agreement both on the spending side and the revenue side,” Manar said.

In terms of revenue, Manar said the General Assembly has funded previous capital bills with taxes on gaming and liquor, and a gas tax and licensing fee hike is on the table as well. Funds resulting from a higher gas tax would be constitutionally mandated for use on road and bridge safety thanks to a “lock box” amendment passed in 2016.

Manar said there would be “significant discussion” about other revenue sources, including a tax on ride sharing services among many others.

“It’s an endless list of needs, and it’s because of inaction,” Manar said. “And frankly it’s because of, time and time again, we haven’t done difficult things. It’s time to do difficult things.”

The advocates at the meeting listed their needs in the hundreds of millions of dollars for such projects as hospital upgrade grants, university and community college buildings, and more.

Elgin Community College President David Sam said campuses have had to choose whether to continue offering classes and services to students or spending that money on HVAC or boiler repairs.

“Forty-eight out of every hundred high school graduates are going out of state,” Sam said. “Our facilities in Illinois are crumbling, and these students see them.”

Illinois State University President Larry Dietz said his university has had to move money from operating funds to building maintenance as well.

“Over the past five years, we have invested between \$4 million and \$6 million annually of our own resources in general revenue on construction of facilities to ensure that they remain safe and functioning,” Dietz said. “Had capital funds been available, that money could have been used for scholarships, additional faculty and support staff or new technologies.”

A.J. Wilhelmi, president of the Illinois Health and Hospital Association, said his organization is proposing the “Hospital Transformation Capital Program,” which calls for \$500 million in state capital funds for hospitals that need to transform their aging facilities to provide modernized care.

“The health care landscape is changing dramatically from an inpatient-based system to an outpatient-focused system,” Wilhelmi said. “This means that hospital buildings constructed over the past century to provide inpatient care need to be modernized, and in some cases, repurposed to fit today’s health care model.”

Michael Carrigan, president of the Illinois AFL-CIO, said the “the 900,000 union members across the state are willing partners in support of a capital plan that addresses needed repairs and upgrades as well as new construction.”



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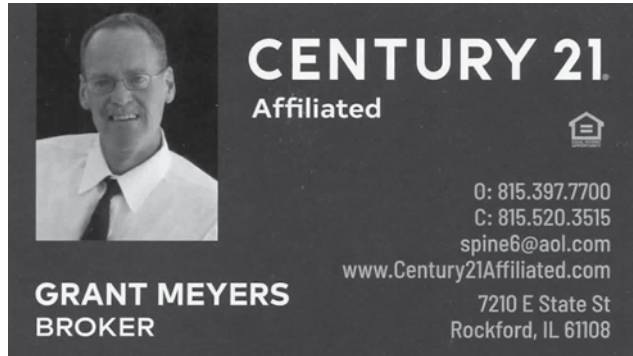




**COMMUNITY** *Continued from page 7*  
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## Attorney General Calls for More Regulation of ‘Deceptive’ Energy Suppliers

**‘Almost nobody’ pays lower prices for energy purchased from alternative providers, Raoul says**

by **Jerry Nowicki**  
*Capitol News Illinois*

SPRINGFIELD – Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul on Tuesday called for greater regulation of alternative retail energy suppliers, many of which go door-to-door using “deceptive practices” to lock consumers into contracts that ultimately lead to higher energy costs.

At a Chicago news conference, Raoul said “almost nobody” who signs up to receive gas or electricity from alternative energy providers ends up paying less for their energy bills than consumers who stayed with their public utility.

Raoul said Illinois customers who switched to an alternative supplier paid more than \$600 million more in electricity costs over the past four years. For the average consumer who switches, the added cost is between \$87 and \$208 each year.

“Not everybody who is a victim of their utility rates increasing as a result of being victimized by one of these suppliers realizes this, that they’re being victimized, they’re paying increased rates,” Raoul said.

He noted that high-price energy contracts “disproportionately affect” African-American and Latino communities in Chicago on the south and west sides. Senior citizens are often targeted as well, Raoul said.

“We’ve heard from consumers all over the state who have been trapped in bad supply contracts,” Raoul said. “They routinely fail to provide customers with critical information, including price and length of contract.”

He urged the General Assembly to pass Senate Bill 651, the Home Energy Affordability Transparency, or HEAT, Act. Raoul said the bill would improve his office’s existing authority to bring suit against suppliers by enumerating acceptable and unacceptable practices for the industry so “it can be clearer and easier” for his office to “go after these bad actors.”

The bill, which is sponsored by state Sen. Kimberly Lightford, a Maywood Democrat, would also mandate alternative suppliers to provide consumers with information about rates, fees and early termination charges.

It would also require suppliers to notify customers before their rates rise, prevent suppliers from automatically renewing a consumer’s contract without their knowledge, and require suppliers to report their rates to the Illinois Commerce Commission and the attorney general’s office.

Raoul said he and predecessor Lisa Madigan have filed suit against nine of the 100-plus licensed energy suppliers in the state.

Often, Raoul said, the consumers targeted in alternative suppliers’ marketing campaigns are receiving state assistance from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and

Percentage of Income Payment Plan.

“When these ARES (alternative retail energy suppliers) enroll low-income consumers, state dollars are utilized to pad these suppliers’ profits,” Raoul said, noting the Chicago Housing Authority

has banned these suppliers from marketing on its property.

The bill contains protections for LIHEAP- and PIPP-eligible consumers by preventing alternative suppliers from entering into contracts with them.

Almost immediately following Raoul’s news conference, representatives for Direct Energy, an alternative retail energy supplier, released a statement saying Raoul is “proposing the wrong remedy for restoring confidence in the electricity market.”

“This bill as is will take away the rights of Illinois households and small businesses to choose their energy supplier and force them back to the monopoly utility,” Teresa Ringenbach, Direct Energy’s senior manager of government and regulatory affairs, said in the statement. “Rather than shut down the entire market, the right thing to do is to make the market better with thoughtful price guardrails, same-day switching, greater transparency and stronger enforcement.”

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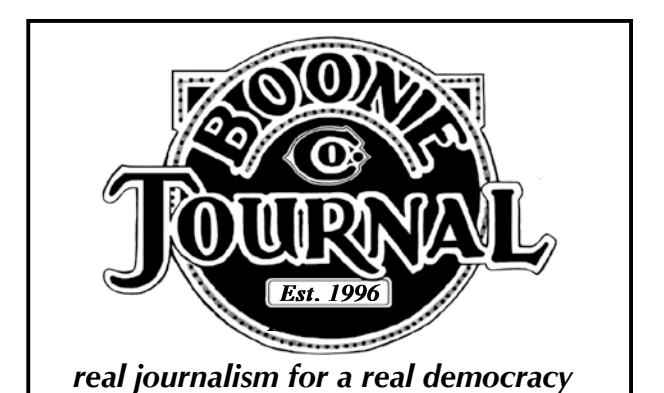
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