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Cigars & Billiards

by David Larson

Again we see the “short guy” with the cap, hand signals and watch fob. This time, just a thumbs up. In last week’s picture, taken from across the street looking at the old State Tap, this same fellow was projecting some sort of signal much more complex with both hands. Was he a patron or an employee? He is featured in a whole set of pictures.

Who is this guy? Without a doubt everyone in town knew his name.

The rest of the men are apparently the “boys”: pool hustlers and just generally nice guys. Men among men as they say. Every day a good day and every man a king around the pool hall. Of course, smoking was allowed and the best cigars available in Belvidere could be enjoyed while watching felt games. It was a time when men wore hats.

What is the difference between billiards and pool? Billiards is played on a table that has no pockets and uses 3 balls. One red ball, one white ball with a spot, and one yellow ball without a spot. Billiards is a cue sport that is played by two players. Each player uses a different color cue ball and attempts to score more points than their opponent and reach the previously agreed total required to win the match.

Pool is played on a table with 6 pockets with 9 to 15 balls plus an additional cue ball. The number of balls depends on the type of game played.

Nothing is indicating card games but that is a strong possibility. Belvidere has had a long history of backroom card games, some of which are remembered a half-dozen decades after the fact.

The name of this establishment is unknown. It was located where RIO is today in the 100 block of North State Street on a bank of the Kishwaukee River at the State Street Bridge. It, like the RIO was attached to the theater building, but that building is not the Apollo Theater. It was the Dirthick Theater, which burnt to the ground sometime after this picture was taken, and before the Apollo was built in 1922.

The iron work of the facade is very nice. Similar ornamental work from original facades of buildings around town are transforming the original business district on the north and south sides of the river, as a few owners have taken care to preserve their original design. Recently the building at North State Street and Lincoln Avenue, 202 North State Street, has benefited by the work of its new owner John Ahrens. It will be interesting to see the final product of his restoration of that important three-story building, the site of the first bank in Boone County founded by Allen Fuller and other early settlers.

A portion of the pre-1929 bridge is visible on the far left. This post-Civil War bridge was the first iron bridge on State Street over the river. While narrow, this building’s window view of the river shows an early interest in the river as an aesthetic feature of the city rather than something to be ignored or exploited. Something more than a drainage ditch.

On the far right, we can read the word “Opera”. Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini, or Richard Wagner were perhaps experienced at the Dirthick. Many traveling theatrical groups crisscrossed the country in search of welcoming audiences in that pre-TV and radio time in America. Belvidere had become a part of the greater world at the turn of the century, having sprung from the prairie only 65 years before.

Many factories had located in what was once just a farming community in the prairie. It was the period of the Industrial Revolution of the United States and anything was possible.

It is much like today’s Digital Revolution. Belvidere, is already home to remote workers who interact internationally and live in this small, some say quaint, community. If we aspire to have educational institutions capable of supporting that kind of industry and culture, we will see more.

Bailey Refuses to Wear Mask During House Session and was Removed

Requirement part of safety rules adopted as House returns to session
by Jamie Munks Chicago Tribune
Pool Reporter via Capitol News Illinois

The Illinois House voted Wednesday afternoon to remove Republican state Rep. Darren Bailey, of Xenia, from session at the Bank of Springfield Center after he refused to comply with a facial-covering requirement in newly-adopted House rules.

In a bipartisan vote, the Illinois House adopted rules Wednesday that include a requirement for members, staff members and visitors to the special session to wear a face covering over their nose and mouth, if they are medically able to do so.

Democratic Rep. Emanuel “Chris” Welch, of

Continued on Page 2

Removal

Continued page 1

Hillside, made a motion to remove Bailey from the House proceedings after Bailey responded "I will not," when he was asked to come into compliance with the face covering requirement in the newly-adopted rules. The House voted 81-27 in favor of Bailey's removal.

Divisions among House Republicans emerged over the face-covering requirement.

Prior to session reconvening after caucus on Wednesday, House Republican Leader Jim Durkin, of Western Springs, spoke for several minutes with Bailey. Durkin wore a mask during their conversation, Bailey did not.

When the House returned to session, Durkin urged all members to comply with the new rules.

"We cannot ignore nor compromise the health and safety of every member of the General Assembly, their family members, every one of our staffers who works tirelessly for us," Durkin said.

The exception to the new face covering rule for the special session is when members are eating or drinking, and then it is recommended they stay at their individual table.

Lawmakers returned to Springfield on Wednesday for the first time since March 5. The House is meeting in the downtown arena, the Senate in the Senate chamber at the Capitol.

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

City Assesses Revenue Impact of Virus

By David Larson

Belvidere's revenue is down and will continue downward in the short term, according to the City of Belvidere's Budget & Finance officer, Becky Tobin. At the end of April, Tobin reported to the council what effects have been observed.

The revenue from the 2-cent-per-gallon motor fuel tax enacted by the city under home rule authority in September 2018 is expected to be down in April, because fewer gallons of gasoline are being sold. There was no effect on March revenue. The largest source of the gasoline tax is the Belvidere Oasis, said Tobin.

Tobin also addressed revenue from the municipal sales tax and the recent half-cent increase in sales tax enacted by the city under home rule authority. Tobin said that Belvidere is not as dependent on sales tax revenue as some cities are, and that Walmart and McDonald's are open for business and doing well. She reported that automobile sales are strong. Online sales tax revenue remains strong, but the half-cent home rule sales tax is not collected in online sales.

Local gaming revenues, which normally generate \$30,000 to \$32,000 per month, will be zero for April and May. Belvidere receives 5% of gamblers losses.

But the bright light is the \$600,000 gain from the remainder of this year's gas utility tax which in past years the city failed to collect from some local industries but is now collecting. The city will continue to collect this tax in future years at the rate of approximately \$900,000 per year. This revenue was not in the budget, and will help cushion the loss in traditional categories, said Tobin.

Tobin advised the council that most expenses from the budget require City Council approval, and that by using their discretion, expenditures can be monitored. Ultimately, the judgment of the council will control.

Community News

Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step groups have moved their meetings to Zoom - Although there are in-person meetings that continue in the area and they are following the guidelines provided by the Winnebago County Department of Public Health, many of the members of A.A. are choosing to practice safe social distancing by attending meetings online.

A list of Zoom meetings can be found on our websites and members of the community who are struggling with a substance abuse or drinking problem can find help 24/7 by visiting: www.rockfordaa.org and www.district70aa.org or by calling 815-968-0333. Sober members of AA are available to take calls and provide guidance around the clock.

Burpee Museum offers FREE Virtual Reality Field Trips - Thanks to generous community support and donations from foundations and individuals, we are pleased to offer a limited number of virtual field trips at NO COST to school groups this spring! Using the teacher's choice of a simple web browser, students will enter the "museum" through their home devices. Clicking on the floor, students can "walk" the 360-degree virtual reality environment and click on "hot spots" for additional activities, videos, and more. Burpee will have a live stream with the class to complete a 30-45-minute field trip. Please contact nicole.hayes@burpee.org for more to reserve your spot while supplies last. For more information see Burpee.org or email Burpee@burpee.org

RVC Admissions Hosting Getting Started Webinars for Prospective Students- In an effort to adapt to the constraints of the stay-at-home order for the State of Illinois, Rock Valley College's Admissions department will be hosting Getting Started Webinars to help prospective students with the admissions process. Currently, Getting Started Webinars are scheduled for: Monday, May 18 at noon, Wednesday, May 20 at 5pm, Friday, May 22 at 2pm, Tuesday, May 26 at 10am, Thursday, May 28 at 3pm. In these free interactive webinars, prospective students will learn about the programs and services offered at RVC and will have the opportunity to meet the RVC Recruitment team to find out what it takes to become a Golden Eagle. Each session will be followed by a Q&A session to address any questions students or parents may have. Pre-registration is required. After registering, instructions on how to join the webinar will be emailed to registrants. Choose a session now at rockvalleycollege.edu/webinars. For more information please email rvc-admissions@rockvalleycollege.edu.

Quidnunc



So...

Did you think your trusted politician would be above politicizing the pandemic for personal gain?

Obituaries

- Aden, Robert, 91, Belvidere, May 12
- Ferguson, Tyler, 17, Belvidere, May 15
- Knox, Lois, 87, Belvidere, May 17
- O'Malley, Billie, 78, Belvidere, May 13
- Ramos, Ronald, 52, Belvidere, May 9
- Seebruck, Leon, 80, Cherry Valley, May 10



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Publisher/Editor	David C. Larson
Senior Writer/Editorial	Charles Herbst
Advertising	Bethany Staniec
Photography	Susan Moran
Office	Amanda Nelson

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

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news@boonecountyjournal.com

Each week, the Journal seeks to present a variety of voices.
Letters. Every attempt will be made to print all letters received with the exception of those that are libelous or obscene. Letters should be signed and include an ID or phone number, so that we can contact the author prior to publication to verify authenticity.
Guest columns. Community leaders are encouraged to submit guest columns consistent with our editorial guidelines for possible inclusion in the Journal.
Opinions. The opinions expressed in the Journal are those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Boone County Journal management or ownership.

Boone County 2020 Board of Review

The Boone County Board of Review will hold its opening session on Wednesday, May 27, 2020 at 9:30 A.M. in the Boone County Government Office's Board Room at 1212 Logan Ave, Belvidere, IL 61008. The members will elect a chairman and vice chairman. The Rules of the Board will be approved and non-homestead exemptions will be reviewed. The board will also sign the Certificates of Error for 2019 tax bill corrections. They will discuss any business that comes before them. If there are any questions, please contact the Boone County Assessment Office at 815-544-2958.

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Illinois Supreme Court Allows Circuits to Design Local Reopening Plans

Chief judges may implement their own plans beginning June 1

by Rebecca Anzel Capitol News Illinois

Illinois' 24 chief judges can decide when to reopen courthouses across the state to in-person proceedings, the state Supreme Court ordered Wednesday.

Each circuit is encouraged to continue holding remote hearings as frequently as possible, an extension of the highest court's previous guidance. But beginning June 1 and in consultation with local health departments, courthouses may hold jury trials, lawsuit arguments and other actions in a courtroom.

The Supreme Court's plan is independent of Gov. JB Pritzker's regional Restore Illinois plan, and gives reopening authority to the head of Illinois' 24 judicial circuits. Schedules in each district should be flexible, according to the order and guidance from chief justices, because "local conditions may change."

"The court realizes that the health crisis is not over, but we must advance justice in a safe and organized manner," Chief Justice Anne Burke said in a statement.

Restrictions implemented to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and "significant levels of backlogged cases" present an obstacle for "most courts for the foreseeable future," the Supreme Court wrote in its guidance.

In a news release, the Supreme Court said "each jurisdiction is uniquely positioned" to address those changes and other obstacles created by COVID-19. For many judicial jurisdictions, that reopening process will be "slow" and many courthouses will "immediately face" challenges.

During the pandemic, the judicial branch of government has used technology not usually embraced by the courts.

"Whatever the new 'normal' brings, a silver lining for the judicial branch is the culture shift in the effective use of video conference technology and remote work capacity," the justices wrote in the guidance.

They suggest considering having judges and attorneys exchange "sensitive documents" through encrypted email, allowing electronic signatures on paperwork and ruling on certain matters without holding oral arguments.

Strategies for in-person proceedings should be made in consultation with local health departments, according to the guidance.

Officials may recommend foot traffic patterns to ensure social distancing, place tape on floors to indicate safe distances for court visitors to stand, and evaluate where court personnel should be positioned. Judges should also limit how many people are in buildings at once.

The Supreme Court advised hand sanitizing stations and Plexiglas germ shields be in place throughout courthouses and that there be more frequent cleanings. Justices also ordered face coverings be mandatory, and entry refused to those who refuse to wear one.

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Boone County Farmland Review Committee Annual Meeting for 2021

The Boone County Farmland Review Committee will meet for the annual meeting and public hearing according to the ILLINOIS PROPERTY TAX CODE on Wednesday, May 27, 2020 at 9:00 A.M. in the Boone County Government Office's Board Room at 1212 Logan Avenue, Belvidere, IL 61008. A public hearing will be held at 9:15 A.M.

The committee annually meets to receive public input on the implementation of the farmland assessments and to certify the values per productivity index from the Illinois Department of Revenue for the assessment year. The Values are developed by the Farmland Assessment Technical Advisory Committee appointed by the Director of the Illinois Department of Revenue. The values are the same throughout the State of Illinois per soil type.

The assessed value of farmland is based on the net income to the land according to land use and soil type. The values are based on a five-year average.

The committee is responsible for certifying the values from the Illinois Department of Revenue for the 2021 assessment year.

This is a public hearing. Questions and comments are welcomed. For more information, please contact the Boone County Assessment Office at 815-544-2958.

Census Outreach 'Incredibly Stymied' by Covid-19 Pandemic

Organizers forced to adapt as in-person outreach efforts put on hold

by Jerry Nowicki Capitol News Illinois

Like everyone else, Illinois' census outreach coordinators have had to adapt to a new reality during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As drastic as this change has been for everyone, it's the same thing for us," said Marishonta Wilkerson, who was named co-director of newly-created state census office last September.

Wilkerson and fellow co-director Oswaldo Alvarez are leading Illinois' \$29 million outreach effort through their office within the Illinois Department of Human Services. Their positions were created by Gov. JB Pritzker's June executive order aimed at maximizing participation in the decennial head count.

The pair oversees a "hub and spoke" model in which funding passes through IDHS to 31 intermediary organizations that lead outreach efforts in 12 regions of the state. Those organizations partner with other community groups to target outreach at a hyperlocal level.

Thus far, Illinois has hovered in the top 10 for state self-response rate since the census portal opened on April 1. While Wilkerson and Alvarez are pleased with the high ranking, they said there is room to grow the response rate – which was

Continued on Page 4



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Census *Continued from page 3*

64.2 percent as of May 13, putting Illinois in 8th place of all states.

While good against the national average of 59.1 percent, the numbers were well below the state's 2010 final self-reporting tally of 70.5 percent. In 2000, the self-response rate in Illinois was 69 percent. Illinois outpaced the national average of 66.5 percent in 2010 and 67.4 percent in 2000.

There is still plenty of time to push this year's numbers upward, as the self-response period deadline has been extended to Oct. 31. But for organizers, one difficulty is maintaining momentum as the pandemic puts door-knocking efforts on hold and strict social distancing requirements cancel the planned pizza parties, booths at fairs and local library events while driving outreach online.

Anita Banerji, director of the Democracy Initiative of the nonprofit organization Forefront, agreed that 2020 is presenting challenges both foreseen and unforeseen. Forefront is partnered with the city of Chicago for community-based census outreach as part of the program, and Banerji said they are noticing lagging numbers in minority communities that have not had points of contact with census organizers.

She said one continued challenge is fear of a citizenship question appearing on the official questionnaire. While President Donald Trump advocated for such a question and received widespread media attention, it does not appear on the final form.

"And then everyone also thought that with us going online, that was going to be an issue, but now coupled with the pandemic, there are so many challenges to the 2020 census," she said.

While respondents can still fill out their census by phone at 844-330-2020 or by mailing back the questionnaires that are delivered to one's household, the majority of responses this year – nearly 53 percent in Illinois – have been completed online at my2020census.gov. The process generally takes about 10 minutes and can also be completed on mobile devices.

Hard-to-count communities

Organizers agree that challenges are compounded in "hard to count" communities.

Populations and geographies deemed "Hard to Count" by the U.S. Census Bureau are areas where the self-response rate in the 2010 census was 73 percent or less. Populations that have been historically undercounted include young children, immigrants, low-income households, people of color and rural residents.

Alvarez said the Illinois model puts nonprofit and other community organizations at the center of outreach in these communities.

"It's important to have them become the trusted messengers," he said, noting that nonprofits are often already making day-to-day contact with some of the hardest-to-count communities.

Education is key in the effort, organizers said, as residents need to know what they stand to lose in an undercount, what questions will or will not be on the form, and that their privacy is protected.

But strict social distancing guidelines have made that process more difficult for many local organizers.

Lynden Schuyler, director of southern Illinois census outreach through the Illinois Public Health Association, works in Illinois' southernmost 20 counties. She said the pandemic has made hard-to-count communities "even harder" in her territory, where four counties have between 28 and 51 percent of households that lack internet access.

"There are pockets where thousands and thousands and thousands of people don't have access to internet services," she said, later adding, "There's a lot of migrant population down there. I think every single one of the hard-to-count communities is there in an abundance."

She said many people are waiting for hand-

delivered census forms, especially in rural areas that have only PO boxes which do not receive the forms. The hand delivery effort has been postponed, however, and is tentatively scheduled to start again on June 13 in the region.

"You have a good majority that are still waiting on that folder," Schuyler said. "And in Hardin County, for example, you're talking 98 percent of those people don't even have their census invitation yet. So they're going to explode when that finally gets to them."

Hand delivery entails only slipping the census forms into one's mailbox or onto a door handle, meaning it is different than door-knocking efforts which require in-person contact and won't begin again until at least August, depending on the region.

Banerji said the lack of "touchpoints," or in-person contact, in minority communities in the Chicago area is creating problems as well.

"Our outreach efforts have been incredibly stymied by the pandemic," she said. "And we need to make sure that people's priorities are health and safety first."

Adapting outreach

Unsurprisingly, social media has been important to getting the word out as organizations creatively adapt to new realities.

Banerji said one organization she worked with had not used Twitter much, but realized its power when participating in a coordinated regional outreach "thunderclap" event where several organizations posted to several social media platform at a coordinated date and time to promote the census.

"So we've never utilized social media like this before," she said. "And to know that it is helping people get counted while they're home, has helped us with our outreach efforts while we're all staying at home."

Organizations have also partnered with new entities to expand internet accessibility and hotspots, she said, and they've launched promotion efforts through grocery stores and food banks among others.

In Schuyler's territory, efforts also include billboards, distributing signage in yards and at grocery stores and other creative efforts. One

of her sub-groups launched a "boredom busters" drive-thru where organizers handed bags of coloring books, other activities and census literature to parents while maintaining social distancing.

Groups also promoted social media "dance parties" and other shared virtual activities.

"We're encouraging parents to do videos about how they and the kids are doing the census and just post them on Facebook somewhere – encouraging people to try to do things together without being together," she said.

Alvarez said the census office is also partnering with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to "engage the business community to promote the 2020 census."

That includes marketing and media campaigns as well as working with essential businesses that are open during the pandemic, such as grocery stores in hard-to-count neighborhoods, to distribute posters and canvas tote bags and potentially launch advertising campaigns.

DCEO is also looking at ways target materials to gig workers and work with chambers of commerce to designate a day for workers to take 10 minutes off to complete the census once pandemic restrictions are loosened.

"I would say this is where creativity is really taking flight amongst certain organizations, and encouraging other organizations to think about doing their work differently," Banerji said. "And because we do have more months added to self-response, it's an opportunity to think about more of these concerted outreach efforts, but I will tell



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you that it's an incredible challenge."

Undercount

While the pandemic has changed nearly everything about census outreach efforts, one thing remains the same – the consequences of an undercount. Those include a potential loss of local health resources, up to two seats in Congress and other federal funding.

Wilkerson said about \$1,500 per year in federal funding is lost for each person not counted in the census, and the numbers shape federal funding for the next 10 years.

Alvarez characterized the census as "the one way we really have to twist the government's arm to represent you and invest in you."

"We all win when we're all counted," he said.

Some of the hardest-to-count communities Schuyler's organization serves have the most to lose in an undercount. Those communities are often reliant on local health departments, and a complete count is essential to ensuring they receive adequate funding.

"The census numbers are utilized by the US government to determine the government pass-through funds that go to health and well-being programs like health departments, Medicare, Medicaid, the Head Start programs, all kinds of education programs, Pell Grants, school lunches, senior programs like Meals on Wheels, and the various senior transportation systems," she said.

An undercount could affect schools, roads, bridges and other public improvements that are at least partially funded by government pass-through funds, she added.

The organizers also agreed the pandemic that has so drastically altered this year's plans is further evidence that an accurate count is needed.

"Never before has it become more apparent to me that this kind of data is necessary to be collected for emergency crises," Banerji said. "We need to know where people reside so that resources can be deployed. And without that accurate data, we're not going to be able to plan for our future, we're not going to be able to ensure that when our next pandemic hits that we've got the necessary information we need."

Third-Party Candidates Now Have Until Only July 20 to Get Needed Signatures

Judge amends earlier ruling, giving elections officials more time to ready ballots

by *Rebecca Anzel Capitol News Illinois*

Third-party candidates will have a little less extra time to get petition signatures this election cycle after a federal judge amended her earlier order last week.

Rebecca Pallmeyer, chief judge of the Northern District Federal Court, in April had extended the deadline for third-party candidates to get the required signatures to be on the Nov. 3 ballot from June 22 to Aug. 7. She also cut the number of signatures required by 90 percent.

But two weeks later, the Illinois State Board of Elections asked Pallmeyer to make the deadline earlier to give election officials enough time to have ballots ready.

On Friday, Pallmeyer reset the deadline to July 20. The elections board had asked it to be moved back to July 6. The previous order's allowances of fewer signatures and collecting signatures electronically remain in place.

The Illinois Libertarian and Green parties filed suit initially to have requirements loosened because, they said, Gov. JB Pritzker's stay-at-home and social distancing restrictions made meeting ballot eligibility requirements "practically impossible."

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After Pallmeyer's April ruling, the elections board's attorney argued in a court document that the lowered threshold of registered voters' signatures "threatens" the election by potentially including "a slew of non-serious candidates" on the November ballot.

And the 46-day deadline extension would make it difficult for state officials to finalize candidates in enough time to allow Illinois' 105 election authorities to print and mail ballots, Michael Kasper, the board's representative, added.

Attorneys for the Libertarian and Green parties as well as an independent candidate told Pallmeyer in a hearing Friday that their clients "diligently attempted to comply" with her first order and any change could make an already challenging process more difficult.

The Libertarians began developing an online portal to gather electronic signatures from voters, Oliver Hall, the parties' attorney and founder of the Center for Competitive Democracy, said.

"I don't think that there's any clear way

to address all of the concerns that have been generated by this public health emergency..." the judge said, according to a transcription. "I'm no Solomon here. We don't always get it exactly right."

She changed the petition submission due date because of the "burden" on the board of elections and local elections authorities to certify and print ballots, especially in a cycle when "there's going to be a lot more mail voting," according to a court transcription.

And Pallmeyer denied the elections board's request to raise the signatures required to 25 percent of the number prescribed by the elections code and its request to allow officials to establish their own "appropriate ballot access requirements."

The elections board argued her ruling should consider "the interest of the voters who are going to get incomplete or inaccurate ballots mailed to them if all the steps that the board has taken to finalize the ballot are not completed before they

A Public Notice is an important tool in assuring an informed citizenry; a conduit of information from the government to the public. Notices are mandated by legislatures to make sure there is a public window into the activities of governments, officers of the court and others holding a public trust. Among the most common types of public notices are: hearings, government budgets, notices of contract bids, foreclosures, probate notices, adoptions, and dissolution of marriages, name changes and assumed business names. There are four key elements to a public notice:

Independent: A public notice is published in a forum independent of the government, typically in a local newspaper.

Archivable: A public notice is archived in a secure and publicly available format.

Accessible: A public notice is capable of being accessed by all segments of society.

Verifiable: The public and the source of the notice can verify the notice was published, usually by an affidavit provided by the publisher.

Enabling an informed citizenry through newspaper public notices helped America to develop participatory democracy where it counts: where money is spent, policy is made and futures charted. Public notices by government and private parties are so tightly woven into the American fabric that many citizens may take them for granted. Located in easily found sections of the newspapers, public notices reach out to interested readers, leading them to opportunities. Voices are expressed on taxation, communities are formed around planned public improvements, and assets are saved from loss to unworthy creditors – all as a result of public notices.

Public Notice Network

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The spokesperson did not say when officials will amend the 2020 Candidate's Guide to alert those running for office of the changes.

In an emailed statement, Hall said Pallmeyer did "an excellent job" balancing both sides' interests.

"While we believe the (elections board) could and should have adhered to the August 7 deadline, we understand that Judge Pallmeyer had legitimate concerns with the impact of that deadline on the (board's) ability to print ballots on time," he said. "But for candidates who must collect more than 1,000 signatures before the new deadline of July 20, the difficulty of doing so via email and other electronic procedures remains a heavy burden."

He added Libertarians and Greens are "working hard" to meet the threshold.

Sam Cahnman, an attorney representing an independent candidate, said in a statement his client is "pleased" Pallmeyer did not "nearly triple" the signature requirement from her previous ruling as the board asked.

"While we were disappointed the signature collection period was shortened from the prior order, we are happy the court also rejected the board's request for an even earlier July 6th deadline, as gathering signatures even with the relief granted is still extremely difficult right now," he added.

created by the spread of the virus.

The economic fallout from the pandemic and associated shutdowns has led to projected state revenues for next fiscal year plummeting by billions of dollars. Pritzker said at his news conference Monday that the tax, which would be in effect for only half of the next fiscal year, could bring in more than \$1 billion in state revenues.

The ballot question

As it stands, it is up to the voters if the state's constitutional requirement of a flat income tax will be scrapped to allow higher income tax rates charged on greater levels of income. Support from a majority of those voting in the Nov. 3 election or three-fifths of those voting on the ballot question will be needed for the amendment to pass.

While it took three-fifths of each the state House and Senate to put the amendment question on the ballot, only a majority vote in each house would be needed to remove it.

"As to the likelihood of a vote being taken or a decision being made like that, I can't speak to it," Pritzker said during his Monday COVID-19 briefing. "I can only say ... that the GOP wants to keep people from voting on this, keep people away from the ballot box, says something about their lack of confidence in their position."

Pritzker has already invested millions of his estimated \$3.4-billion personal fortune to promote the ballot measure, which was one of his cornerstone campaign promises.

When asked during the videoconference Monday why voters should not be allowed to decide the measure, House Minority Leader Jim Durkin, R-Western Springs, named several other constitutional amendments that are backed by Republicans but have not advanced in the Legislature.

"Why won't we allow the voters to vote on a fair map amendment? Why won't we allow voters to vote for pension reform? Why won't we allow for any type of constitutional protection of property tax owners? How about a constitutional amendment on ethics reform? There's no balance in the state," he said. "That's why this one party has absolutely lost any type of reason or the ability to understand what is clearly at stake in Illinois government. What I just mentioned are more important to people in Illinois than to fulfill a campaign promise by the governor."

The rate structure

The current flat tax is 4.95 percent on all income earners in Illinois, but if the amendment passes, a new rate structure that has already been passed by the General Assembly will take effect in January 2021. For all but the top bracket in that proposed structure, each varying tax rate would apply to a specific margin of income.

The rates for single and joint filers would be 4.75 percent on taxable income from \$0 to \$10,000; 4.9 percent from \$10,001 to \$100,000;

Continued on Page 8

Ballot *continued from page 5*

start mailing the ballot," Kasper said Friday, according to a transcription.

Developing that suitable solution could take too much time, the judge said.

"I think getting an answer is better than waiting for the perfect answer," Pallmeyer said.

A spokesperson for the board said in a statement officials were "concerned" the later deadline "would not allow enough time for any objections." He did not specifically address officials' position on the judge's revised order.

GOP Seeks to Remove Graduated Tax Measure from Ballot

Pritzker says call shows Republicans 'lack confidence' in their position

by Jerry Nowicki Capitol News Illinois

State Republican leadership is pushing for a vote in the upcoming legislative session to remove a graduated income tax amendment question from the November general election ballot.

"Times have changed dramatically since this initiative was first put forward," Senate Minority Leader Bill Brady, R-Bloomington, said Monday in a video news conference. "But never more has our state's economy been challenged than it will be, and is today."

But Gov. JB Pritzker has said the revenues anticipated from the graduated income tax – estimated at more than \$3.5 billion in its first full fiscal year before the COVID-19 pandemic – are now more important than ever amid uncertainty

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Data *from page 7*

and 4.95 percent from \$100,001 to \$250,000 – meaning everyone earning below that amount annually will pay a modestly lower effective rate than they do under the current flat tax.

The rate is 7.75 percent for joint filers on income margins from \$250,001 to \$500,000 and for single filers from \$250,001 to \$350,000. The rate is 7.85 percent for joint income margins between \$500,001 and \$1 million and single filer margins between \$350,001 and \$750,000.

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

The structure would also increase the state's property tax credit from 5 percent to 6 percent, and create a maximum \$100 per-child tax credit for couples earning less than \$100,000 and single persons earning less than \$80,000.

It would also raise the corporate tax rate from 7 to 7.99 percent, not including an existing corporate property replacement tax of 1.5 to 2.5 percent that is not changed by the already-approved measure.

The arguments

While Republicans cited the COVID-19 pandemic as a new development necessitating new action on the amendment, the arguments on both sides remain generally the same as before the pandemic.

Chiefly, the Republican argument is that the tax rates that would become law upon the passage of the amendment are a “phony promise” from Democrats, who the GOP says will have an easier time raising taxes in the future because they will be able to vote on tax hikes for smaller portions of the public rather than an across-the-board hike which a flat tax requires. The actual vote threshold for a tax hike in the General Assembly would remain unchanged at a simple majority.

“Why should the Democrats who run the state be trusted with a check for any more revenue?” Durkin asked in the Monday video conference. “And when the revenue projections continue to fall as they already are, the same politicians will make more of their phony promises and start raising taxes... The recession caused by this pandemic will turn into a never-ending depression in Illinois with the progressive tax.”

Tax hikes, they say, will drive people from the state and hurt small businesses which are already reeling from the pandemic and associated stay-at-home orders. Income from the graduated tax, they also argue, will fluctuate more and is less reliable for budgeting purposes.

Proponents say 97 percent of Illinois taxpayers earn below \$250,000 per year and would therefore pay less in taxes under the proposed structure. The raised revenue, they say, is necessary to pay Illinois' pension obligations and continue to invest in state services.

Proponents also argue that businesses registering as pass-through S Corporations and sole proprietors making less than \$250,000 would benefit from the new rate structure with smaller tax burdens.

“The Fair Tax promises tax relief to small businesses and middle-class families,” Senate President Don Harmon, D-Oak Park, said Monday in a statement. “I don't know why in the middle of a pandemic they would try to take that option away.”


But Brady said the focus should be on making the business climate friendlier in Illinois.

“We can and will rebuild the state's economy,” he said. “But this graduated income tax threat just gives more to worry about when we need people focusing on how they can rebuild their businesses, how they can go back to work, how they can begin rebuilding the economy of this state.”

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