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# Trump Impeached Again

## Rep. Kinzinger Votes to Impeach

### Welch Becomes Speaker of Illinois House: Madigan Out

*Madigan as long leadership run ends*

by Jerry Nowicki Capitol News Illinois

One of the most transformative six-day periods in the history of Illinois government came to an end Wednesday with the election of Rep. Emanuel “Chris” Welch, D-Hillside, as the state’s House speaker – the first Black man to hold the title.

Equally groundbreaking was the fact that Welch unseated Rep. Michael Madigan, D-Chicago, the nation’s longest-serving legislative leader who had been speaker for all but two years since 1983.

Welch sought a unifying tone in his first floor speech as speaker, telling his fellow lawmakers “today will be the last time I talk about us as Democrats or Republicans.”

“We will need to work together to make difficult decisions, folks,” he said, receiving applause from Republicans. “Let’s get ready. Because we are going to have to make some difficult decisions to control spending while we protect our most vulnerable residents and while we ensure schools receive the funding that they need.”

After the floor speech, Welch said during a news conference he had not had time to digest the historic events that led to his speakership. The House adjourned its Tuesday session at 4:14 a.m. Wednesday morning and reconvened to pass a massive criminal justice reform bill and certify Welch as speaker just hours later.

The 22 members of the House Black Caucus urged him to run for speaker in a closed-door caucus Tuesday, Welch said, and he had no plans to do so before their urging.

All but one of those members – Rep. Maurice West of Rockford – had supported Madigan on the first closed-door ballot between Democrats over the weekend. In the end, they provided the backbone for Welch’s late push after Madigan suspended his campaign and Welch built a broader support coalition than three other challengers – Reps. Ann Williams, D-Chicago, Stephanie Kifowit, D-Oswego, and Kathleen Willis, D-Addison.

West rose to nominate Welch for speaker on the floor of the Bank of Springfield Center, which served as the House chamber this week amid COVID-19 concerns.

“We are walking in uncharted territories, with COVID-19 still running rampant through our communities, a major budget crisis, a (legislative) remap, all while immediately following the huge footsteps and monumental legacy of Speaker Madigan,” West said, later calling for a standing

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### Criminal Justice Reform Package Will Head to Governor

*Legislation revamps police certification, use of force and cash bail*

by Raymon Troncoso Capitol News Illinois

The Illinois Senate passed a criminal justice omnibus bill early Wednesday morning after a grueling 20 hours of politicking during Tuesday’s lame duck session. The House followed suit Wednesday morning, clearing the way for the bill to head to the governor.

The legislation is made up of several provisions that touch all facets of the criminal justice system. The Pretrial Fairness Act, a longtime passion project to end cash bail in Illinois by Sen. Robert Peters, D-Chicago, and a complete overhaul of police certification crafted by Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul were both absorbed into the omnibus package.

The legislation, an initiative of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus, was tied to a new amendment to House Bill 3653, introduced in the early-morning hours Wednesday following mostly private negotiations that stripped down many controversial provisions in the bill.

The Senate met to debate the bill shortly after 4 a.m. Wednesday before the measure passed 32-to-23 just before 5 in the morning, moving to the House floor. The House passed the measure before noon Wednesday with the minimum 60 votes needed for approval.

“Abraham Lincoln once said ‘Plant your feet in the right place and stand firm.’ We are standing firm,” Sen. Elgie Sims, a Chicago Democrat who sponsored the bill, said in his closing speech before voting began. “We are fundamentally changing the way we do criminal justice in this state.”

Many of the most debated aspects, such as ending qualified immunity for law enforcement, were reduced or removed from the bill following heavy opposition from law enforcement, labor unions, prosecutors and municipal representatives.

Points of contention were highlighted over three days of subject matter hearings in the House, where Rep. Justin Slaughter, D-Chicago, also a sponsor of the bill and chairperson of the Judiciary Criminal Committee, fielded testimony and criticism from Republicans on the committee and representatives from the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police and the Illinois Sheriffs’ Association.

Still, the scaled down version that made it to the Senate floor was attacked by Republican lawmakers who said its changes were too drastic and would negatively impact the safety of Illinois communities. Some Democratic senators joined Republicans in voting against the bill or didn’t

*Continued on Page 3*

### Boone County Health Department Calls for Volunteers and More COVID-19 Vaccine

by David Larson

Amanda Mehl, Director of the Boone County Health Department, says that qualified qualified volunteers are needed to give shots to inoculate Boone County from Covid-19. Retired nurses, doctors, pharmacists, and paramedics are a few examples that were given in an online Health Department webinar. Once the momentum increases, additional people can be trained to give shots, and, as long as supply is available, the rate of inoculation can increase.

The goal, according to Dr. James Phoenix, Boone County Health Department’s Medical Doctor, is to be at a point by June, where businesses will be able to permanently reopen and to prepare educators for the coming school year. Dr. Phoenix speculated that by mid-July, a vaccine could possibly be available for children, which would be just in time for school in the fall. Dr. Phoenix stated that, “By June, most in the county will be able to get it.” He went on to say that it all depends on supply, but there are several new vaccines coming along which should provide enough supply.

Mehl reported that, so far, Moderna is the type of vaccine that has been provided to Boone County. But it has only been in lots of a few hundred doses for phase 1A qualified individuals, who are frontline health workers and nursing home residents. She reported that this phase 1A should be completed by the end of January.

The next phase, 2A, will consist of essential workers outside of the medical field and individuals that are 65 or older. This group is much larger and will require much more vaccine and volunteers to immunize. Dr. Phoenix pointed out that it takes twice as long to vaccinate Boone County’s 54,000 residents when a booster is required, but that even with the first vaccination, immunity reaches 50% - 60% in 9 days and 90% in 14 days. Once the booster is administered, the antibody level should reach 95%. As different vaccines become available, some types of vaccine do not require a second booster shot, like the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. The expectation is that supply will be able to keep up with the vaccination rate in that phase.

Mehl explained that the vaccine, in some people, has a side effects similar to a flu shot. As a precaution when the vaccination is given, a 15-minute observation period ensures against an adverse, if unlikely reaction to the inoculation. Mehl also stated that one can not catch the virus from the vaccine, because the vaccine does not contain the virus. At this time of year, it is more

*Continued on Page 2*

## Public Servant "Loki"

A funeral ceremony for Boone County Sheriff's K9 Loki will occur on this Saturday, January 16, 2021 at 10 am. The ceremony will take place in front of the Boone County Public Safety Building, 615 North Main Street, Belvidere, Illinois. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the public is strongly encouraged not to attend. The Sheriff's Office will live stream the ceremony on its Facebook page.

At 9:15 am, a Sheriff's Police Escort Team will pick up K-9 "Loki" at the Emergency Vet Care Clinic of Rockford. The team will escort K-9 "Loki" to South University Drive, just east of Show Place 16. At 9:30 am, from South University Drive, a police procession will escort K-9 "Loki" to the Public Safety Building. The processional route will be east on Business 20, south on North State Street, east on Madison Street and north on North Main Street.

## Obituaries

Norma Bergmark 88, Garden Prairie, Dec 23  
 Goodall, Terrance "Terry", 59, Capron, Jan. 4  
 Jeffers, Bonnie, 92, Poplar Grove, January 5  
 Larson, Robert "Hal" Jr., 64, Belvidere, Jan. 6  
 Margis, James, 95, Belvidere, January 6  
 Molander, Dorothy, 92, Cherry Valley, Jan. 8  
 Nelson, Richard "Rich", 73, Belvidere, Jan. 11  
 Shanks, Mary Jane, 90, Cherry Valley, Jan. 9  
 Tackes, Myrtle, 93, Belvidere, January 4

## Quidnunc



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 Adam Kinzinger



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 Phone: (815) 544-4430 Fax: 544-4330  
[www.boonecountyjournal.com](http://www.boonecountyjournal.com)  
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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.

# Community News & Events

**Illinois Tollway Extends Popular Toll Violation Relief Program through June 30, 2021:** The Illinois Tollway is reminding drivers that they have through June 30, 2021 to take advantage of TOLLING 2020 by paying a reduced, \$3.00 fee per toll for passenger vehicles, a savings of 85 percent over the \$20.00 fines previously assessed. Visit [www.Illinoistollway.com](http://www.Illinoistollway.com) for more information.

**Medicare.gov:** As the country begins to distribute COVID-19 vaccines, there's no doubt scammers are already scheming.

Medicare covers the COVID-19 vaccine, so there will be no cost to you. If anyone asks you to share your Medicare Number or pay for access to the vaccine, you can bet it's a scam. Here's what to know:

- You can't pay to put your name on a list to get the vaccine.
- You can't pay to get early access to a vaccine.
- Don't share your personal or financial information if someone calls, texts, or emails you promising access to the vaccine for a fee.

*More Info:*

If you come across a COVID-19 vaccine scam, report it to the Federal Trade Commission or call us at 1-800-MEDICARE. And check out [CDC.gov](http://CDC.gov) for trustworthy information on the COVID-19 vaccine.

Sincerely, The Medicare Team

**Winter Parking Regulations for The Village of Cherry Valley:** Winter parking regulations will be in effect for the Village of Cherry Valley, Starting December 29, 2020 at 3 P.M.

**Vacancies of the Boone County Volunteer Boards:**

	Term Expires	Length of Term
Commissioners of the Housing Authority	January 1, 2025	(5) Year Term
	January 1, 2023	(5) Year Term
Fire Protection District #3	May 2021	Remainder of Term
	December 31, 2020	Remainder of Term
Regional Planning Commission	December 31, 2021	Remainder of Term
	June 30, 2021	(1) Year Term
Boone County Ethics Commission	June 1, 2021	Remainder of Term
	June 1, 2024	(5) Year Term
Boone County Zoning Board of Appeals	June 1, 2021	Remainder of Term
	June 1, 2024	(5) Year Term
Building Board of Appeals	June 1, 202	(5) Year Term
	February 2027	(6) Year Term

Interested parties are asked to send a letter and/or resume expressing your interest and qualifications along with your contact information to Boone County Administration Office, Administration Campus, 1212 Logan Ave., Suite 102, Belvidere,

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IL 61008 or e-mail [info@boonecountyil.org](mailto:info@boonecountyil.org).

**Time to Prune the Fruit Trees:** Let University of Illinois Extension Help you this Winter with Upcoming Webinars.

To help residents this winter, University of Illinois Extension will be offering its popular "Intro to Fruit Tree Pruning" class in a zoom-webinar format on two different dates: January 20 (12:00-1:30PM), and January 26 (6:00-7:30PM). In this online format, participants will learn the basics of pruning, tools to use, and strategies to consider for their trees

Cost for the class is \$5. For more information and to register, please visit [go.illinois.edu/IntroFruitTreePruning](http://go.illinois.edu/IntroFruitTreePruning) or call 815-235-4125.

**Food Pantry Support:** St. John's United Church of Christ Harmony will be supporting two area Food Pantries. During January, food and cash donations will be collected for the Burlington Hampshire Food Pantry. The food pantry is located in Hampshire and serves the surrounding area. During February items collected will go to MORE (Marengo Outreach Enterprises). During these challenging times all local food banks have a high demand for the help they provide. Both facilities work with Northern Illinois Food Bank to provide additional supplies.

## Vaccination

*Continued page 1*

difficult to do mass inoculations, as they must be administered indoors where social distancing and masks must be employed. In the spring, a drive through site might be established.

The State of Illinois has developed software to schedule the vaccinations. The individual would be able to pick the time and location of the inoculation. More information on that should be forthcoming.



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**Reform**

*Continued page 1*

vote at all.

“It is bold, it is transformational, it is supposed to be,” Sims said in response to challenges during Senate debate.

“The people of Illinois sent us here. They sent us here to do better by them, not by ourselves. This bill is not about who we are, it’s about the Illinois we strive to be.”

**Pretrial detention**

Effective Jan. 1, 2023, all bail bonds and conditions of bail will be replaced by a system of pretrial release to be developed by the Illinois courts based on a detainee’s alleged crime, their risk of not appearing for their court date, and the threat or danger they may pose to the community if released.

“For too long, people in this state have spent time in jail only because they could not afford to pay their bail,” Peters said in a statement released shortly after the successful Senate vote. “The end of that practice is near. I’m thrilled that ending cash bail was part of the package we passed today.”

The original version of the bill abolished cash bail effective immediately, but that was extended by two years to accommodate the transition and allow for uniform standards to be developed, according to Sims.

**Use of force**

According to the bill, the General Assembly intends to establish statewide use-of-force standards by 2022 while making changes to what are acceptable and unacceptable uses of force in Illinois statute.

The bill provides that use of force is permissible only when an officer has determined it is necessary to defend either themselves or others from bodily harm when making an arrest. When a suspect is attempting to escape, officers would not be permitted to use deadly force to stop them, unless that person cannot be apprehended at a later date and is likely to harm others.

The law prohibits certain uses of force. Chokeholds and restraints above the shoulders that can restrict breathing are banned, unless explicitly used as deadly force. It also prohibits using force as a punishment or in retaliation when it is not authorized; using non-lethal projectiles like tasers and rubber bullets on someone’s head, groin area or back; firing rubber or any type of round into a crowd; and using tear gas and pepper spray without first allowing a crowd to disperse after being warned.

Before officers can use deadly force, they must make a reasonable effort to identify themselves as law enforcement and warn that they are about to use deadly force. Law enforcement can no longer use deadly force against someone for committing a property crime, unless that crime is tied to terrorism or to another crime or action where deadly force is permitted.

Officers are also restricted from using deadly force against a person who poses a danger to themselves but does not pose an imminent threat to the officer or another person.

The police reform provisions also add two new duties to the Illinois statutes that officers must follow. The first requires law enforcement to give immediate medical assistance to an injured person, regardless of whether they were injured by the officer’s use of force. The second is the duty to intervene when another officer uses excessive force and to file a report of that incident within 5 days.

**Qualified immunity**

One of the largest changes to the bill was the gutting of a provision that would have ended qualified immunity for officers, eliminating their protection from liability in civil suits if they violated rights guaranteed in the Illinois Constitution.

Instead, the legislation creates a yearlong Task Force on Constitutional Rights and Remedies, an

18-member body that will investigate and develop procedures to protect constitutional rights and remedies should those rights be violated. The task force will specifically look at qualified immunity as enjoyed by law enforcement.

A report with policy recommendations must be submitted to the governor’s office and the General Assembly by May, with the task force being dissolved by the legislation at the start of the new year.

**Police certification**

A police certification provision backed by the attorney general’s office was also added to the bill. It gives the state more power over who can be a member of law enforcement and makes it easier to decertify and terminate the employment of problematic officers.

Before this legislation, the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board could decertify an officer only if they were convicted of a felony or a limited set of misdemeanors such as offering a bribe, prostitution or criminal sex abuse.

The criminal justice omnibus bill grants ILETSB greater discretion to decertify officers based on whether a Certification Review Board determines they violated conduct guidelines.

An officer could be decertified if it is determined they committed a felony or a disqualifying misdemeanor, even if they were never convicted or charged. Other actions that could result in an officer being decertified include using excessive force; failing to intervene when another officer uses excessive force; tampering with dashboard cameras, body cameras or evidence; and committing perjury or engaging in “unprofessional conduct” such as deceiving or harming the public.

Under a new statute of Law Enforcement Compliance Verification, all officers must verify their certification with ILETSB every three years to prove they’ve completed all mandatory trainings and have not engaged in misconduct worthy of decertification.

No law enforcement agency can hire a person who is not ILETSB certified.

The certification also overhauls transparency and communication in the criminal justice system, creating three databases maintained by ILETSB relating to officers.

The first database, which will be private, will have every law enforcement officer’s certification status, instances of misconduct and current or past status of employment in law enforcement agencies. The database will be available to the Illinois State Police, governmental agencies, law enforcement agencies, state’s attorneys and the attorney general. All law enforcement agencies would be required to use and check this database when hiring an officer.

Two other public databases would also be maintained by ILETSB, one that contains all officers, their agency, certification status and any misconduct that led to decertification; and one that contains all completed investigations of law enforcement misconduct, with the identifying information of the officers involved redacted.

**Body cameras**

Under this new legislation, the Law Enforcement Officer-Worn Body Camera Act is amended so that all law enforcement agencies must eventually use body

cameras.

The largest agencies must have body cameras in place by 2022, while all agencies, no matter how small, must have body cameras implemented by 2025.

Originally, this provision was touted as the “defund the police” bill by law enforcement groups opposing the Black Caucus legislation due to a non-compliance penalty that reduced how much state funding municipalities received for each year law enforcement agencies under their control violated the mandate.

Now, compliance is rewarded and the penalty has been removed, with ILETSB giving preference in grant funding to agencies following the mandate.

**Detainee rights**

The bill expands rights of people who are taken into custody by police. The state’s 1963 Code of Criminal Procedure is amended and modernized regarding phone calls.

Suspects in custody must be able to make three phone calls within three hours of being taken into police custody. Every time they are detained in a new location, this right is renewed for the purpose of speaking to their attorney and notifying family and friends of their situation.

The new provision also gives detainees the right to access the contact list on their cellphone to obtain numbers as part of their three phone calls, even if the cellphone is being used as evidence in a criminal investigation. This must be done before the phone is officially placed into police inventory.

Other provisions give judges more discretion to disregard mandatory minimums for certain crimes, change how prisoners are counted when drawing representative district maps and create a new process for how deaths in custody are handled.

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## Letter to The Editor

Dear Editor:

Joanne "Josie" Riley

Republican Candidate for Belvidere City Clerk

Thank you for allowing me to introduce myself.

My name is Joanne "Josie" Riley and I am excited to be your republican candidate for Belvidere City Clerk. I previously served as the Belvidere City Treasurer and I am currently the Village Clerk in Union, Illinois.

My husband of 26 years, Rodney Riley, retired as Sergeant and K9 Officer after 30 years of service on the Marengo Police Department and is currently a Court Security Officer for McHenry County and newly elected District 3 County Board Member.

Kyle, the oldest of three children, lives in Dayton, Ohio, with his wife Danielle, daughters Evelyn and Olivia and son Lucas. Kyle is a Technical Sergeant in the United States Air Force.

Hannah is a senior at Augustana College majoring in Premed and Neuroscience and minoring in Biochemistry and Violin Performance. Hannah was a 2017 Belvidere Sister City Youth Ambassador and traveled to Schwieberdingen, Germany

Jack is a senior at Belvidere High School and is the Captain of the Belvidere Fury hockey team and currently works at Belvidere Ace Hardware. Jack will be attending Bradley University in the Fall majoring in Biochemistry.

I am proud to be a resident of the City of Belvidere and proud to have raised my children in a great community.

Your support for me in the Primary election on February 23rd would be greatly appreciated. I would be honored to be your next Belvidere City Clerk!

### Speaker

*Continued page 1*

ovation for Madigan. "But I firmly believe that Welch did not choose this moment. This moment chose Welch because he has the wherewithal to convene the great minds within this caucus, so that we could tackle these issues together."

But Welch's election did not receive the backing of every Democratic member in the House. Rep. Kelly Cassidy, D-Chicago, and Lance Yednock, D-Ottawa, voted present.

Cassidy later issued a statement saying diversification of leadership in Illinois should be celebrated, but she called for a "vigorous review" into allegations against Welch that were outlined in a Chicago Tribune article in the waning hours of his run for speaker.

The Tribune cited a 2002 police report from west suburban Hillside that accused Welch of slamming an ex-girlfriend's head into a kitchen countertop numerous times after she called him "a loser." The Tribune said the woman elected not to press charges after talking it over with Welch's relative, according to the report.

Welch denied the allegations at the time, according to the Tribune report. He also issued a statement this week when confronted with the past allegation.

"This verbal argument occurred nearly two decades ago," he said in the statement. "I will be honest that I have reconciled with the individual



**Rep. Maurice West (left), D-Rockford, shaking hands with Rep. Emanuel "Chris" Welch, D-Hillside, after West nominated Welch for House speaker for the 102nd General Assembly on Wednesday at the Bank of Springfield Center. (photo Justin L. Fowler of The State Journal-Register)**

since that night. In fact, after our dispute we sought out the authorities ourselves. Their family lives in my district and are proud supporters of my public service and work."

Cassidy said in her statement she respects Welch and considers him "a good man" but she reserved her vote "because, at the same time that we're ending years of scandal over allegations of sexual harassment and corruption, we have also just been made aware of troubling allegations from Speaker Welch's past."

"He has denied each allegation, and we certainly have seen plenty of examples of Black men being wrongfully accused," she said. "I feel strongly that I have been too outspoken on issues of sexual harassment and domestic violence to simply ignore these questions."

Asked about the allegations Wednesday in a news conference after his election, Welch said he did not see a need to go beyond the statement and he respected the privacy of the individuals involved.

"And I think my life's work here in the legislature shows my respect for women," he said.

As Cassidy referenced, Madigan's decades-long vice grip on power as House speaker and Democratic Party of Illinois chairman was weakened in 2018 amid a sexual harassment scandal that led to the firing of several top aides from his administration, including his longtime chief of staff.

Madigan was further weakened last year when he was named in a court document by utility giant Commonwealth Edison. The company admitted to a yearslong bribery scheme aimed at influencing Madigan by providing jobs to his associates.

Welch and Minority Leader Jim Durkin, R-Western Springs, both made statements Wednesday that they were willing to reach across

the aisle, and they noted they live about five miles from one another.

But rifts in their relationship scratched the surface Wednesday in their floor remarks and in news conferences following the vote.

Durkin, prior to Welch's election, accused Welch of being an extension of Madigan, and he has been critical of Welch's handling of a House Special Investigating Committee into Madigan's ComEd ties. Republicans called that legislative committee after accusing Madigan of conduct unbecoming of a legislator. Welch chaired the committee, not requiring Madigan to testify and voting to end it after only three hearings in four months.

Durkin repeated again Wednesday that Welch, as chairman, "did a disservice to the

body" and called the process "an embarrassment."

While Welch thanked Madigan, Durkin, who is now the longest-serving legislative leader in Illinois having served in the post since 2013, said he did not "have anything positive to say" about Madigan, calling government institutions "better off" with him out of leadership.

Welch was more laudatory, although he later alluded to potential changes to the committee process and leadership from the previous practices of Madigan's administration.

"While our state has many problems, our schools are better, more children have access to health care, and our working class families can more easily live the American dream thanks to the strong leadership of Speaker Madigan," he said.

The new speaker and minority leader will also have to get past their disagreements with how the process played out over the previous six days in the General Assembly – Democrats frequently cut off floor debate in an effort to pass a sweeping Black Caucus agenda and other major reforms before the clock ran out and new lawmakers were seated.

"Speaker Madigan ran through a number of bills that were not well thought out," Durkin said. "Despite the statements on the floor that these issues have been around for a long time, every one of these major bills that were passed have a cost tag to them, ... and many of them were dropped on us last night without any negotiation."

Both suggested they are willing to move forward more collaboratively.

"I'm hopeful that he will see by my actions that today is a new day, a new opportunity to develop a new relationship in this space and we'll go from there," Welch said of his relationship with Durkin.

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## IDES Responds to GOP Criticisms

*Department adding staff, balancing need for prompt payment, checks on fraud*

by Tim Kirsininkas Capitol News Illinois

House Republicans continued to criticize the Pritzker administration Wednesday as the Illinois Department of Employment Support works through ongoing staffing and fraud issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since handling a historic number of unemployment assistance claims at the outset of the pandemic in March, IDES has added staff, changed processes and implemented additional measures to prevent fraudulent claims.

On Wednesday, some House Republicans continued calls for additional measures to be implemented, such as moving staff from other state departments to assist with the overload of unemployment assistance claims, implementing more anti-fraud measures and holding public hearings to discuss issues at the department.

"It is unacceptable how the governor and the department have responded to this crisis that they themselves have caused," Rep. Mike Marron, R-Fithian, said Wednesday. "It is my hope that someone at the administration cares enough to listen to our ideas and to start a dialogue."

IDES officials pushed back on criticisms offered by the Republicans Wednesday, stating that it is not possible to move employees from other state agencies without substantial training, and that many of the anti-fraud measures being proposed by the Republicans are already in use by the department.

"We are working hard to respond to an economic crisis and stand up five new, complex federal programs while battling fraudsters who have used stolen identities to file for benefits nationwide," said IDES Acting Director Kristin Richards in a statement.

Richards said the department was already short-staffed as a result of years of budget cuts which left IDES ill-equipped to handle the unprecedented number of claims last spring. The current employee head count is roughly half of what it was 10 years ago, she said.

Since the pandemic began, the department has contracted over 1,000 employees to assist in handling unemployment claims, and has been approved for an increase in staffing and resources for the current fiscal year, which is fiscal year 2021. It continues to hire more employees, she said.

It has also implemented a callback only system which allows an applicant with a question to be placed in a queue to be called back, rather than having to experience extensive waits.

"IDES was given an increased headcount for FY21, but adding full-time employees, as all state hiring does, takes time," Richards said. "This is especially true for IDES, whose employees possess a unique and complicated skillset to work on issues and deliver services to claimants."

Richards said a proposal to move employees from other state agencies would be ineffective in fixing delays.

"The legislators' call for moving state employees from one hollowed out agency to another ignores the nuance of what is involved in these jobs and positions and would create productivity deficits in the agencies from which state employees would be pulled," Richards said.

Richards said the department has worked to stabilize its operations in order to meet the needs of unemployment support applicants in a timely manner.

"The idea that IDES has disproportionate trouble processing new claims or paying out claims is misleading," Richards said. "A claimant who provides all the necessary data and submits their claim will be processed in a timely and efficient manner and will receive benefits if they are deemed eligible and continue to certify."

She said the state has also begun paying out Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation, which adds an extra \$300 per month to claims from certain individuals collecting unemployment assistance.

But the federal rush to expand unemployment assistance amid the pandemic and associated government shutdowns has led to widespread exploitation of unemployment systems across the nation, including in Illinois. In particular, a federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program which allows certain independent contractors to collect benefits has been ripe for fraud.

Richards and the administration have said the fraud is due to a nationwide scheme enabled by data breaches of private companies that have made individuals' information, such as social security numbers, available to scammers. It is not the result of a breach to state unemployment systems.

Rep. Mike Murphy, R-Springfield, called for the department to implement additional anti-fraud measures, such as a flagging system for out-of-state applicants and multiple failed claims, measures which IDES said it already has in place.

"The above-mentioned anti-fraud measures, and many others that are already in place, have the effect of slowing down the process of distributing (unemployment insurance) benefits — and that is an unavoidable and necessary thing," Richards said. "But it demonstrates the cruel irony that IDES is being simultaneously besieged by historic unemployment claims and besieged by a globally orchestrated fraud scheme, and that solutions to these problems work against each other. Legislators are telling us to hurry up and make payments but slow down and put more barriers in

place to stop fraud."

Richards said that IDES has been in routine communication with legislators and has done its best to provide timely answers to questions from lawmakers and constituents. But she said additional training and information will be necessary moving forward, citing a "misunderstanding some legislators have of IDES and unemployment insurance."

The lawmakers, however, continue to call for public hearings to discuss the department's pandemic response, rather than being reduced to input only through personal conversations with the administration.

"IDES will work with these legislators to create the first cohort of targeted training for elected state officials," Richards said.

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## Bipartisan Illinois Politicians Condemn Rioters, Trump

*Pritzker calls for Congress to remove president immediately*

by Jerry Nowicki Capitol News Illinois

Hours after rioters seeking to block the certification of President-elect Joe Biden's November election victory first began storming the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday, Gov. JB Pritzker called on Congress to impeach and remove sitting President Donald Trump.

The Associated Press reported one woman was shot and killed at the Capitol on Wednesday, and members of Congress were sent fleeing as angry Trump supporters stormed the floor of the U.S. House and Senate.

U.S. Congressman Adam Kinzinger, R-Channahon, called the scene a "coup attempt."

"The current president incited this coup and encouraged it and did little to protect the Capitol and the Constitution," Kinzinger said in a video posted on his Twitter account. "He is no longer the leader of our party. Our party must reject these treasonous acts."

Pritzker, in a statement, said, "Two weeks is too long for Donald Trump to remain in office, where he can continue to incite more untold violence."

"Because of today's events incited by the President, I had to ask the Illinois State Police and other law enforcement resources, engaged in important life-saving missions, to redeploy to heighten their presence at government buildings and the Capitol in Springfield," Pritzker added.

A small group of 75 to 100 protestors demonstrated peaceably Wednesday outside of the Illinois State Capitol, a far cry from the events in Washington, D.C.

*Continued on Page 6*

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# Public Notices

## Public Notice:

Early Voting for the February 23, 2021 Consolidated Primary Election will begin on Thursday, January 14, 2021 and end February 22, 2021. This Primary Election is City of Belvidere Mayor, City of Belvidere Clerk, Alderperson in Wards 2 and 3 and Belvidere Township Trustees. There are no Democratic candidates running for this office, so this will be a Republican Primary only. Early Voting for Boone County residents will be conducted at the Boone County Clerk's Office, 1212 Logan Ave, Suite 103, Belvidere, IL 61008. The office is open Monday through Friday, 8:30AM to 5:00PM. The office will be closed in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day on January 18, 2021 and again on February 15, 2021 in observance of President's Day. The office will also be open on Saturday, February 20, 2021 from 9:00AM to 12:00PM

For more information about Early Voting please contact the Boone County Clerk's Office at 815-544-3103.

Julie A. Bliss

Boone County Clerk & Recorder

Published in the Boone County Journal Jan 1 thru Feb 19, 2021

STATE OF ILLINOIS

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
COUNTY OF BOONE - IN PROBATE

In the Matter of the Estate of JARRETT M. POWELL, Deceased.  
No. 2020-P-73

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION-WILL AND CLAIMS

NOTICE is given of the death of Jarrett M. Powell on November 8, 2020. Letters of Office were issued to Martin Powell, Public Guardian and Administrator who is the legal representative of the estate. The attorney for the estate is Attorney Charles G. Popp, P.C., 215 South State Street, Belvidere, Illinois.

Claims against the estate may be filed on or before August 30, 2021, 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, 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 North 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 days after it has been filed.

Published in *The Boone County Journal* 1-15, 22, 29

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

NOTICE OF PUBLICATION

In The Interest of:

No. 20-JA-30

ENZO CAMACHO, minor

ISRAEL CAMACHO/ To whom it may concern/All unknown natural  
Fathers

ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Take notice that on December 3, 2020, a petition was filed under the JUVENILE COURT ACT by Atty, Tricia Smith, State's Attorney, 601 North Main Street, Belvidere, Illinois 61008, in the Circuit Court of Boone County entitled "In the Interest of Enzo Camacho, minor; and that in the County Courthouse in Belvidere, Illinois, at 1:30P.M. Central Daylight time on 02/11/2021; or as soon thereafter as this cause may be heard, an adjudicatory hearing will be held upon the petition to have the child declared to be a ward of the Court under that Act. THE COURT HAS AUTHORITY IN THE PROCEEDING TO TAKE FROM YOU THE CUSTODY AND GUARDIANSHIP OF THE MINOR, TO TERMINATE YOUR PARENTAL RIGHTS, AND TO APPOINT A GUARDIAN WITH POWER TO CONSENT TO ADOPTION, YOU MAY LOSE ALL PARENTAL RIGHTS TO YOUR CHILD. IF THE PETITION REQUESTS THE TERMINATION OF YOUR PARENTAL RIGHTS AND THE APPOINTMENT OF A GUARDIAN WITH THE POWER TO CONSENT TO ADOPTION YOU MAY LOSE ALL PARENTAL RIGHT TO THE CHILD. Unless you appear you will not be entitled to further written notices or publication notices of the proceedings in this case, including the filing of an amend petition or a motion to terminate parental rights.

Now, unless you appear at the hearing and show cause against the petition, the allegations of the petition may stand admitted as against you and each of you, and an order or judgment entered.

Dated: January 11, 2021

LINDA J. ANDERSON, Circuit Clerk

Published in *The Boone County Journal*; January 15,22,29 – C

# 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 auto and truck repair business in said County and State under the name of Snap's Auto and Truck Repair at the following post office address: 6276 Logan 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: Keith W. Beers, 815 Prospect Street, Belvidere, IL 61008; phone #779-200-2894.

Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 31st day of December, A.D. 2020

Julie Stapler, County Clerk

Published in *Boone County Journal* January 8, 15, 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 contracting engineering service design business in said County and State under the name of

A 2 Z Contract Engineering at the following post office address: 1104 Barberrry Lane, 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 Achim, 1104 Barberrry Lane, Belvidere, IL 61008; Antoniu Achim, 1104 Barberrry Lane, Belvidere, IL 61008; phone #224-678-8349

Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 12th day of January, A.D. 2021

Julie Stapler, County Clerk

Published in *Boone County Journal* January 15, 22, 29

## Bipartisan

*Continued page 5*

"As the heart of our democracy was under siege and blood was literally being spilled in our most sacred halls, Donald Trump was praising the attackers. There are real questions about what efforts the president made to protect our Congress or what obstructions he committed that has prevented the ending of the siege," Pritzker said in the statement.

Trump, in a video statement released Wednesday afternoon, urged the rioters to go home while still incorrectly maintaining the election was "stolen" by Democrats. Trump has filed several lawsuits alleging voter fraud, repeatedly being rejected by judges for lack of evidence.

Trump also praised the rioters in the video statement, calling them "very special" and telling them he loved them.

On Twitter, the social media platform began removing some of the president's tweets after he criticized Vice President Mike Pence for not being more proactive in blocking the results of the November election. Wednesday evening, Twitter placed a 12-hour block on his account, noting it would continue until certain tweets deemed a threat to public safety were removed.

Several Republican members of Congress planned to object to Biden's certification Wednesday before it was waylaid by the rioters.

But House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said the joint session would reconvene Wednesday night to certify Biden's election victory.

"There is no doubt in my mind that his efforts to encourage a coup represent high treason to this democracy, our Constitution and all Americans," Pritzker said in his statement. "He poses a danger to our nation. He must be impeached and removed from office immediately. And every person in a position of public trust, elected or otherwise, who enabled the systematic dismantling of our democratic norms and failed to speak up or take action bears some responsibility for the culmination of four years of spreading bile."

Legislative Republicans in the state also rebuked the events in Washington.

"The events unfolding at the United States Capitol today, and the inflammatory remarks by members of the Republican Party, are a disgrace to the core values and beliefs of our great nation," House Republican Leader Jim Durkin, R-Western Springs, said in a statement. "These actions do not represent our Republican Party, and are against everything we stand for as Americans. I am sickened and deeply saddened by what I have witnessed today. Any public officials who condone these actions have no place in the Republican party or in our democracy."

Dan McConchie, Senate minority leader designate, also issued a statement.

"The horrible violence at our nation's Capitol is a disgrace to all Americans," McConchie said. "This violence does not reflect the United States that generations of Americans have fought so hard to build. I stand with members of all parties in condemning these un-American acts of violence and treachery, and will do my part here in Illinois to repair the devastating divide that has been created in our country."

Senate President Don Harmon, D-Oak Park, and House Speaker Michael Madigan, D-Chicago, also issued statements condemning the rioters.

"The peaceful transition of power is a hallmark of our great democracy," Harmon said. "To disrupt that transition is an affront to the very fabric of the United States of America. The U.S. Capitol has stood strong in the face of attacks by confederates and terrorists. We will survive today's sad acts to once again be a beacon of hope, change and equality for the world."

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# Bill To End Medicaid Managed Care Advances In House

*Proposal is part of Black Caucus' health care agenda*

*by Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois*

A House committee on Monday advanced a bill that would end the system of hiring private insurance companies to manage the state's Medicaid program at the end of their current contracts and replace it with a standard fee-for-service payment system.

The bill also calls for a three-year moratorium on any hospital closures or downsizing.

However, it is expected that further amendments to the bill are being drafted, and it was unclear Monday whether a final version could be approved by both chambers of the General Assembly before the special lame duck session ends, either Tuesday or early Wednesday.

That proposal is part of a health care reform package being pushed by the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus, an agenda aimed at addressing racial and ethnic disparities in the state's health care system.

Medicaid covers more than 3 million people in Illinois, according to the latest tally by the Department of Healthcare and Family Services, and the majority of them are enrolled in a managed care program. Nearly half of those enrollees, more than 1.4 million, are children in low-income families. Another 1.1 million are working-age adults, including more than 640,000 who became eligible with the federal expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.

The idea behind managed care was to reduce costs and improve health outcomes by coordinating each person's health care – making sure they get regular checkups and follow-up visits and coordinating services between primary care providers and specialists.

But critics of the program have long argued that the insurance companies, known as managed care organizations, or MCOs, don't really save money by reducing costs but, rather, by denying claims.

"The MCOs are really managed claims organizations not managed care organizations," Tim Egan, president and CEO of Roseland Community Hospital in Chicago, said during a House Executive Committee hearing. "They deny health care claims and make money off the backs of Medicaid providers in Illinois, which is just outright wrong."

The bill, introduced as an amendment to Senate Bill 558, is sponsored by Rep. Camille Lilly, D-Chicago, a member of the ILBC.

"One of the things that I want to make sure I have the opportunity to ask the MCO organizations is, why do they think providers have signs outside of their facilities that say we accept most MCO plans and not all," Lilly said during the hearing. "And once that sign is displayed in the poor, the Black and brown community, which that's where those signs are, that means those individuals do not have access to health care within their community."

Samantha Olds Frey, CEO of the Illinois Association of Medicaid Health Plans, which represents MCOs, acknowledged that work needs to be done to address racial disparities in health care, but she said ending managed care itself would be disruptive and could result in a loss of some federal funding.

That's because the state currently levies an assessment on MCOs, which generates money that is then used to draw down additional federal dollars that are used to support reimbursement rates and help fund safety net hospitals.

"As drafted, we believe this will jeopardize billions of dollars in federal revenue, that it will destabilize the program and cause confusion during an already very confusing time for Medicaid members," she said. "And that'll eliminate the stable partnership that the health plans have been able to offer to the state throughout financial crises

and that we continue to offer to the state.”

David Gross, a senior vice president of the Illinois Health and Hospital Association, also spoke about the potential loss of federal dollars by ending managed care.

“There’s over \$3 billion that flows through the assessment program right now through the MCOs to our hospitals, including \$1.4 billion over the next two years for our safety net hospitals, who I think, as everyone knows here, face very difficult financial challenges, and many times have only a few days of cash on hand,” he said.

Gross also spoke against a provision of the bill calling for a three-year moratorium on hospital closures and capacity reductions.

“Hospitals need financial resources,” he said. “They need appropriate staffing and they need patient volume to maintain service lines in order to move forward with a functioning hospital. And forcing the hospital to stay open when they cannot afford to do so, and do not have the appropriate staff or the patient volume to maintain competencies, puts the safety of patients at risk.”

The committee voted 8-5 to advance the bill to the full House.

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## Permanent Vote-By-Mail Expansion Moves To House Floor

**GOP members say measure should require more security**

by Sarah Mansur Capitol News Illinois

The House Executive Committee advanced an election bill that would make permanent some of the expansions to mail-in voting that were passed for the 2020 general election.

The bill would require election authorities to accept mail-in ballots that were submitted without sufficient postage and allow election authorities to set up collection sites or drop-boxes that accept ballots without postage.

Lawmakers approved those measures last spring for the 2020 election in order to accommodate concerns about voting in-person during the COVID-19 pandemic. But those earlier expansions of mail-in voting expired on Jan. 1.

The bill’s sponsor, Rep. Katie Stuart, D-Edwardsville, said those vote-by-mail provisions were successful in the 2020 general election and should continue in the upcoming consolidated elections. The consolidated primary election is scheduled for Feb. 23.

“This will be permanent because our election authorities who chose to use it found it was successful,” Stuart said.

The bill would also allow local election authorities to continue the use of curbside voting during early voting or on Election Day.

It would not require local election offices to mail or email vote-by-mail ballot applications to voters who cast a ballot in previous elections. This measure was included in the previous vote-by-mail law for the 2020 general election but will not be extended.

In order for a ballot returned to a drop-box to be counted in an election, it must be returned before voting closes on Election Day.

Some Republicans on the House Executive Committee said the bill’s requirement that the state Board of Elections provide guidance, rather than rules, for securing collection sites does not go far enough to provide security.

Rep. Tim Butler, R-Springfield, who raised similar concerns about the previous vote-by-mail bill, said the bill should require the ISBE to create rules for drop-box security.

“I think this is important for election integrity, and for people to know that in this state when they drop off the ballot, that nothing is going to happen. And I think we as the Legislature need to give an executive branch agency with oversight of our elections much more clarification as to how these boxes should be built,” Butler said.

The bill, Senate Bill 145, moved to the full House floor, with Democratic committee members voting in favor and Republican members voting against it.

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## Small Business Grant Program Ends, Paying Out More Than \$275 Million

**With 50,000 total applicants, less than 20 percent received money**

by Sarah Mansur Capitol News Illinois

The grant program for small businesses owners in Illinois who suffered losses during the pandemic has run out of money.

Illinois’ Business Interruption Grant program was the largest state program of its kind, but only about 20 percent, or 8,974 applicants, received a grant.

The Illinois General Assembly created the program using federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, money. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity helped administer the program, and awarded more than \$275 million since the first round of grants were issued in August.

DCEO Director Erin Guthrie said this particular set of federal dollars has been exhausted, but the department continues to look for ways to help businesses statewide.

“We know that businesses are hurting and we wish that Congress would provide more relief,” Guthrie said in an interview Friday. “This virus has shut down so much of our economy, and that is a struggle for every person and business across our state. The other thing I would say is, we’re constantly working with our federal counterparts, with other sources in ways that we can creatively provide relief to those businesses.”

She said government money is still available for business owners through the second round of the federal Paycheck Protection Program, which awards forgivable loans, as well as existing state loan programs dedicated to small businesses, such as Advantage Illinois.

More than a third of BIG funds went to businesses downstate, 40 percent of grants were made to minority-owned businesses statewide, and more than 80 percent were made to businesses with \$1 million or less in annual revenues, according a DCEO press release.

“(Gov. JB Pritzker’s) decision to respond quickly to the virus, and also support, economically, our workers and our businesses has been key in getting this all done. That’s the big picture. It’s really coming down from the top. It’s really coming from his vision and carrying it out in an equitable way,” Guthrie said.

Although the supply of funds could not match the demand, Guthrie said the agency continued to solicit for new applications because “we knew that we would continue to get those smallest, very smallest businesses to apply who were in the hardest hit industries, and that’s exactly what happened.”

The average grant size was \$30,000, and grants ranged from \$5,000 to \$150,000.

Robert Gomez, owner of Subterranean music venue in Chicago, received funding through the BIG Grant program in mid-November after shuttering his doors in March.

Gomez said Subterranean was in a dire situation before it received a \$30,000 program grant, as he weighed the possibilities of refinancing his home, or tapping into his kids’ college funds.

Subterranean, which is in its 27th year, received federal PPP money but Gomez said he hasn’t touched the funds because his workers are not on his payroll, which is a required for loan forgiveness eligibility.

“We’ve had to rely on donations from individuals, and a gift certificate program that we put in place where people can redeem it later,” he said.

“It’s like, no, we can’t go down like this. You work so hard to build something for almost 30 years, and then get wiped out because of the pandemic. It’s so hard to wrap my mind around that. But our only alternative, my only alternative, was to fight, to get creative, to push,” Gomez said.

Having spent his BIG funds, Gomez said he plans to apply for grant money that was allocated for venue operators in the second round of federal COVID-19 stimulus funding, which was passed by Congress in December.

“Thankfully, there seems to be a federal program that is specific for venues that would be the lifeline we need. But without the BIG grant, we wouldn’t have been able to sustain ourselves without some major financial overhaul,” Gomez said.

Nearly half of all BIG funds, or more than \$133 million dollars, went to restaurants and bars, according to the DCEO release.

A recent survey from the National Restaurant Association, along with the Illinois Restaurant Association, found 58 percent of Illinois operators say it is unlikely their restaurant will be open in six months without additional relief packages from the federal government.

Pritzker’s executive order that imposed an indoor dining ban on bars and restaurants, effective Nov. 18, has been especially painful for the industry.

Pat Doerr, managing director of the Hospitality Business Association of Chicago, said the fact that the agency awarded some grants to restaurants that never stopped serving customers indoors, in violation of the program’s eligibility rules, is one of his top grievances.

For example, Fireside Grille in Sugar Grove has continued to operate indoor dining after the governor issued his executive order but was issued a \$150,000 grant.

Owners of Fireside Grille did not respond to requests for comment.

A DCEO spokesperson said the department hasn’t received a formal complaint about Fireside Grille, adding that DCEO will be reaching out to this business owner to inquire.

Guthrie said the majority of grant recipients have followed the rules.

“If they aren’t, we really try to work with grantees to get them back in compliance. And then the very last line of defense would be to potentially claw back funds,” she said.

Guthrie said the department hasn’t clawed back any grant funds so far but one grant recipient that was not in compliance voluntarily returned their funds.

Doerr said the agency also failed to communicate an applicant’s realistic chance of getting money.

“They massively oversold the program,” he said. “The ship went down, and only one in five businesses got a lifeboat. Everybody’s happy for the one in five small businesses who made it in the lifeboat.”

Matt Strauss applied for BIG funds to help his Chicago restaurant — Table, Donkey and Stick — and Danke, a Chicago sandwich shop, where he is a managing member, but was denied funds for both businesses.

**Grants** *Continued page 7*

He said his businesses have remained afloat with PPP funds, and expects they will receive a second round of federal PPP money in the coming weeks.

“The bottom line is (DCEO) should have taken applications, determined eligibility, and then distributed funds across the pool — the full universe of eligible applicants. It’s the only way to do it equitably,” he said.

“Obviously, everyone wants free money. And I wouldn’t say no, but I just know that there are thousands and thousands of businesses that are owned by people who have less than I have, and are probably going to struggle significantly because they didn’t get any funding.”

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## Economic Equity Bill Draws Scrutiny

*Legislation ranges from payday loans to lead water pipes*

by Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

As the General Assembly’s lame duck session moved into its third day, lawmakers in both chambers turned their attention to a sweeping bill aimed at narrowing economic disparities faced by Black and brown communities in Illinois.

That is one of the four pillars that make up the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus’ agenda, which has been the focus of the lame duck session thus far.

The proposed Economic Equity Act, House Bill 5871, was introduced Thursday by Rep. Sonya Harper, D-Chicago, and like many of the other bills being pushed by the ILBC, it drew general praise for its intent, but criticism over a number of specific parts.

The 334-page bill contains sections dealing with predatory lending, the use of criminal background checks in employment decisions and housing, diversity requirements in state contracting and purchasing, and the removal of lead water pipes in public water systems, something that advocates say disproportionately affects communities of color.

It also would create a new African Descent-Citizens Reparations Commission that, among other things, would be charged with developing future legislation to require corporations and other institutions to disclose any past ties to the slave trade and to negotiate financial reparations.

“This pillar is part of the Black Caucus’ agenda to end systemic racism,” Harper said of the bill. “In this pillar, we are addressing several different areas such as banking and investment, economic mobility, small business and entrepreneurship, procurement and the Business Enterprise Program, industry-specific equity, housing, land-use gentrification, and pay equity and workers’ rights.”

### Criminal backgrounds

One part of the bill, called the Employee Background Fairness Act, calls for strictly limiting the ability of employers to use a person’s criminal history to deny someone a job or take any other adverse action unless there is a “direct relationship” between the conviction and the job, or if there is a specific federal, state or local law prohibiting the employment of such a person.

It also contains similar language regarding housing in buildings under the jurisdiction of public housing authorities.

“It’s just important to note that 55 percent of Illinois adults have a criminal record, and an applicant with a record is 50 percent less likely to

get a callback for a job offer or an interview than an individual who does not,” said Matt Smith of Cabrini Green Legal Aid. “So what we see is that just routinely, people who’ve been caught up in the criminal legal system, sometimes decades prior, continue to face huge and insurmountable challenges in getting stable employment as they move forward.”

But Jay Shattuck of the Illinois Chamber said that while the business community generally supports the concept of that provision, they would prefer language that protects an employer’s right to provide a safe workplace and which is aligned with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s guidelines on the same subject.

### Predatory lending

The bill also contains provisions to put more restrictions on companies that offer small-dollar loans such as payday loans and vehicle title loans. Provisions include capping the interest rate they can charge at 36 percent, the same cap that applies under federal regulations for loans to members of the military.

Steve Brubaker, of the Illinois Small Loan Association, which represents companies that offer short-term, small-dollar loans, said that under current law, payday lenders are allowed to charge a fee of \$15.50 per \$100 borrowed for a two-week period. Capping interest rates at 36 percent, he said, would translate to just \$1.38 per \$100 borrowed, which would effectively force payday lenders out of business.

“We can’t operate at \$1.38,” he said. “We can’t pay somebody to do the paperwork on the loan at \$1.38.”

Brubaker also defended the industry, arguing that the loans they make circulate through the community because people use them to pay for emergency expenses such as plumbing repairs or funerals.

But Brent Adams of the Chicago-based Woodstock Institute, a group that advocates for fair housing and lending policies, argued that payday loans actually do the opposite because the lenders take the money back at what amounts to a 297-percent annual interest rate.

“For decades, predatory consumer loans have stripped billions, predominantly from families of color, trapping them in cycles of debt, making it impossible for them to build wealth and causing them to forego other expenses like health care and prescription drugs,” Adams said.

### Lead water pipes

Another portion of the bill would require all owners and operators of public water supply systems to conduct an inventory of lead pipes in the system and to develop a plan for replacing them.

Lead, which is toxic to the human nervous system, was once the predominant material used for water pipes. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency estimates there are more than 677,000 lead service lines throughout the state, plus nearly 380,000 copper lines that contain lead solder.

“Let me state clearly, there is no safe level of lead exposure,” said Colleen Smith, of the Illinois Environmental Council. “While not everyone has a lead service line, the existence of lead service lines impacts everyone in the state of Illinois.”

Josh Ellis of the Metropolitan Planning Council, a group that advocates for sustainable neighborhoods in Chicago, noted that 67 percent of Black and Hispanic residents in Illinois live in communities that have 95 percent of all the lead pipes. Even outside of Chicago, he said, Black and Hispanic residents are twice as likely as white residents to live in communities with lead pipes.

But Brad Cole, executive director of the Illinois Municipal League, argued that local governments that operate water utilities cannot afford to undertake such a project without financial help.

He said the language of that portion of the bill has changed several times and that even more revisions have been circulating among lawmakers, some of which would levy a fee on all water users, whether they are connected to lead service lines or not, and others that would put municipal water utilities under rate regulation by the Illinois Commerce Commission.

“We have consistently maintained that any legislatively mandated inventory or replacement of lead service lines must include an accompanying and continuous infusion of revenue to cover the costs of municipal operations and administrative costs associated with this,” Cole said.

Lawmakers heard testimony Sunday in both the House and Senate Executive Committees, no action was taken in either chamber. The lame duck session will continue through Tuesday and possibly into Wednesday before new and reelected lawmakers are sworn into office and a new legislative session begins.



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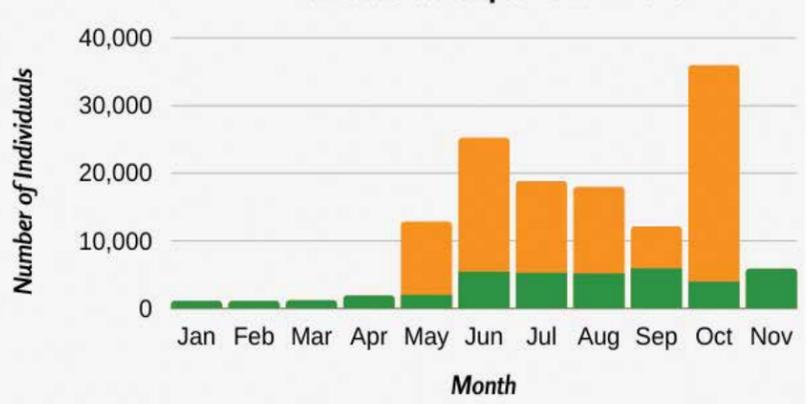
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COVID-19 RESPONSE

**BAR GRAPH KEY:**

- = Additional Saturday drive-thrus in Belvidere
- = Ongoing Tuesday hours at food pantry

**Individuals Served per Month in 2020**





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**3 STAFF**  
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