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LOCAL NEWS, OPINION & HISTORY

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A 123 Year Old Musical Note

By David Larson

J.R. Balliett was a contemporary of Alfred Love, Belvidere's violinmaker. He was also a contemporary of Allen Fuller, O.H. Wright, Barnabas Eldredge, and the infamous Stephen Hurlbut. Balliett was a multi-faceted entrepreneur, besides being a man of music. Born in 1848, He died May 28, 1944 at the age of 96. At 95 he cashed in a life insurance policy at that age of maturity, It was one of only two others insured by Equitable Life Insurance Society that had reached maturity, one of which was John D. Rockefeller. Evidence of him living in Belvidere dates back to before 1872, with his building of a barn directly behind the *Boone County Journal* office.

Balliett built a successful musical instrument business and was the most successful musical instrument dealer in Belvidere. This success allowed him to expand and invest. He also sold insurance and home decor from his store at 403 South State Street. His most notable

Continued on Page 4



Balliett Music Store at 403 South State Street in Belvidere around 1912

Foster Announces Local Project Funding Requests

(From Press Release)

Today, 11th Congressional District Congressman Bill Foster (D-IL) announced his support for Belvidere in the House Appropriations Committee's Community Project Funding (CPF) program. The Belvidere project has been submitted to the House Appropriations Committee for consideration as part of the FY2024 government spending bills.

The CPF program is a continuing initiative first introduced for FY2022. This process allows Members of Congress to request direct funding for projects that benefit the communities they represent.

Under guidelines issued by the Appropriations Committee, each Representative may request funding for up to 15 projects in their community for FY2024. Projects are restricted to a limited number of federal funding streams, and only state and local governments and eligible non-profit entities are permitted to receive funding.

In compliance with House Rules and Committee requirements, Congressman Foster has certified that he and his immediate family have no financial interest in any of the projects selected.

"During my time in Congress, it has always been one of my top priorities to ensure the Illinois communities I represent receive their fair share of federal resources. I'm proud to advocate for federal funding for these important projects that will directly benefit the residents of Illinois' 11th Congressional District," Foster said. "It wasn't easy choosing only 15 projects from the many worthy

Continued on page 4

Bill Aims to Limit Excessive School District Cash Reserves

Some districts could operate for years on money they've stashed away

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

The overall financial health of Illinois school districts has been improving in recent years, according to a recent state report, but a bill moving through the General Assembly seeks to rein in the amount of money some districts are saving.

Senate Bill 1994, which passed unanimously out of the Senate last week and now awaits action in the House, would put a cap on how much money school districts could hold in reserves. Districts that exceed it would be required to file a report with the state.

"They're kind of like a nonprofit where, you know, money comes in and resources come in, and then it needs to be spent," the bill's sponsor Sen. Meg Loughran Cappel, D-Shorewood, said during an interview. "Like, yes, you need to have savings. Yes, those are good practices. But you can't just be sitting on all this cash and then not doing anything with it."

The Illinois State Board of Education publishes a report each year measuring the financial health of all 852 school districts in the state. The report looks at several factors such as their expenditure-to-revenue ratio, short-term and long-term debt, and how many days' worth of cash on hand they keep.

ISBE uses those factors to generate an overall "financial profile" score for each district. Over the last seven years, the latest report noted, the statewide average score has risen steadily.

To receive ISBE's highest rating, districts must

Continued on Page 5

Bill Calls for Review of Teacher Licensing Standards

Task force would review use of edTPA exam

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

Some Illinois lawmakers are calling for a review of one of the tests prospective teachers must pass in order to be licensed in Illinois.

The test is known as the Teacher Performance Assessment, or "edTPA," and it is intended to determine whether a prospective teacher has the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective in the classroom. It has been a requirement for teacher licensing in Illinois since 2015.

State Sen. Tom Bennett, R-Gibson City, said he started hearing concerns about the test from people in his district, and he later learned that those concerns were shared by other lawmakers.

"And it was over and over again," he said in an interview. "I was only hearing from a few folks that thought it was the best thing since sliced bread, which, okay, but then I hear from the other side. It's like, I'm not hearing the same thing from people in my district."

Every state has its own criteria for licensing teachers and every school of education uses its own curriculum for training teachers. Developed at Stanford University, the edTPA was intended to be a standardized way of measuring an aspiring teacher's knowledge and abilities, regardless of what state they came from or which college or university they attended.

The assessment is given at the end of a prospective teacher's student teaching experience. It's a performance-based assessment that, among other things, requires applicants to submit a portfolio that includes actual lesson plans

Continued on Page 5

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Bill Requiring Schools To Teach Native American History Heads to Senate Floor

Measure passed House last month

By Nika Schoonover Capitol News Illinois

Lawmakers advanced a measure that would require public elementary and high schools to include a unit of Native American history in their social studies curriculum, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.

House Bill 1633 passed out of a Senate committee this week with a 10-3 vote after passing the House 75-32 last month. It now heads to the full Senate for consideration before it can head to Gov. JB Pritzker.

The measure also requires the State Education Equity Committee, which provides recommendations for advancing equity in education, include a representative from an organization that works for “economic, educational, and social progress for Native Americans.”

According to Andrew Johnson, executive director of the Native American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois, the lack of Native American representation on the committee was a “serious oversight” that didn’t reflect the state’s diversity.

“This is one of the many examples where the lack of proper education has deprived our citizens of discovering the full extent of the complexity, interrelations and impact of the people who originally inhabited this land and who continue to live here today,” Johnson said in committee.

While the legislation does not actually create curriculum for the history course, it does specify the unit should include Native American contributions in “government and the arts, humanities, and sciences, as well as the contributions of Native Americans to the economic, cultural, social, and political development of their own nations and of the United States.”

The bill also requires the unit of instruction to include descriptions of large urban Native American populations in Illinois and, for grades 6 through 12, a section on the genocide of and discrimination against Native Americans.

While the Illinois State Board of Education would provide instructional materials and guidelines for the development of the curriculum, each school district would be required to develop it on their own. Additionally, each school board will have to determine the minimum amount of time that qualifies as a unit of instruction.

It was sponsored in the Senate by Sen. Suzy Glowiak Hilton, who said in committee that teaching the subject matter has been “overlooked for far too long.”

Joseph Rupnick, chairman for Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, said in committee that

Native Americans experience higher suicide rates because of cultural disconnection, alienation and pressure to assimilate. He added the inclusion of their history in school curriculum may help them feel further connected to their community and history.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. suicide rate increased 33 percent from 1999 to 2017. Over the same period, the suicide rate for American Indian or Alaska Native women increased by 139 percent and 71 percent for men.


“Integrating Native history in our education system will help discriminatory myths about Native Americans in an inclusive environment free of caricatures of our families, parodies of our tradition and words that diminish our worth,” Rupnick said.

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government. It is distributed to hundreds of newspapers, radio and TV stations statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, along with major contributions from the Illinois Broadcasters Foundation and Southern Illinois Editorial Association.

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- Maureen Dolmant, 76, Poplar Grove, April 9
- Barbara Eichler, 96, Belvidere, April 10
- John Fisk, 67, Belvidere, April 9
- David Lester, 80, Harvard, April 13
- Bruce MacDonald, 89, Belvidere, April 5
- Wayne Schreiber, 78, Belvidere, April 12
- Barbara Schwebke, 84, Belvidere, April 11
- Jane Whitt, 88, Belvidere, April 10
- Stan Winn, 82, Belvidere, April 15



REAL JOURNALISM FOR A REAL DEMOCRACY

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

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

Stadelman Announces 7.3 million in Grants for Rockford and Loves Park

(From Press Release)

Nearly \$1 million in new state funding is headed to local human services providers for construction and accessibility projects that State Senator Steve Stadelman today deemed “much needed and long overdue.”

Funding is through the six-year Rebuild Illinois capital spending legislation Stadelman supported in 2019.

“For far too long, our most vulnerable citizens have not been adequately supported. The dedicated non-profits who serve them are accustomed to vying for operational funds from government,” Stadelman said. “But they have not previously had any opportunity to receive capital dollars to repair buildings and make them safe and accessible.”

- The local organizations that won grants are:
- Blackhawk Area Council, Boy Scouts of America \$148,000
 - Boys & Girls Club of Rockford \$246,458
 - Milestone, Inc. \$160,130
 - Regional Access & Mobilization Project, Inc. \$204,209
 - Supported Housing Management Corporation \$99,631
 - Youth Services Network \$89,043

Rockford, Loves Park win \$6.3 million in state funds for bike, walking paths

State Senator Steve Stadelman announced Friday that nearly \$6.3 million in Rebuild Illinois funds are headed to Rockford and Loves Park for construction of sidewalks and multi-use paths to improve safety and enhance quality of life.

The funds are part of the six-year Rebuild Illinois capital spending bill Stadelman supported in 2019 and are being awarded through the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program.

• \$3 million to construct 1.7 miles of 10-foot-wide shared-use path in northeast Rockford along the south side of Highcrest Road between Spring Creek Road and Alpine road along with a mile of bike lanes on residential streets from Alpine north to existing on-street bike lanes that lead to Rock Valley College. The project connects the 10-mile

Continued on Page 3



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Stadelman

from page 2

Rock River Path path into downtown Rockford with the Perryville Road shared-use path that stretches north Rock Cut State Park and south to Charles Street bike path.

- \$275,000 for preliminary engineering to design sections of a shared-use path to fill gaps in the existing path along the west shore of the Rock River through downtown Rockford from an existing Rails-to-Trails bridge at Race Street north to the Whitman Street bridge and meeting the southern end of the Rock River Path.

- \$3 million in Loves Park to pour sidewalks along both sides of Illinois 251 (North Second Street) and remove existing 8-foot-wide parking lanes to improve traffic flow and provide green space and traffic separation.

The three local projects were selected from among 213 applications for ITEP grants statewide. Projects were awarded based on their ability to tie into existing transportation networks along with population and poverty considerations.

Chicago to Host 2024 Democratic National Convention

City beat out Atlanta and New York after receiving support from Democratic Midwest governors

By Jerry Nowicki Capitol News Illinois

The Democratic National Committee announced this week that Chicago will host the party's 2024 presidential nominating convention.

The city beat out Atlanta and New York for the four-day convention next August after Democratic leaders in the Midwest pushed for it to be the site. It will be hosted at the city's United Center and McCormick Place.

A news release announcing the choice noted

Chicago is "an ideal backdrop" to host the nominating convention for President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. It will also highlight the importance of the Midwest as "a key voting bloc in the 2024 election," the release noted.

"Chicago is a great choice to host the 2024 Democratic National Convention," Biden said in the news release. "Democrats will gather to showcase our historic progress including building an economy from the middle out and bottom up, not from the top down. From repairing our roads and bridges, to unleashing a manufacturing boom, and creating over 12.5 million new good-paying jobs, we've already delivered so much for hard working Americans – now it's time to finish the job."

Gov. JB Pritzker was a leading force behind the push to bring the convention to Chicago, as was outgoing Mayor Lori Lightfoot. Last week, after a meeting with Mayor-elect Brandon Johnson, Pritzker said his administration has worked to relay to the DNC that "the best convention that anyone could have would be here in the city of Chicago."

He emphasized Chicago and Illinois' status as a pro-choice state that's "stood up for labor rights and workers" and taken action to ban assault weapons.

"And that's not true of some of the other competitors states," he said.

He made similar points at a news conference in Chicago Wednesday afternoon.

"Now after all, Chicago and the entire Midwest looks like America, and is the capital at the heart of the nation," Pritzker said. "Illinois is home to a bustling metropolis, a strong rural tradition, thriving suburbs, not to mention a longstanding history rooted in civil rights, and workers rights, and reproductive rights."

The convention is scheduled for August 19-22 next year. It is expected to bring tens of thousands of visitors to Chicago. The city last held the convention in 1996. "This region was critical to President Biden and vice-president Harris's 2020 victory," DNC Chair Jaime Harrison said at a news conference Wednesday. "We won big here in 2020 and it will be a part of how we win big again in 2024. This region will also give us the opportunity to showcase the Biden-Harris economic agenda that is unleashing a manufacturing boom, strengthening U.S. supply chains, creating good paying union jobs and expanding economic opportunities."

The Republican Party will host their presidential nominating convention in July, roughly 90 miles north of Chicago in Milwaukee.

Also on Tuesday, GOP Congressman Darin LaHood, of Dunlap, announced that presumed presidential hopeful and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis will be the keynote speaker at the 2023 Lincoln Day Dinner. The event hosted by the Peoria and Tazewell County Republican Central Committees will take place on Friday, May 12.

"Gov. Ron DeSantis is one of the preeminent conservative voices

in our country, fighting back against the radical left," LaHood said in a statement. "As Governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis has enabled his state to thrive because he leads with fiscal responsibility, family values, and Constitutional principles. I am honored to welcome him to this year's Peoria-Tazewell Lincoln Day Dinner and look forward to hearing him share his Florida Blueprint with Central Illinois conservatives."

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Lawmakers Consider Banning Vehicle Searches Based on Cannabis Odor, Changes to Probation

Measures would further decriminalize use of substance after its 2020 legalization

By Nika Schoonover Capitol News Illinois

Just before lawmakers went on a two-week spring break, the Illinois Senate passed two bills that would work to further decriminalize cannabis use in Illinois.

The bills – Senate Bill 125 and Senate Bill 1886 – would prevent an individual's vehicle from being searched solely based on the smell of cannabis and would allow some individuals on probation to consume cannabis or alcohol.

When Illinois legalized cannabis in 2020, it also made individuals previously charged with minor cannabis offenses eligible to have their records expunged. At the end of 2020, Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced 492,129 cannabis-related convictions had been expunged and 9,219 people with low-level cannabis convictions had been pardoned.

"It was incredibly important as we were looking to legalize this product that has clearly demonized so many communities," Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth, D-Peoria, said of the legalization law at a Tuesday news conference.

Both bills will still need approval in the House and a signature from the governor to become law.

Cannabis odor in motor vehicles

SB 125 would ensure that the smell of "burnt or raw cannabis in a motor vehicle" cannot alone be probable cause for an individual's vehicle to be searched.

"People – especially people of color – are unnecessarily pulled over far too often," Sen. Rachel Ventura, a Democrat from Joliet and lead sponsor on the bill, said of the legislation during floor debate. "The odor of cannabis alone shouldn't be one of those reasons (for their car to be searched). Cannabis is legal in Illinois and it's a pungent scent that can stick to clothes for extended periods of time."

An amendment to the bill created an age exemption, specifying that individuals under the age of 21 are still eligible to have their vehicle searched solely based on odor.

After that provision was added, the ACLU of Illinois shifted from supporting the bill to having a neutral stance on it.

Continued on Page 7



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Balliett

from page 1

investments were in the Belvidere Electric and Light Company and the Belvidere telephone utility. These were the original utility companies formed by local businessmen, which brought those utilities to Belvidere in the 19th Century. He was also an investor in the National Sewing Machine Company and a member of its board of directors into his 90s. He lived during a period of wealth building by local individuals.

Balliett's music store had almost any instrument (and a wide array of replacement and repair parts associated with almost any instrument) in stock or he knew where to find the item. This ability to serve a wide range of needs explains why the store was so popular in an age when people were making music for their enjoyment. Live music was popular and rich entertainment for families.

As a result of his ownership in the local telephone company, he took part in the transition to dial phones, which, until that time, required the assistance of a local operator to make a call. He used his store to display the new phone, similar to an Apple store displaying the newest iPhone today. The Belvidere public was invited in to make calls from it as a way to market the new technology in 1905.

Because of his association with the National Sewing Machine Company, he had his own label sewing machine. When Westinghouse brought out an attachable motor for the sewing machine, he was the local dealer. The motor would fit any older-style sewing machines where a foot pump was used to power the needle.

Balliett's had instruments that were available for children, students, or even serious professional musicians. Balliett's Music Store in the photograph shown here was shot sometime around 1910 or 1912. It was during those days that the store enjoyed its prime years of popularity. Balliett, created a space for music lessons and drama lessons on the second floor.

The *Belvidere Daily Republican* reported that he made a delivery to Manchester Township of a \$500 dollar piano, which in today's money is \$17,500. Other similar accounts were reported over the years. In 1939, he donated a pipe organ to the First Presbyterian Church, with a 1939 dollar value of \$5,000.

For those who were musically inclined, Balliett's Music Store was as regular a stop as a lumber yard would be for a builder or home handyman. If the musician played a brass instrument, they would always need to replenish their supply of valve oil, or, if they played a reed instrument, replace splintered reeds. If the musician was a pianist, or they played a string instrument, they could always use sheet music to expand their repertoire. The music store was where musicians met musicians, and as the drummer Pat O'Brien once said, "Good musicians eventually find each other."

An evening spent with the family at home was very different when Balliett's Music Store was found in downtown Belvidere. For example, the father might moisten a reed for his prized clarinet while the mother might limber her fingers to stroke the keys of their upright piano. The kids might exercise their voices to add to the melody and soon everyone would assemble in the living room for an evening of sprightly song and entertainment. Several years ago, the *Journal* did a story about the Swail family, which illustrated that lifestyle in

Belvidere. Interestingly, a very popular midwest Rock and Roll band from Belvidere, the Esquires, were members of the Swail family.

As the 20th Century matured and the nation moved from the artificial prosperity of the Roaring 20's into the Great Depression, the tastes of Belvidere residents changed. The First World War had changed them, as well as the new media. The radio was becoming a far more popular medium. It allowed people in town to stay in touch with the news of the rest of the world. A family could enjoy listening to others create music and tell jokes. The personal exploration of musical expression gradually, but not entirely, was replaced by this mass media.

Today, the world seems to be managed by the inflated media offered over cable TV and the Internet, where everything anyone could want, whether fact, fiction, or fantasy is available for the clicking. And, as it seems, one's own version of history and fact. Too bad there is today such an homage paid to such overheated media. Marshall McLuhan must be smiling, he told us this would happen.

The Depression and those horrible days were followed by days even more horrible, that embraced the rest of the world in the Second World War. Families without a man in the house, but those who were employed, had money to buy a small record player. They could buy 78-rpm records of dance bands and popular music of the day to fill the void. Families were creating less music but listening to more music. Music had a bigger audience, and the experience was shared equally by all. Many genres of music emerged. Venues like the Apollo, showing movies in color with grand musical backgrounds, left the audience in awe and inspired many of us.

After the end of World War II, families were tuning into television and evenings around a family musician's piano for a family recital had become "yesterday's news." Hidden by fancies like *Green Acres* and *Petticoat Junction*, intimacies of the past became the subject of 1960s folk music

It might be difficult to find anyone today who remembers buying a musical instrument at Balliett's or maybe even a reed, valve oil, or sheet music. But, for several decades, Balliett's Music Store provided people in this community with not only music, but, the joy of being able to create music.



Foster

from page 1

submissions we received, but I am proud of the projects selected and I look forward to working with the Appropriations Committee to deliver this important funding."

• **City of Belvidere Appleton Road Grade Separation \$2,000,000**

This funding will be used to build a grade-separation structure over two existing Union Pacific Railroad crossings along South Appleton Road in the City of Belvidere. Building these structures will allow nearby manufacturing plants to expand and will improve safety for emergency vehicles and commuters using this road.

• **McHenry County UP-NW Woodstock Rail Yard Project \$5,000,000**

This project will build a new and improved rail yard northwest of downtown Woodstock to replace existing facilities in Barrington and Crystal Lake. The new rail yard will streamline
Continued on Page 5



Illinois Department of Transportation

Virtual Public Meeting

The Illinois Department of Transportation will be conducting a virtual public meeting to receive input from the public regarding the proposed improvements of US Business Route 20 from Shaw Road through the State Street/Appleton Road intersection in Belvidere.

DATE and TIME
Thursday, May 11, 2023
5:00 PM to 6:00 PM

ONLINE – VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING

To register for the virtual public meeting, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/US20Business-Study-VPM2>

The Purpose of this meeting is for the public to refamiliarize themselves with the project since the first public information meeting and review the proposed improvements through a webinar presentation. Following the presentation there will be a question-and-answer session. Meeting materials will be posted to the project website the day of the meeting. Comments can be submitted via email, mail, or the study website. Comments received by June 15, 2023, will become part of the official outreach meeting record.

The proposed project would involve use of land at the Beaver Bluffs Conservation Area from the Boone County Conservation District and land from the Belvidere Park District within the Glenn H. Green Open Space Area. Less than one half acre of right-of-way and less than one half acre of temporary easement would be used from the 23-acre Glenn H. Green Open Space area. Less than one acre of temporary easement will be required from 79.1-acre Beaver Bluffs Conservation Area. Land is needed for the reconstruction and widening of US Business 20 and will not adversely affect the park's activities, features, or attributes that make the property eligible for Section 4(f) protection. Through publication of this notice, the Department is requesting the public's views on the proposed use of parkland and on FHWA's intent to make a Section 4(f) de minimis determination.

This meeting will be held in a virtual format with personnel from IDOT and representatives from our consultant team and will include a question-and-answer session. If you are unable to attend the virtual public meeting, you may view the materials and video on the project website after May 11th at: <https://tinyurl.com/USBusiness20Study>

Persons with a limited internet access or that require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact Steve Robery, Section Engineer, at the Illinois Department of Transportation, 819 Depot Avenue, Dixon, IL 61021 at least three (3) days prior to the meeting. The contact may be in writing, by telephone at (815)284-5510, or by e-mail at steven.

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Foster

from page 4

Metra's operations and increase storage capacity, enabling Metra to run more frequent service on the UP-NW line, including to Woodstock and McHenry County.

Upon completion of this project, Metra service to Woodstock would more than double, improving convenience for Western McHenry and Boone County riders.

Pace Electric Paratransit Buses for McHenry County \$1,000,000

Pace Suburban Bus, a public transportation agency in Northeastern Illinois, will use this funding to purchase five battery-electric paratransit buses for use in McHenry County. The new buses will encourage commuters to use public transit, reduce carbon emissions and air pollution, lower Pace's maintenance costs, and insulate the agency from fuel price volatility.

Reserves

from page 1

keep the equivalent of 180 days of operating expenditures on hand. The agency also notes that bond underwriters and financial advisers typically recommend 144 to 180 days of operating expenditures.

According to the most recent report, which includes data from the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2021, 70 percent of districts had cash reserves of between 100 and 359 days of expenses. But 197 districts, or 23 percent, had reserves of 360 to 720 days, and 10 districts had reserves greater than 720 days.

The report does not identify which districts have those large reserves.

SB 1994 would require districts to calculate their three-year average operating expenses each year and report their cash on hand. If their cash reserves ever exceed 2.5 times their annual average, they would have to submit a plan to ISBE for how they intend to spend those reserves.

Districts would not be required to spend excess reserves, but only to submit the plan detailing how they intend to do so over the next three years.

Cappel said that limit was negotiated with superintendents and other officials involved in school district budgeting who had pushed back against the original version of the bill, which would have required districts to immediately spend down any reserves beyond 250 days of operating expenses.

She noted that there are many reasons why a district might build up large reserves. Some, she said, might save up so they can pay cash for capital expenses like a new security system or to build a new elementary school. Others might be bracing themselves for the possibility that their heating or air conditioning system might go out.

"I don't want to stop any district, if they've got plans to build something that's appropriate, you know, a kindergarten building or whatever," she said. "Of course, we want you to be able to use that. So that's kind of where this came from."

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Testing

from page 1

and tests that they've administered, examples of their students' work, and other material that demonstrates their knowledge and competence.

The portfolios are then scored by teachers and teacher educators with expertise in the subjects and grade level in which the applicant is seeking a license.

Bennett said that having outside evaluators who have never met or worked with the applicant scoring their portfolios is one of the issues that concerns him about edTPA.

"They're weighing in, and their weight is pretty heavy," he said. "If they pass, great. If they don't, it's based on this evaluation from these folks that don't understand the whole situation. So that just got my attention."

Sen. Meg Loughran Cappel, D-Shorewood, a cosponsor of the bill, said she has concerns that edTPA is so rigorous and intensive that it could deter some people from ever trying to become a teacher.

"You will have someone that wants to be a math teacher, and then they get to the point where they have to do all this work for their student teaching and all this additional rigorous testing and projects," she said. "And what you end up having is, they're like, 'Why would I go through all of this and maybe not even make it, only to make \$40,000 coming out (of college) when I could stop what I'm doing right now as a junior, take a couple extra classes and become an accountant and come out making \$60,000 or \$65,000?'"

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Gov. JB Pritzker issued an executive order suspending use of the edTPA but that executive order will expire when the disaster declaration is lifted on May 11.

Bennett is the lead sponsor of Senate Bill 1488, which passed unanimously out of the Senate March 30 and now awaits action in the House. It would continue the suspension of the edTPA through Aug. 31, 2025. It would also establish a

task force to evaluate teacher performance assessment systems and make recommendations to the State Board of Education and the General Assembly by Aug. 1, 2024.

"I think this is a good time to sit back, let's review it, see what we got, and I'm very grateful for bipartisan support from a number of Republican and Democrat senators really feeling the same way," Bennett said.

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Report: Tuition Costs Skyrocketed at Public Colleges Amid 20 Years of State Disinvestment

Effective halving of state funding has contributed to strikes at universities around Illinois

By Andrew Adams Capitol News Illinois

As university faculties around Illinois strike for better pay and working conditions, budget analysts have found that state spending on higher education has fallen dramatically over the past 20 years.

When adjusted for inflation, state spending on higher education fell 46 percent between 2000 and 2023, according to a new research report from the left-leaning think tank Center for Tax and Budget Accountability.

This mirrors a less extensive data analysis from the Illinois Board of Higher Education, which found that the buying power of 2021 higher ed appropriations is 55.5 percent of what it was in 2002.

"At this point, there has been such a decline and such an underfunding of the system, (the state) has essentially disinvested itself," CTBA Associate Director for Budget and Policy Allison Flanagan told Capitol News Illinois.

In 2002, state funding accounted for approximately 72 percent of revenue for state universities, with the rest coming mostly tuition and fees. In 2021, 35.7 percent of university

Continued on Page 8

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Education*from page 5*

revenue came from the state, with 64.3 percent coming from fees, according to the report.

These effects are felt more acutely by low-income families. For families in the bottom fifth of income, tuition and fees for a 4-year public university represent at least 101 percent of that household's income, according to the report.

One of the ways Illinois has traditionally combatted inequities in higher education accessibility is through the Monetary Award Program, which gives grants to Illinois students who demonstrate financial need. But the average amount of individual MAP grants has not kept pace with tuition.

In 2003, the average MAP grant was 47.9 percent of the average tuition and fees at a four-year university. Twenty years later, the average grant could only cover 19.4 percent of the average tuition and fees.

In recent years, however, Gov. JB Pritzker's administration has increased funding for the program. In his latest proposed budget, Pritzker called for a \$100 million increase in funding, which would represent a 75 percent increase from the year Pritzker came into office. Last year, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, which administers the program, also approved a framework to increase the amount of each award.

Labor disputes

The long-term changes in state university funding have at least partially led to ongoing disputes between state universities and their professors.

As of Thursday morning, faculties at Chicago State University, Governors State University and Eastern Illinois University were all on strike. Faculty at the University of Illinois Chicago struck earlier this year.

While these strikes arose from unique negotiation breakdowns on each campus, one common theme has been university administration and faculty reckoning with a changing funding situation.

Eastern Illinois University President David Glassman released a statement Tuesday characterizing the disagreements between his administration and the union.

"That the administration has many high priorities is absolutely true and all of them are important — rewarding our outstanding employees, add staffing in vital operations' areas, rebuild campus infrastructure and keep the campus beautiful, assist our students with the high cost of a university education, and remain financially stable," Glassman said. "There are simply not enough university funds to tackle all of these areas except through balancing the amount of dollars going to each priority."

Unease about budgets is also stalling negotiations at Northeastern Illinois University. The university's administration and faculty have been bargaining since last summer.

"They're claiming that they're in such a budget crisis that they can't give us anything," NEIU's faculty union president Nancy Matthews said in an interview. "Meanwhile the last couple of years of inflation has eaten away our salaries."

NEIU faculty voted to authorize a strike earlier this week after nine months of bargaining. The faculty's membership voted 95 percent in favor of the strike, with 90 percent of members voting, according to Matthews.

"We don't want to strike, but we will," Matthews said.

Statewide union leadership has also pointed to long-term shifts in higher education funding as a driver in these strikes.

"This is what happens when you have 20 years of disinvestment in higher education," Illinois Federation of Teachers President Daniel Montgomery told Capitol News Illinois when CSU faculty went on strike last week.

Future funding changes

Funding problems have attracted the attention of state lawmakers and advocates.

"There's no doubt that universities have to contend with changing enrollment and funding," Rep. La Shawn Ford, D-Chicago, told Capitol News Illinois.

Ford, who chairs the House committee that oversees higher education appropriations, said wages and programs are among the things that universities should consider changing as their budgets shift.

"Are these programs actually paying for themselves?" Ford said.

Long-term, the state is in the process of considering a fundamental shift in how it funds higher education. In 2021, the state created the "Commission on Equitable Public University Funding," a body that will recommend a new method of funding universities.

Sarah Wasik is the lead author on the CTBA report and has been a technical advisor to the commission's work. She said the commission is working on creating a "formula" for university funding, similar in nature to the formula used for state funding of K-12 education.

"We're in a position to not only change higher education funding in the state of Illinois, but nationally," Wasik said, noting that there isn't a precedent for a funding formula in public higher education.

"I can't wait to see the findings," Ford said.

A recommendation from the commission is expected in July.

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Assault Weapons*from page 7*

from the JB for Governor campaign and another \$500,000 each from the Jay Robert Pritzker Revocable Trust. Both also received contributions from Welch's campaign committee, \$350,000 for O'Brien and \$150,000 for Rochford.

"The significance of the campaign contributions cannot be understated as often in politics, cash follows cash, especially when one considers the stake the Governor and/or Speaker were taking in the race(s)," the motion stated. "Thirty-Nine percent (39%) of Justice O'Brien's cash came from litigation stakeholders. Thirty-Six percent (36%) of Justice Rochford's cash came from litigation stakeholders."

The motion also cited a joint statement from G-PAC and Giffords PAC issued Nov. 9, the day after the election, in which the groups touted the victories of 88 "gun-safety" candidates they had endorsed in the election.

"Chief among them are victories in both contested Illinois Supreme Court races as well as a pickup in the Illinois Senate and four pickups that build the supermajority in the Illinois House," the groups said.

"G-PAC congratulates the gun safety candidates who were victorious in the general election, particularly newly elected Supreme Court Justices Elizabeth Rochford and Mary Kay O'Brien as well as Senator-elect Rachel Ventura and Representatives-elect Diane Blair-Sherlock, Nabeela Syed, Mary Beth Canty and Laura Faver Dias," they said.

In their motion, the plaintiffs' attorneys conceded that there is no Supreme Court rule specifying how a justice could be disqualified. But they did cite portions of the Illinois Code of Judicial Conduct, which states in part that, "A judge shall be disqualified in any

proceeding in which the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned."

That includes cases in which the judge has a personal bias or prejudice concerning the parties, attorneys or issues involved, as well as cases in which the judge has made public statements outside of a court proceeding that appear to commit the judge to a particular decision.

In Illinois, the decision on whether Supreme Court justices should recuse themselves from a case rests solely with the justices themselves, and both O'Brien and Rochford declined to do so.

In separate orders written by each of the two justices, O'Brien and Rochford noted that the plaintiffs did not point to any specific pledges or statements that would indicate a bias in the case. They both also argued that the contributions they had received were within the state's campaign finance limits for judicial elections.

Both justices cited a case involving now-retired Justice Lloyd Karmeier, a Republican, who was asked in 2014 to recuse himself from hearing an appeal in a \$10 billion class action lawsuit against tobacco giant Philip Morris. Plaintiffs in that case argued that Philip Morris' parent company, Altria Group, had given \$500,000 to a group that supported Karmeier.

"The claim that a judge may not hear a case because a party may have some association with a public interest group or political party that did support or may have supported the judge's candidacy has no basis in the law, would be unworkable and is contrary to the very notion of an elected judiciary," Rochford quoted Karmeier as writing at the time.

"When judges are elected, as the Illinois Constitution requires, it is inevitable (and entirely appropriate) that interest groups will support judges whose judicial philosophies they believe are most closely aligned with their own views," Rochford's quotation of Karmeier continued.

O'Brien quoted Karmeier as well, stating: "Litigants must not be permitted to create the grounds for recusal by criticizing the judge or casting sinister aspersions, nor may a party engage in 'judge-shopping' by manufacturing bias or prejudice that previously did not exist."

Lawmakers passed the ban on more than 170 types of semiautomatic firearms and high-capacity magazines during a special lame duck session in January. Gov. JB Pritzker signed it into law within hours of its passage, making Illinois the ninth state to enact such a ban.

There are currently two challenges to the law pending in state courts. The Caulkins case originated in Macon County while a separate suit filed by attorney Thomas DeVore, the 2022 Republican candidate for attorney general, originated in Effingham County.

The Supreme Court agreed to hear the Macon County case on an expedited schedule while the Effingham County case is being held "in abeyance" pending the outcome of the Macon County case.

The law is also being challenged in federal court in East St. Louis where a judge heard oral arguments last week.

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