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Daytripping Exploring the Land of Lincoln

By Charles Herbst

If you've spent any time in Illinois, then you know that Abraham Lincoln is revered here. Many historians regard him as the greatest American President, given that he saved the union and helped free millions of enslaved people. He was one of the most eloquent Presidents and one of the world's most studied figures of the Nineteenth Century.

Lincoln spent most of his adult years in Central Illinois, first at New Salem, and later as a lawyer in Springfield. One of his principal legal clients was the Illinois Central Railroad. He was married to Mary Todd and the father of four children. By every indication, Lincoln was successful and prospered in Illinois, despite his humble upbringing.

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Abraham Lincoln's Home in Springfield

Former Southeastern Illinois Police Chief Faces Federal Charges

*Prosecutors say he improperly sold
vehicles that were surrendered to the
department*

By Beth Hundsdorfer Capitol News Illinois

Phillip Brown called his motorcycle Elvira: Mistress of the Night – the custom 2000 Harley Davidson he built with flames licking the black tank and fenders, plenty of chrome and a \$5,000 motor.

That motorcycle is now at the center of a two-count federal indictment in the southern district of Illinois in November against then-Wayne City Police Chief Anson Fenton, 46, alleging he sold forfeited or surrendered items for his personal benefit.

Under Illinois law, prosecutors can initiate a process called criminal forfeiture to seize property, assets and proceeds. Forfeiture is a civil action, separate from the criminal case. To gain control of the property, prosecutors must show a judge that it was either used in the commission of the crime or purchased with the proceeds of the crime.

That's not how Brown, who said he hasn't had a driver's license since 1977 and admitted he has more than 20 driving under the influence convictions, lost Elvira. In his case, he agreed to give the bike to Wayne City Police Department as part of a plea agreement in an aggravated DUI case. A repeat offender, Brown was facing prison time.

"They had me where they wanted me. They used the legal system to screw me," Brown said.

State records show that bike's title was not transferred to Wayne City but sold outright to a private individual. Federal prosecutors allege Fenton kept the proceeds of the bike's sale.

Neither Fenton nor his attorney returned calls seeking comment.

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Pritzker Criticizes Trump's Courting of Tech CEOs, Lack of Communication

*Illinois Republicans celebrate Trump's
vision for 2nd term*

By Ben Szalinski Capitol News Illinois

A wave of executive orders and bold pronouncements of his vision for the country highlighted President Donald Trump's first day back in the White House Monday.

In Illinois, Trump's ascension back to power kicked off new frustrations for Gov. JB Pritzker, who ripped into the new president at an unrelated news conference Tuesday for a lack of communication with the states, executive actions, and who he chose to surround himself with at inaugural events.

Pritzker, whose net worth is estimated at \$3.7 billion by Forbes, is one of the 1,000 wealthiest people in the world. As one of the richest politicians in U.S. history, he largely self-funded his two campaigns for governor. But on Tuesday, he raised concerns about the prominent appearance of several large tech company CEOs at Trump's inauguration.

Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg, Apple CEO Tim Cook, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and TikTok CEO Shou Chew were among those seated behind Trump's family during Monday's festivities at the U.S. Capitol.

"These are the wealthiest people in the country who essentially Donald Trump feels better about having them around than having ordinary Americans backing him up or standing with him," Pritzker said at an unrelated news conference. "And I think it's just an indication of what this administration is really all about. It isn't about what he ran on."

Continued on page 4

Pritzker Announces The Addition of Over 5,000 Publicly Funded Preschool Seats

*Seats made available for low-income
families through 'Smart Start' program*

By Jade Aubrey Capitol News Illinois

Over 5,000 preschool seats have opened for low-income families in Illinois through Smart Start Illinois in the past year.

Smart Start Illinois is an initiative of Gov. JB Pritzker that's designed to expand publicly funded preschool programs and increase the number of preschool seats available to 80% of all working families in Illinois. Lawmakers first approved the program in 2023.

Since then, the state has added 11,000 seats.

"Every Illinois child deserves our full investment starting in their earliest years," Pritzker said in a statement. "Smart Start Illinois will put our children on the path to growth and opportunity while making our communities stronger, healthier, and more connected."

The initiative includes the Early Childhood Block Grant, which is distributed by the Illinois State Board of Education.

The block grant allocated \$32.2 million for the 2025 fiscal year to 91 grantees. That funding is serving 4,008 children in half-day preschool and 1,142 in full-day preschool, as well as providing support services for 512 children under the age of 3.

"When we educate our children, we set off a domino effect – education leads to opportunity which leads to prosperity which leads to stability," Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton said in a statement. "That's why Smart Start Illinois remains a priority in our administration."

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service that distributes state government coverage to hundreds of news outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.



**Jaiden Michael Mashburn
2005-2025**

Jaiden Michael Mashburn passed away unexpectedly on Monday, January 20, 2025, at the age of 19 in Belvidere, Illinois. He was born on November 29, 2005, to parents Jamil Locker and Jamie Mashburn in West Allis, Wisconsin.

Jaiden grew up in Waukesha originally attending HillCrest Elementary, Summit View Elementary School, Horning Middle School and Butler Middle School. After moving to Illinois, he attended Belvidere North High School where he was on the football and swim team. Jaiden went on to graduate from Lincoln Challenge

Academy in Rantoul, Illinois. After graduation he worked for Nucor Steel manufacturing rebar for roadways and bridges. He had a love for fishing and for fixing up his truck, often attending auto and truck shows when they came about. Jaiden had a great smile and will be deeply missed.

He is survived by his loving mother and stepfather Jaime (nee Raduenz) and Jeremy C. "Chad" Mashburn of Poplar Grove, Illinois; beloved father, Jamil Locker of Denver, Colorado; siblings, Nichole (Seth) Strothers, of Columbus, Mississippi, Jarin Locker, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Makayla and Adalynn Mashburn of Poplar Grove, Illinois; grandparents, Linda Mashburn of Atoka, Tennessee, Bonita Locker of Pennsylvania, and Julie Raduenz of Waukesha, Wisconsin. He is preceded in death by his grandparents George Mashburn, Steven Schultz and Michael Raduenz.

Visitation will be held on Saturday, January 25, 2025, from 1:00 p.m. until the 3:00 p.m. Funeral Service at Randle-Dable-Brisk Funeral Home, 1110 South Grand Avenue, Waukesha, Wisconsin 53186. Reverend Bruce Marggraf will preside. A Celebration of Life will be held for Jaiden on Sunday, January 26, 2025, from 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. at Candlewick Lake Rec Center, 1812 Candlewick Drive SW, Poplar Grove, Illinois. Candlewick is a gated community, so we ask that you enter off HWY 76 entrance (which is just north of dollar general) and inform the gate clerk that you are there for Jaiden Mashburn Celebration of Life.

Memorials to the family to be used for causes important to Jaiden are appreciated.



Bernard Discher, 94, Belvidere, Jan. 22
Philip Ferris II, 83, Harvard, Jan. 24



Publisher/Editor David C. Larson
Senior Writer/Editorial Charles Herbst
Photography Susan Moran

David Grimm April 1938 - Dec. 2000
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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.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The public test of the automatic tabulating equipment and program to be used at the February 25, 2025, Consolidated Primary Election will be Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 10:00AM in the Boone County Clerk's Office, 1212 Logan Avenue, Suite 103, Belvidere, Illinois. The public, press, candidates and political parties are invited to attend.

Laura Bettis
Chief Deputy Clerk

**Foster Statement on
Trump Funding Freeze**

Press Release

Today, Congressman Bill Foster (D-IL) released the following statement:

"Trump's order to indiscriminately freeze federal aid and grants is illegal, willfully ignorant, and cruel. Federal funding that provides essential assistance, like helping families heat their homes, keeping health care centers open, ensuring our kids are fed, and housing the vulnerable is now in jeopardy.

"As this was clearly another one of Trump's impulsive actions that neglects the well-being of everyday Americans, there is still a lot of uncertainty. I will continue to monitor the situation and do everything I can to ensure people in Illinois continue to receive the assistance they need."

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**'Blatantly Unlawful'
Federal Spending
Freeze Sends State
Scrambling**

Illinois among several states filing lawsuit to block freeze

*By Ben Szalinski & Peter Hancock
Capitol News Illinois*

State agencies, nonprofit organizations and a host of other entities that rely on federal funding were thrown into chaos Tuesday following the release of a White House memo that froze – at least temporarily – the distribution of all federal grants, loans and other financial assistance programs.

Late Tuesday, however, the Associated Press reported that a federal judge in Washington, D.C., issued a ruling temporarily blocking the spending freeze.

Gov. JB Pritzker accused President Donald Trump's administration of "trying to confuse the American people," but said the state is nonetheless making contingency plans should tens of billions of dollars in federal funding disappear.

"The United States Constitution clearly states that Congress has the power of the purse and sets laws to obligate federal funding for all 50 states," Pritzker said. "What Donald Trump tried to do in the last 24 hours is illegal."

The initial memo, from the White House Office of Management and Budget, was released late Monday. It directed all federal agencies to "temporarily pause" the distribution of federal financial assistance funds by 4 p.m. Tuesday in order to "provide the Administration time to review agency programs and determine the best uses of the funding for those programs consistent with the law and the President's priorities."

It quickly became unclear, however, just how far the instructions were meant to go. The initial memo indicated it was not meant to apply to Social

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Spending

from page 2

Security or Medicare payments. But the White House later clarified that it also was not intended to interrupt funding for Medicaid, SNAP benefits, aid to farmers and small businesses, Head Start, rental assistance, “and other similar programs.”

States including Illinois reported they had lost access to their Medicaid systems. But White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt later posted on social media that the website was down as part of a web outage. In a late-afternoon news conference, however, Pritzker said many programs beyond Medicaid had in fact been affected, at least for part of the day.

“Nothing that came in that memo last night would indicate that all of a sudden you’d have the systems going offline,” Pritzker said. “And yet, that’s exactly what happened because they intend — they intend — to make cuts to these programs. That’s why they went offline. Don’t let them fool you that there was some kind of website outage.”

Pritzker said he fears Illinoisians will suffer greatly with any sudden cutoff in federal funding, such as for programs that pay for critical services provided by nonprofits and health care for millions of Americans.

“This is a demonstration of cruelty against people who depend on us, working families who rely on federal assistance to pay their rent, people who need help paying their utility bills, parents who need critical programs like Head Start for quality affordable child care, and 3.5 million Illinoisans who get their health insurance through Medicaid,” Pritzker said.

Trump’s administration also hasn’t communicated with states about the freeze.

“When our agencies reached out to the federal agencies, we literally were informed that they are not to speak with us,” Pritzker said.

Pritzker said possible major spending cuts or freezes by the federal government are being kept in mind as he prepares to introduce a budget on Feb. 19, but he said it’s challenging to prepare for unknown actions by the White House.

Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul and four other Democratic attorneys general announced they would file a lawsuit in Rhode Island to block the directive from the federal Office of Management and Budget.

Raoul said the unilateral action by the Trump administration was “another blatantly unlawful action” as the U.S. Constitution delegates spending decisions to Congress.

“Congress is given the power to appropriate the

funding,” Raoul said in a news conference. “The executive branch cannot unilaterally disregard those appropriations passed by a separate and equal house of government. We will collectively fight this unconstitutional mandate.”

Federal funding plays a significant role in nearly everything state government does, including PreK-12 and higher education, Medicaid, public health services and highway maintenance.

In the last fiscal year, which ended June 30, roughly \$34.4 billion in federal funds flowed through state agencies and programs, according

Continued on page 7



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January 22, 2025 is a great day for the citizens of Belvidere, our skilled working men and women and our great nation. We can accomplish so much more when we simply work together and do what’s right.

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Mayor, City of Belvidere



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Lincoln

from page 1

ing in Indiana and Kentucky.

Given the homage paid to Lincoln after he was assassinated, it may come as a surprise that Lincoln was not a particularly popular President while he was in office. He won a four-way race for the Presidency in 1860. While President, he was frequently criticized by both the left and the right. His cabinet meetings were often stormy affairs, particularly when it came to the timing and issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Moreover, several modern-day historians have taken a more derogatory tone toward Lincoln and discussed his perceived shortcomings at length. A trip to Springfield provides some perspective.

If you have ever wanted to know more about Illinois' favorite son, it might seem difficult to know where to start. There are many monuments to Lincoln. One could spend days in the Springfield area checking out the Lincoln sites, not to mention others scattered throughout Illinois and beyond.

For a day trip, I suggest visiting three sites in Springfield. Lincoln's home, his tomb, and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum. If time permits, the Presidential Library is just across the street from the museum. Springfield is about a three-hour drive from Northern Illinois, and while



it makes for a long day, one gets a good look at the 16th President.

All three destinations are a short drive from each other. Arriving early at the Lincoln Home is advisable, as wait times for the free tour can increase as the day goes on, and, at peak times, the tours sell out.

Start at the Lincoln Tomb State Historic Site in Oak Ridge Cemetery, 1500 Monument Avenue. Lincoln's tomb is a huge granite structure, with an inside gallery containing replicas of many Lincoln statues. Lincoln, his wife and three of his four children are buried here. The grandeur of the tomb reflects the public respect for Lincoln after his assassination. Because of Lincoln's grave, this is the second-most visited cemetery in the US.

Next is the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, 426 South Seventh Street. The site, operated by the National Park Service, contains a two-block square around the home, consisting of several historic homes. Lincoln moved to this home in 1846. At the time, he was married with one son and practicing law. Initially, the home was much smaller, originally resembling the house which sits to the south across the street. Lincoln expanded the house several times, employed servants, and bought his wife a top-of-the-line stove for the kitchen. The Lincolns lived in the home until he was elected President in 1860.

The third stop is the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum at 212 North Sixth Street in Downtown Springfield. The museum is an independent state agency. Its campus consists of three buildings, the museum, library, and the original Springfield Union Station. The museum contains life size dioramas of various times in Lincoln's life. The museum's permanent exhibits are divided into two stages of the president's life, called "Journey One: The Pre-Presidential Years", and "Journey Two: The Presidential Years." Journey One feels selective in what it covers, and it seems like there are gaps in the story.

Despite being one of the most visited Presidential museum/libraries, the museum has attracted some controversy for "21st Century showmanship techniques," and been called "Six Flags Over Lincoln." The museum has been accused of allowing showmanship to trivialize the subject and collection. An example of this controversy is an exhibit discussing the election of 1860, presented by Tim Russert in a fictional, televised format.

Regardless of how you feel about the presentations, after this agenda, one will leave Springfield with a greatly expanded knowledge of Abraham Lincoln. Museum admission is \$15. Admission to the home and tomb are free. All three sites are open

Pritzker on Trump from page 1

Pritzker, who has been floated as a future presidential hopeful in the Democratic Party, reserved more specific criticism for Elon Musk, the Tesla and SpaceX CEO who Trump has tapped to lead a "Department of Government Efficiency." While speaking at Trump's rally Monday, Musk gave a gesture to the crowd that has been criticized as a Nazi salute, though the Anti-Defamation League said that is not the case. Pritzker, who is Jewish, said he was "disgusted" by the act and Trump should condemn it.

"They hope to become greater than billionaires," Pritzker said of Trump's wealthy guests. "They hope to double what they already have. That is why they're making nice. That's all I can imagine. I mean, maybe some of them have delusions of becoming dictators themselves."

In a farewell address last week, former President Joe Biden warned about a growing "oligarchy" ruling American politics.

The governor said he saw no evidence in Trump's executive orders that the president was following through on campaign promises to lower costs for Americans.

"In the flood of all the proposals that he made yesterday, there was nothing that would lower costs. In fact, he proposed tariffs on goods coming into this country from Canada and Mexico and is proposing having an entire department that's dedicated to tariffs. Well, guess who is going to pay for tariffs," Pritzker said.

Returning to a familiar line from the campaign trail, Pritzker said Democrats have delivered for families and made going to the grocery store more affordable. Pritzker signed legislation approved by the General Assembly last year that will eliminate the statewide 1% grocery tax in Illinois beginning in 2026, though local governments can impose their own grocery taxes.

Illinois Republicans expressed hope that Trump's presidency would improve costs for Americans.

"Illinois families can sigh a breath of relief knowing that the chaos and instability of the last four years is behind us, and a new reality of unity, prosperity and peace through strength begins," Illinois Republican Party Chair Kathy Salvi said in a statement. "Illinois Republicans look forward to working with President Trump to restore liberty, lower costs, and create safer communities for Illinois families."

House Republican Leader Tony McCombie, R-Savanna, echoed that sentiment in a statement.

"Together, we can deliver relief to families, bring peace to divided communities, and restore economic success by focusing on policies that get people back to work, lower the cost of living, and strengthen our nation's standing at home and abroad," McCombie said.

Pritzker argued Trump turned against the Republican Party's values when he pardoned or commuted sentences for more than 1,000 people convicted of crimes related to the Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol riot. Those covered under Trump's act include people convicted of assaulting police officers, according to the Associated Press, and leaders of white supremacy groups.

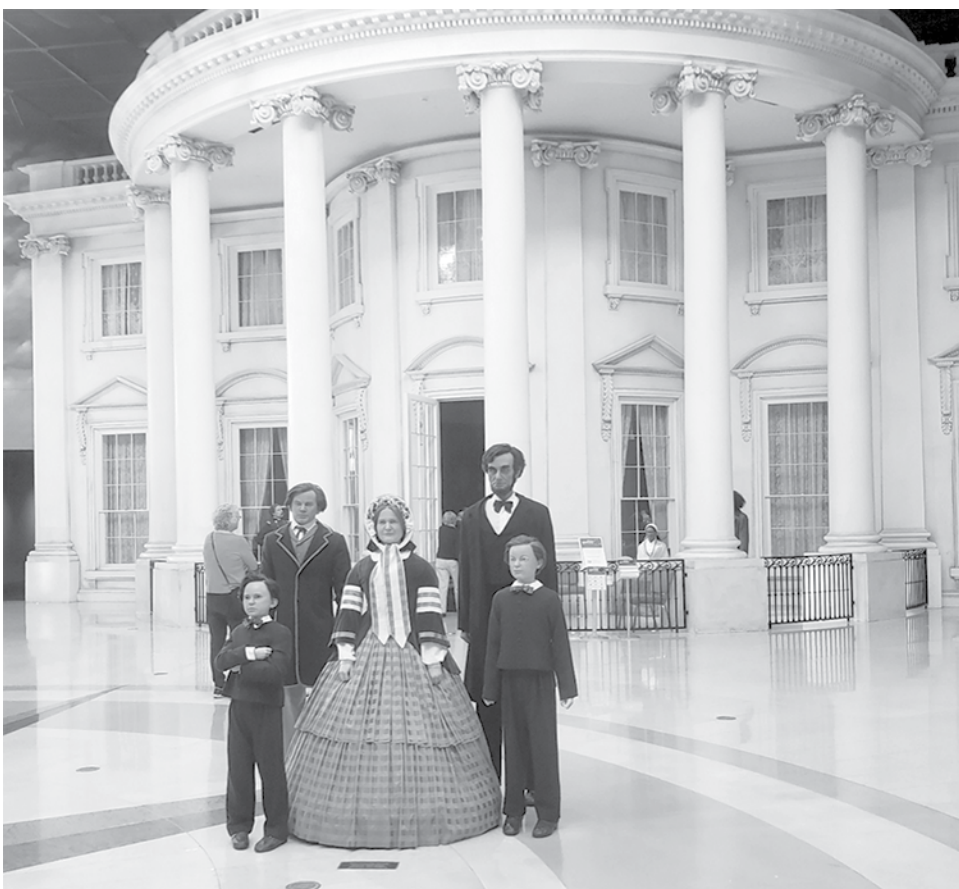
"What used to be the party of law and order is now the party of chaos and disorder, and that stands against law enforcement," Pritzker said of Republicans.

Spokespeople for McCombie and Salvi did not respond to requests for comment about the pardons and commutations.

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service that distributes state government coverage to hundreds of news outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.



**Abraham Lincoln Tomb,
Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield**
David Jones, used under Creative Commons BY 4.0



Inside Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, Springfield

Police Chief

from page 1

The surrendered vehicles

While the surrender was legal and approved by a local judge, prosecutors and defense attorneys – and ultimately agreed to by Brown – what federal prosecutors allege Fenton did with the property wasn't.

Elvira is one of three surrendered motorcycles listed in the indictment against Fenton. The others include a 2022 Suzuki Hayabusa motorcycle and a 2017 Harley Davidson. Illinois Secretary of State records show those vehicles formerly belonged to two other Wayne County men.

State records listed Christopher Cunningham as the Hayabusa's owner. Cunningham was charged in 2022 with felony aggravated fleeing and misdemeanor reckless driving but pleaded guilty to speeding 26 to 34 mph over the limit.

As part of a plea agreement, Cunningham agreed in March 2023 to give his motorcycle to the Wayne City Police Department. Cunningham died six months after the deal in a motorcycle accident.

Federal prosecutors allege that Fenton traded Cunningham's motorcycle for a 1991 Ford Mustang. State records showed that the motorcycle was titled in Virginia in 2023 and later in Maryland.

Fairfield business owner Jacob Woolever owned the 2017 Harley Davidson. In 2020, Woolever was charged with felonies of aggravated fleeing, aggravated driving under the influence, criminal damage to government property and aggravated battery to a police officer. In 2022, he pleaded guilty to fleeing a police officer, a misdemeanor.

Woolever agreed to surrender the motorcycle as part of a plea agreement in April 2022.

Fenton sold Woolever's motorcycle, according to the indictment. State records show that it was transferred to an Illinois man, then later titled in Indiana.

Woolever declined to comment.

In addition to his job as the Wayne City police chief, Fenton began working for the Wayne County Sheriff's Office in August 2016. His status with the sheriff's office isn't clear, but as part of his pre-trial release conditions, he is not allowed to carry a firearm. Sheriff Chris Otey did not return calls seeking comment.

In total, the indictment alleges Fenton received more than \$10,000 in benefits from the vehicles surrendered by Cunningham, Brown and Woolever. He is scheduled to go to trial on those charges in March.

'Financial interest for prosecutors'

While prosecutors contend that Fenton's alleged crimes are a violation of the law, advocates for reforming criminal forfeiture laws say the way forfeiture laws are written makes them ripe for exploitation.

In Illinois, the link between the crime and the property can be very loose in forfeiture cases, said Ed Yohnka, spokesperson for the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois. Prosecutors alleged the vehicles surrendered in these three cases were used in the commission of crimes, but instead of filing a civil action to take possession of the vehicles, prosecutors opted to have defendants surrender them as part of a plea bargain.

Former Wayne County State's Attorney Kevin Kakac, who was the prosecutor when the three defendants made their deals, responded in 2021 to written questions from a Capitol News Illinois reporter who was looking into forfeitures in the county, including Brown's motorcycle, three years before the federal indictment.

Brown surrendered vehicles as part of a deal that disposed of his criminal cases, Kakac wrote in the email. He described the deal as a "bargain for exchange." Kakac retired as Wayne County state's attorney in November.

Wayne County Judge Michael Molt, who approved the deal, retired in November.

Kyle Ellis, who was appointed to replace Kakac, provided copies of the plea agreements that show Cunningham, Brown and Woolever signed over their vehicles, but he did not answer whether he would continue the practice during his tenure.

This process is legal in Illinois, but Yohnka said the ACLU finds it concerning.

"This practice creates a financial interest for prosecutors and law enforcement in the criminal case that does not otherwise exist," Yohnka said.

Vehicles seized by a court order must be used by a law enforcement entity for operational purposes or sold to fund them. A defendant has 28 days to appeal a forfeiture in a criminal case.

But the fate of surrendered vehicles is murkier. Unlike forfeited vehicles, they aren't reported to the Illinois State Police and there is no established legal remedy to regain the property without reinstating the criminal charges.

"Unlike civil forfeitures, these kinds of forfeitures can't be appealed. There's no process for it without undoing the entire plea agreement," Yohnka said.

Brown said he didn't want to serve a long sentence and said he felt pressured to take the deal offered by the prosecutors. Part of that deal included the surrender of his beloved Elvira and a 1997 Mercedes with 62,000 miles.

They brought him the titles to sign while he was sitting in the Wayne County Jail, Brown said. State records showed the car's ownership was transferred to the Wayne County Sheriff's Office in March 2021.

It took three years for Brown's Mercedes to be auctioned, records show. It happened just after he was released from prison. Brown is friends with the man who bought it and has seen it parked in his driveway.

Elvira was transferred to a third party, then sold and titled in Indiana.

Brown doesn't expect to see the bike again, though on Elvira's rear fender, Brown painted a message in orange flames that he hopes one day will come true: "CU L8TER."

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service that distributes state government coverage to hundreds of news outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

McClain Lawyer Calls Star Witnesses Liars as Trial Nears Conclusion

Jury slated to begin deliberations late Wednesday after 3 months of trial

By Hannah Meisel Capitol News Illinois

Jurors hearing former Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan's trial are finally scheduled to begin deliberations Wednesday afternoon more than three months after testimony in the case began.

But one day before the government began its final rebuttal, a lawyer for Madigan's co-defendant, longtime Statehouse lobbyist Mike McClain, urged the jury on Tuesday not to fill in what he called "holes" in the feds' case with suspicion or speculation. Instead, McClain attorney Pat Cotter asked jurors to consider his client's motivations through the lens of McClain's decadeslong friendship with Madigan.

"Did this very real, very unique – and I would submit to you based on the overall evidence in this case – very decent human being ... intend to bribe someone he considered one of his closest friends?" Cotter asked. "If there's a doubt in your mind, then I suppose you'll have your verdict."

What the jury doesn't know is that McClain, who'd for years been electric utility Commonwealth Edison's lead external lobbyist in Springfield, has already been convicted of bribing Madigan in the related "ComEd Four" trial in 2023. In both cases, prosecutors allege the bribes – in the form of jobs and contracts for Madigan allies – greased the wheels for the passage of a few big ComEd-backed laws beginning in 2011.

The jury did briefly hear testimony in November that McClain's three alleged co-conspirators were charged but was not told of their ultimate convictions while they heard details of the five no-work contracts given to Madigan allies, along with those who did perform legitimate work for ComEd.

Between the ComEd Four verdict and the beginning of the current trial, the U.S. Supreme Court narrowed its interpretation of the federal bribery statute, emphasizing that there must be a quid pro quo agreement in place before an elected official takes "official action."

The justices also indicated a defendant had

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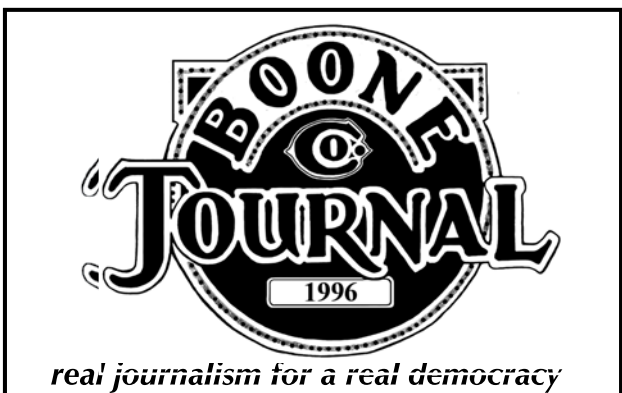
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LEGAL NOTICES

Early Voting Hours

Early Voting for the February 25, 2025, Consolidated Primary Election will begin on Thursday, January 16, 2025, and end Monday, February 24, 2025. 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 also be open on Saturday, February 22, 2025, from 9:00AM to 12:00PM. Please note: The office will be closed on Monday, February 17, 2025, in observance of President's Day.

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

Laura Bettis
Chief Deputy Clerk

Published in The Boone County Journal Jan 9 thru Feb 20th

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COUNTY OF BOONE
In the Matter of: HENRY K. SKRZYPCZAK, Deceased.
2024-PR-40

CLAIM NOTICE

Notice is given of the death of HENRY K. SKRZYPCZAK of Belvidere, Illinois. Letters of Office were issued on September 12, 2024 to CECILIA SKRZYPCZAK, as Independent Administrator whose attorneys are WILLIAMS MCCARTHY LLP, 120 W. State St., P.O. Box 219, Rockford, IL 61105.

The estate will be administered without court supervision, unless under Section 28-4 of the Probate Act (755 ILCS 5/28-4) any interested person terminates independent administration at any time by mailing or delivering a petition to terminate to the Clerk.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the office of the Clerk of the Court, Boone County Courthouse, 601 N. Main Street, Belvidere, IL 61008 or with the representative, or both, on or before July 16, 2025, or within 3 months from the date of mailing or delivery of notice to creditors, if mailing or delivery is required by Section 18-3 of the Probate Act, whichever date is later. Any claim not filed by the requisite date stated above is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.

CECILIA SKRZYPCZAK
Independent Administrator

Published in The Boone County Journal 1/16, 1/23, 1/30, 2025

**Boone County Housing Authority Project Based Vouchers
Award Request for Proposals (RFP)**

The Boone County Housing Authority (BCHA) announces the availability of up to 4 Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers (PBV) for rehabilitation and/or new constructed housing units within Boone County. Applications in response to this Request for proposal must be consistent with the established Request for Proposals (RFP) and in compliance with government rules and regulations. The RFP may be obtained by contacting the Boone County Housing Authority attention: Alan Zais via email: AZais@Wchauthority.com. Applications will be accepted until 4:00 pm on March 10, 2025.

Published in The Boone County Journal Jan 16th, 23th, and 30th, 2025

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

GMFS LLC, Plaintiff,
vs. CASE NO. 2024FC72
KATHY CORTES A.K.A. KATHY BRITO; UNKNOWN OWNERS
AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS; Defendant(s).
Property Address: 705 Union Ave. Belvidere, IL 61008
NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

The requisite affidavit for publication having been filed, notice is hereby given you, KATHY CORTES A.K.A. KATHY BRITO; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS; , defendants in the above entitled cause, that suit has been commenced against you and other defendants in the Circuit Court for the Judicial Circuit by said plaintiff praying for the foreclosure of a certain mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to wit:

LOT ONE (1) IN BLOCK ONE (1) OF HOLLISTER AND KINGS ADDITION TO THE CITY OF BELVIDERE, AS PLATTED AND RECORDED IN THE RECORDER'S OFFICE OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS IN BOOK 47 OF DEEDS ON PAGE 518; SITUATED IN THE COUNTY OF BOONE AND STATE OF ILLINOIS.
P.I.N.: 05-35-231-025

Said property is commonly known as 705 Union Ave., Belvidere, IL 61008 and which said mortgage(s) was/were made and recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds as Document Number 2024R01596 , and for other relief; that Summons was duly issued out of the above Court against you as provided by law and that said suit is now pending.

NOW THEREFORE, unless you, the said above named defendants, file your answer to the complaint in the said suit or otherwise make your appearance therein, in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at Boone County on or before FEBRUARY 24, 2025, a default may be taken against you at any time after that date and a Judgment entered in accordance with the prayer of said complaint. E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit www.illinoiscourts.gov/FAQ/gethelp.asp.

YOU MAY BE ABLE TO SAVE YOUR HOME – DO NOT IGNORE THIS DOCUMENT. By order of the Chief Judge of the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit, this case is subject to Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program. For further information on the mediation process, please see the NOTICE OF MANDATORY MEDIATION on file with the Clerk of the Circuit Court by contacting the Plaintiff's attorney at the address listed below.

This communication is an attempt to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose.

Diaz Anselmo & Associates, LLC
Attorneys for Plaintiff
1771 West Diehl Road, Suite 120
Naperville, IL 60563
Telephone: (630) 453-6960
Facsimile: (630) 428-4620
Attorney No. Cook 64727, DuPage 293191
Service E-mail: midwestpleadings@dallegal.com
6088-949597

Published in The Boone County Journal Jan/23, 30. Feb 6, 2025

Tina Coats
306 Greenview Road
Belvidere, IL 61008
Date of Notice: January 16, 2025

You are notified that Greenview Estates has declared that a certain mobile home 1979 Victorian, Vin# 1V7014FFR24835 located at 306 Greenview Road Belvidere IL 61008 is an abandoned mobile home within the meaning of the Abandoned Mobile Home Act. Unless all delinquent monies owed \$9969.09 are paid and electric and water service restored to this mobile home within 30 days of the date of this notice, Greenview Estates shall remove and dispose of the mobile home, and it shall be disposed of or sold at public auction free and clear of any existing liens.

If you have any questions regarding this notice, you should contact the following person.

Lainey Hills
Greenview Estates
3901 Newburg Road
Belvidere, IL 61008
815.547.6221

Published in The Boone County Journal Jan16, 23, 30 2025

John and Yvette Knighton
2340 Sunrise Drive
Belvidere, IL 61008
Date of Notice: January 16, 2025

You are notified that Four Seasons Mobile Home Park has declared that a certain mobile home 2000 Schult, Vin# 296585 located at 2340 Sunrise Drive Belvidere IL 61008 is an abandoned mobile home within the meaning of the Abandoned Mobile Home Act. Unless all delinquent monies owed \$7808.93 are paid and electric and water service restored to this mobile home within 30 days of the date of this notice, Four Seasons Mobile Home Park shall remove and dispose of the mobile home, and it shall be disposed of or sold at public auction free and clear of any existing liens.

If you have any questions regarding this notice, you should contact the following person.

Stephanie Luna
Four Seasons Mobile Home Park
700 W Chrysler Drive
Belvidere, IL 61008
815.547.5343

Published in The Boone County Journal Jan16, 23, 30 2025

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

GMFS LLC, Plaintiff,
vs. CASE NO. 2024FC72
KATHY CORTES A.K.A. KATHY BRITO; UNKNOWN OWNERS
AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS; Defendant(s).
Property Address: 705 Union Ave. Belvidere, IL 61008
NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

The requisite affidavit for publication having been filed, notice is hereby given you, KATHY CORTES A.K.A. KATHY BRITO; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS; , defendants in the above entitled cause, that suit has been commenced against you and other defendants in the Circuit Court for the Judicial Circuit by said plaintiff praying for the foreclosure of a certain mortgage conveying the premises described as follows, to wit:

LOT ONE (1) IN BLOCK ONE (1) OF HOLLISTER AND KINGS ADDITION TO THE CITY OF BELVIDERE, AS PLATTED AND RECORDED IN THE RECORDER'S OFFICE OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS IN BOOK 47 OF DEEDS ON PAGE 518; SITUATED IN THE COUNTY OF BOONE AND STATE OF ILLINOIS.
P.I.N.: 05-35-231-025

Said property is commonly known as 705 Union Ave., Belvidere, IL 61008 and which said mortgage(s) was/were made and recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds as Document Number 2024R01596 , and for other relief; that Summons was duly issued out of the above Court against you as provided by law and that said suit is now pending.

NOW THEREFORE, unless you, the said above named defendants, file your answer to the complaint in the said suit or otherwise make your appearance therein, in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at Boone County on or before FEBRUARY 24, 2025, a default may be taken against you at any time after that date and a Judgment entered in accordance with the prayer of said complaint. E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit www.illinoiscourts.gov/FAQ/gethelp.asp.

YOU MAY BE ABLE TO SAVE YOUR HOME – DO NOT IGNORE THIS DOCUMENT. By order of the Chief Judge of the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit, this case is subject to Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program. For further information on the mediation process, please see the NOTICE OF MANDATORY MEDIATION on file with the Clerk of the Circuit Court by contacting the Plaintiff's attorney at the address listed below.

This communication is an attempt to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose.

Diaz Anselmo & Associates, LLC
Attorneys for Plaintiff
1771 West Diehl Road, Suite 120
Naperville, IL 60563
Telephone: (630) 453-6960
Facsimile: (630) 428-4620
Attorney No. Cook 64727, DuPage 293191
Service E-mail: midwestpleadings@dallegal.com
6088-949597

Published in The Boone County Journal Jan 23, 30, Feb 6, 2025 SW

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING BOONE COUNTY BOARD

Notice is hereby given that the Boone County Board will hold a public hearing on Thursday, February 20, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. in the County Board Room, 1212 Logan Ave, Belvidere, IL 61008 for the following consideration:

Amending Section 506 (Impact Fee Ordinance) of APPENDIX B Boone County Subdivision Regulations
Karl Johnson, Chair, Boone County Board
Published in the Boone County Journal on January 30th, 2025.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The public test of the automatic tabulating equipment and program to be used at the February 25, 2025, Consolidated Primary Election will be Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 10:00AM in the Boone County Clerk's Office, 1212 Logan Avenue, Suite 103, Belvidere, Illinois. The public, press, candidates and political parties are invited to attend.

Laura Bettis
Chief Deputy Clerk

Published in The Boone County Journal Jan 30, Feb 2025

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS
CIVIL DEPARTMENT
GPM Midwest, LLC, a Delaware limited liability company, Plaintiff,
v. Case No. 2024EV97
GNP4, Inc., an Illinois corporation, and
ALL UNKNOWN OCCUPANTS, Defendant.

NOTICE OF SERVICE BY PUBLICATION

The requisite affidavit for publication having been filed, notice is hereby given you, GNP4, Inc., and All Unknown Occupants, Defendant(s) in the above-entitled suit as parties to be served, that the said suit has been commenced in the 17th Judicial Circuit Court of Boone County, Illinois, by Plaintiff, GPM Midwest, LLC, against Defendant(s), praying for the possession of the leased real commercial property located at 1705 S. State Street, Belvidere, Boone County, Illinois 61008 (the "Premises").

Notice is also hereby given you that the said Complaint also prays for other relief; that summons was duly issued out of said Court against you as Defendant(s) as provided by law; and that the said suit is now pending.

UNLESS YOU file your answer or otherwise file your appearance in this case, on or before March 3, 2025, A JUDGMENT OR DECREE BY DEFAULT MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST YOU FOR THE RELIEF ASKED IN THE COMPLAINT.

E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit www.illinoiscourts.gov/FAQ/gethelp.asp, or talk to your local circuit clerk's office.

Kim R. Walberg
kwalberg@taftlaw.com
Nicollette L. Khuans
NKhuans@taftlaw.com
Counsel for Plaintiff
TAFT STETTINIUS & HOLLISTER LLP
111 East Wacker Drive Suite 2600 Chicago, IL 60601-4208
Telephone: (312) 527-4000
Published in The Boone County Journal Jan 30, Feb 6,13, 2025

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS
CIVIL DEPARTMENT
GPM Midwest, LLC, a Delaware limited liability company, Plaintiff,
v. Case No. 2024EV98
HRB Group, Inc., an Illinois corporation, and ALL UNKNOWN
OCCUPANTS, Defendant.

NOTICE OF SERVICE BY PUBLICATION

The requisite affidavit for publication having been filed, notice is hereby given you, HRB Group, Inc., and All Unknown Occupants, Defendant(s) in the above-entitled suit as parties to be served, that the said suit has been commenced in the 17th Judicial Circuit Court of Boone County, Illinois, by Plaintiff, GPM Midwest, LLC, against Defendant(s), praying for the possession of the leased real commercial property located at 2001 N. State Street, Belvidere, Boone County, Illinois 61008 (the "Premises").

Notice is also hereby given you that the said Complaint also prays for other relief; that summons was duly issued out of said Court against you as Defendant(s) as provided by law; and that the said suit is now pending.

UNLESS YOU file your answer or otherwise file your appearance in this case, on or before March 3, 2025, A JUDGMENT OR DECREE BY DEFAULT MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST YOU FOR THE RELIEF ASKED IN THE COMPLAINT.

E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit www.illinoiscourts.gov/FAQ/gethelp.asp, or talk to your local circuit clerk's office.

Kim R. Walberg
kwalberg@taftlaw.com
Nicollette L. Khuans
NKhuans@taftlaw.com
Counsel for Plaintiff
TAFT STETTINIUS & HOLLISTER LLP
111 East Wacker Drive Suite 2600 Chicago, IL 60601-4208
Telephone: (312) 527-4000
Published in The Boone County Journal Jan 30, Feb 6,13, 2025

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS
CIVIL DEPARTMENT
GPM Midwest, LLC, a Delaware limited liability company, Plaintiff,
v. Case No. 2024EV99
AHRB, Inc., an Illinois corporation, and
ALL UNKNOWN OCCUPANTS, Defendant.

NOTICE OF SERVICE BY PUBLICATION

The requisite affidavit for publication having been filed, notice is hereby given you, AHRB, Inc., and All Unknown Occupants, Defendant(s) in the above-entitled suit as parties to be served, that the said suit has been commenced in the 17th Judicial Circuit Court of Boone County, Illinois, by Plaintiff, GPM Midwest, LLC, against Defendant(s), praying for the possession of the leased real commercial property located at 1052 E. Belvidere Road, Belvidere, Boone County, Illinois 61008 (the "Premises").

Notice is also hereby given you that the said Complaint also prays for other relief; that summons was duly issued out of said Court against you as Defendant(s) as provided by law; and that the said suit is now pending.

UNLESS YOU file your answer or otherwise file your appearance in this case, on or before March 3, 2025, A JUDGMENT OR DECREE BY DEFAULT MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST YOU FOR THE RELIEF ASKED IN THE COMPLAINT.

E-filing is now mandatory for documents in civil cases with limited exemptions. To e-file, you must first create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit <http://efile.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm> to learn more and to select a service provider. If you need additional help or have trouble e-filing, visit www.illinoiscourts.gov/FAQ/gethelp.asp, or talk to your local circuit clerk's office.

Kim R. Walberg
kwalberg@taftlaw.com
Nicollette L. Khuans
NKhuans@taftlaw.com
Counsel for Plaintiff
TAFT STETTINIUS & HOLLISTER LLP
111 East Wacker Drive Suite 2600 Chicago, IL 60601-4208
Telephone: (312) 527-4000
Published in The Boone County Journal Jan 30, Feb 6,13, 2025

The Journal
has old newspapers free
for picking up from time to time.
Call to see if any are available



ASSUMED NAMES

STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE COUNTY ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION

No. DBA4218 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a WINDOW CLEANING SERVICE business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of LD WINDOW CLEANING SOLUTIONS that its location is or will be 22371 COUNTY LINE RD, in SOUTH BELOIT, in the County of Boone County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.

Phone Number: 630-699-4258

Louie Anthony Dazzo 22371 County Line Rd South Beloit, IL 61080

I, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk And Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do the hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: January 21, 2025.

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder

Published in Boone County Journal 01/23,30 02/07 - P

CHANGE IN CERTIFICATE OF OWNERSHIP OF BUSINESS PUBLICATION NOTICE

Public Notice is hereby given that on JANUARY 21ST A.D. 2025, a certificate was filed in the Office of the County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, concerning the business known as GREEN BLADE LAWN CARE, located at 2512 E 6TH ST., BELVIDERE, IL 61008, which certificate sets forth the following changes in the operation thereof: CHERYL LEIGH PACELLO IS BEING WITHDRAWN AS AN OWNER.

Dated this 21ST day of January, A.D. 2025

Julie A. Bliss

Boone County Clerk

Published in the Boone County Journal 01/23,30 02/07 (P)

STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE COUNTY ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION

No. DBA4219 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a LANDSCAPING business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of LUCKY'S LAWN SERVICE that its location is or will be 3060 GRANT HGHWAY in Belvidere, in the County of Boone County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.

Phone Number: 779-238-0655

Austin Tyler Westergaard, 1913 Midway Drive, Rockford, IL 61103

I, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk And Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do the hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: January 22, 2025

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder

Published in Boone County Journal 1/30, 2/6, 2/13 - P

STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE COUNTY ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION

No. DBA4220 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a MAKING SHIRTS ETC.. AND SELLING AT CRAFT FAIRS business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of FIRBRAE ART that its location is or will be 2405 RANDOLPH ST, in Caledonia, in the County of Boone County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.

Phone Number: 815-988-1233

Rae Duncan 2405 Randolph St., Caledonia, IL 61011

I, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk And Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do the hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: January 24, 2025.

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder

Published in Boone County Journal 01/30 02/06,13 - P

CHANGE IN CERTIFICATE OF OWNERSHIP OF BUSINESS PUBLICATION NOTICE

Public Notice is hereby given that on JANUARY 28 th A.D. 2025, a certificate was filed in the Office of the County Clerk of Boone County, Illinois, concerning the business known as KASSANDRA'S BEAUTY SALON, located at 145 S. STATE ST., BELVIDERE, IL 61008, which certificate sets forth the following changes in the operation thereof: THE BUSINESS WILL BE DISSOLVED.

Dated this 28TH day of January, A.D. 2025

Julie A. Bliss

Boone County Clerk

Published in the Boone County Journal 01/30, 02/06,13 (P)

Spending from page 3

to Comptroller Susana Mendoza's office. Halfway through the current fiscal year, the state has received about \$20.4 billion in federal funds.

One of the largest categories of federal funding for Illinois is Medicaid, the health insurance program for low-income and disabled individuals that covers about 3.5 million people in the state. The federal government pays about 52% of the cost of the Medicaid in Illinois.

In his initial memo Monday outlining the freeze, Matthew J. Vaeth, acting director of the Office of Management and Budget, said the action was intended to apply to "federal financial assistance" programs.

"The use of Federal resources to advance Marxist equity, transgenderism, and green new deal social engineering policies is a waste of taxpayer dollars that does not improve the day-to-day lives of those we serve," Vaeth said in the memo.

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service that distributes state government coverage to hundreds of news outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

Madigan from page 5

to have a corrupt intent to qualify as a bribe. As a result, attorneys on both sides have hit the theme of intent hard in this last week of closing arguments.

Defense lawyers emphasized that Madigan and McClain had no corrupt intent when the speaker passed along job recommendations to ComEd and McClain made efforts to find work for them. The two men had frequently followed a similar dynamic for job recommendations prior to the occurrence of the first alleged bribe in 2011, and job recommendations from public officials were common for ComEd and lobbyists in general, Cotter said.

"I think the government wants you to believe that their relationship was at least partially a criminal conspiracy," Cotter said of McClain's and Madigan's friendship. "I don't think the evidence backs that up."

The pair are accused of running a "criminal enterprise" focused on enhancing the speaker's power while enriching Madigan and those around him.

Friendship 'casualty'

McClain and Madigan met in the early 1970s as young Democratic legislators in Springfield after McClain replaced his father in the House upon his sudden death. Their friendship continued after McClain lost his seat in the 1982 election and became a lobbyist. As several witnesses testified earlier in trial, McClain had nearly unparalleled access to Madigan, often taking up residency in the speaker's suite of offices in the Capitol on session days and meeting him for dinner many evenings.

In addition to his role as ComEd's chief lobbyist responsible for maintaining the utility's relationship with Madigan, McClain was also a political advisor to the speaker, Cotter reminded the jury – and "also his good friend."

"We know now he's not, and that's – I guess that's a casualty of this case," Cotter said Tuesday, harkening back to Madigan's own testimony earlier this month that his friendship with McClain survived for decades "until recently," not elaborating. "But it was real. And it shouldn't be dismissed or minimized. Not by the government, not by anybody, and I hope not by you."

During Madigan's time on the witness stand and closing arguments, the former speaker's attorney Dan Collins took steps to distance his client from McClain. At one point on Monday, Collins derided the former lobbyist as "Mr. Important," suggesting McClain exaggerated conversations with Madigan in relaying them to others in order to lend him more gravitas. McClain's lawyers had predicted the move in the summer when they asked for his case to be severed from Madigan's, a request they renewed and were again denied after Madigan's testimony.

Collins on Monday also lightly mocked a letter McClain sent to Madigan and his wife to announce his retirement from lobbying in late 2016, in which McClain wrote: "At the end of the day I am at the bridge with my musket standing with and for the Madigan family. I will never leave your side, Shirley and Mike."

"Who talks like that?" Collins asked the jury.

But Cotter on Tuesday pointed to the letter – "that never in a million years did he imagine we'd be standing in federal court in Chicago and his lawyer would be reading it" – as both a sign of deep devotion to Madigan and an obvious signal that there was no alleged bribe.

"Does a person who's been bribing Mike Madigan for five years write that letter?" he asked. "Does he tell him how much he admires him, how

much he respects him, how much he loves him? Does that make sense to you?"

At his defense table at the far wall of the courtroom from the jury box, McClain seemed to get emotional when his attorney discussed the letter, at one point grabbing a tissue. He and Madigan have spent most of the last three months avoiding each other in the courtroom, though their families have interacted and have mutual friends who've attended trial to support them.

"And if you're trying to figure out what was his motivation, what was his intent?" Cotter said of McClain's actions like job recommendations that prosecutors were criminal. "You've gotta consider that it was friendship."

'What does he care?'

Cotter made the same case when picking apart charges related to McClain's assistance – at Madigan's behest – with a legislative request from Chicago Ald. Danny Solis. As it turned out, the alderman had been an undercover FBI cooperator, and his secret recordings of Madigan and McClain landed both men in federal court while Solis has been promised no prison time for his own unrelated crimes.

The FBI's attention turned to Madigan in mid-2017 after the speaker made an out-of-the-blue call to Solis asking for an introduction to a real estate developer. At that point, Solis had been cooperating with the government for a year. And after Solis brought the developer to Madigan's property tax appeals law firm office a few weeks later, he brought up an apartment complex project that he wanted to see done in Chicago's Chinatown neighborhood, which was in his 25th Ward.

But since the project was proposed for a strip of land owned by the state of Illinois, the General Assembly would need to approve of the land transfer to the city so it could ultimately be sold to a real estate developer. When Solis asked for help in that initial meeting, Madigan noted that he wasn't terribly popular with then-Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner at the time as the two had just emerged from a bitterly fought two-year budget impasse.

So Madigan asked McClain to get involved, who then recruited Republican lobbyist Nancy Kimme to work with the Rauner administration. Prosecutors last week pointed out that Solis explicitly told McClain in a December 2017 meeting that the Chinatown developers would give Madigan their property tax business after the land transfer was completed.

Collins this week focused on the fact that Solis never made any such claim to the speaker until March 2018 – more than nine months after Madigan first tried to be helpful to Solis about the Chinatown effort. He reiterated testimony from multiple witnesses, including Madigan's longtime law partner, that the speaker's law firm had a strict conflict of interest policy that would never have allowed the firm to take on clients who'd gotten land from the state.

But Cotter asked the jury if it made sense that McClain would care about the speaker's legal fees at all, considering he had no financial interest in the firm. Cotter also pointed to an April 2018 call between McClain and Solis in which the alderman tried to tell McClain there was more community support for the planned development than McClain could see. The attorney contended that was a lie.

"Mike wants to shut it down if there's no community support," Cotter said of the proposed apartment complex Tuesday. "If this is about getting legal fees for Speaker Madigan, what does he care if the community likes it?"

'Fidel Marquez is a liar' *continued on page 8*

Madigan

from page 7

Cotter on Tuesday also went after the government's other star witness, former ComEd executive Fidel Marquez, who began cooperating with the FBI after agents approached him in January 2019 and secretly recorded meetings with McClain and their other colleagues.

Cotter reminded the jury of Marquez's "long history of lying," including to a judge during his divorce proceedings a decade ago and last spring when he attempted to buy a gun in Arizona and did not check the box that said he was convicted of a felony.

When questioned on cross-examination in November about McClain bringing job recommendations to ComEd from Madigan, Marquez acknowledged that it was part of McClain's job as the utility's chief external lobbyist – and that not all of the recommendations were hired.

Cotter also pointed out that Marquez kept his contention vague when testifying about the purpose of the alleged bribery conspiracy, repeatedly saying giving jobs and contracts to Madigan allies was to keep Madigan "positively disposed" toward ComEd's legislative agenda.

"He never said, 'The purpose of our conspiracy was to trade jobs for official action,'" Cotter said. "Even when he was asked about trading jobs, he won't go there. Won't say it."

Marquez also agreed that finding jobs for those Madigan recommended was a "favor," which is legally allowed, Cotter said.

"No one else told you there was a conspiracy," Cotter told the jury, raising his voice slightly. "The only witness who came in here and said that is Fidel Marquez. And Fidel Marquez is a liar."

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service that distributes state government coverage to hundreds of news outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

House Republicans Ask State Supreme Court to Toss Out Legislative Map

Maps fail to meet legal requirements for redistricting, lawsuit alleges

By Ben Szalinski *Capitol News Illinois*

Democrats continue to hold a supermajority in the Illinois House thanks to illegally gerrymandered House districts, House Republicans allege in a new lawsuit filed with the Illinois Supreme Court Tuesday.

The lawsuit alleges the current House map fails to meet state constitutional requirements that districts be compact and allow elections to be "free and equal." The outcome is elections that are "rigged" to favor Democratic candidates. Republicans want the court to invalidate the maps and appoint a special master to draw new district boundaries.

Republicans are targeting this lawsuit to state courts after previously failing to block the maps in federal court. New data and a key expert witness, they say, make their state case more likely to succeed.

"Illinois House Republicans refuse to stand by while Democrats rig elections and manipulate the system to maintain their grip on power," House

Minority Leader Tony McCombie, R-Savanna, said at a news conference Tuesday.

The lawsuit comes after House Republicans failed to gain seats in the two election cycles since a new map was drawn in 2021 following the census and implemented for the 2022 election. Republicans lost five seats in 2022 and failed to win any back in 2024, leaving House Democrats with 78 members in the 118-member House.

'Compactness' in question

The first question Republicans want the Supreme Court to weigh in on is whether the districts are "compact."

Compactness is not defined in the state constitution, though dozens of mathematical formulas exist to measure whether the residents in a district are spaced appropriately.

Republicans point to the Illinois Supreme Court's decision to invalidate a district in 1981, which found the central Illinois district was not considered compact. Using two mathematical formulas, the lawsuit alleges 52 of the current House districts are less compact based on at least one formula than the unconstitutional 89th House District was in 1981.

The 89th House District in that year included several square-shaped sections from Peoria to Springfield. The court ruled it was not compact based on a visual examination. The lawsuit argues existing districts that feature odd shapes snaking around communities or extending away from the heart of a district would fail the same eye test.

The Princeton Gerrymandering Project, which assesses legislative maps around the country on several metrics, gave the current Illinois House map an "F" grade for its compactness metric.

The districts are also politically gerrymandered to elect more Democrats, according to the lawsuit.

Republicans argue Rep. Lisa Hernandez, D-Cicero, who chaired the House Redistricting Committee, admitted to partisan gerrymandering during floor debate in August 2021 when she was asked by then-Rep. Avery Bourne, R-Morrisonville, whether "partisan advantage" was considered in drawing the map.

"It is one of the factors included," Hernandez said at the time. The court filing also points to testimony in previous challenges to the maps in which a House Democratic staff member acknowledges lawmakers considered creating political advantages in certain districts as they discussed how to draw the map.

At odds with simulations

As part of their case, House Republicans enlisted the help of national redistricting expert Jowei Chen, from the University of Michigan. Chen has served as an expert witness on similar lawsuits in other states. House Republicans said Chen ran 10,000 computer simulations on different map outcomes at their request, with the only requirement being that the maps were compliant with the federal Voting Rights Act. None of the simulations produced a map similar to the current House map.

"That outcome is only possible with partisan gerrymandering designed to disenfranchise voters," Rep. Ryan Spain, R-Peoria, said in an interview.

The current 78-40 split between Democrats and Republicans isn't proportional to ballots cast in recent elections, the GOP argues. The 78-40 split would make sense in a world where Republicans were receiving roughly 40% of votes cast in a general election. But in 2022, Republicans received 51% of votes cast in House races, and the party should expect to receive 47-48% of the votes cast in House races in a normal election year, per the simulation.

Thus, the GOP believes they'd have a larger share of House seats if maps were drawn fairly.

"We're not supposed to be depriving voters of their individual vote," Rep. Dan Ugaste, R-Geneva, said in an interview. "It's supposed to have the same meaning as every other voter in the state, and when you do that on a partisan basis, it always skews that one individual's vote."

The Princeton Gerrymandering Project, using a different methodology, gave Illinois' House map an "A" grade for partisan fairness, meaning the current map doesn't give an advantage to either party.

The filing notes courts in North Carolina and Pennsylvania have previously struck down maps based on similar accusations and language in those states' constitutions similar to Illinois'.

Republicans hope the Illinois Supreme Court will agree the maps are unfair and force new House maps to be redrawn by an independent commission that would not consider partisan benefits. The lawsuit focuses on the House maps, but a favorable ruling for Republicans could be extended to Senate maps, as each Senate district is comprised of two House districts.

"I have high hopes for the court in doing the right thing," Spain said. "I think the compactness claim is a slam dunk. They've already ruled on that one before."

"Leader McCombie can't justify her party leader's unlawful attempt to slash services working families need to access healthcare, afford rent, and put food on the table, so she is choosing to distract people by relitigating a matter that courts decided years ago," said Jon Maxson, a spokesperson for House Speaker Chris Welch, D-Hillside, in an email.

Previous lawsuits

This is not the first time Republicans have asked courts to toss out maps.

Republicans and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, or MALDEF, sued in summer 2021 after the General Assembly passed an initial set of maps using American Community Survey data in order to meet statutory deadlines for redistricting after census data was delayed by the pandemic. Lawmakers returned later that summer to pass the current set of maps based on census data.

Republicans and MALDEF sued again to try to stop the maps, arguing the latest version reduced the number of Latino-majority districts in the Chicago area. A separate case was filed by the East St. Louis Branch of the NAACP and other civil rights groups that argued the maps broke up the Metro East's Black voting population. A three-judge panel of federal judges rejected those challenges in December 2021, leaving the current maps in place.

Republican lawmakers said their reason for challenging the map wasn't based on whether it would lead to more Republicans winning legislative seats in future elections. Ugaste said he believes an independently drawn map could make his reelection more difficult in his west suburban district.

"I'm willing to do it because that is what is right for the voters. It's not about me hanging on to my seat," Ugaste said.

The plaintiffs also argue it's not too late to challenge the maps, as there are three more elections before the General Assembly is required to redraw the maps after the 2030 Census. Fourteen other states also have pending cases challenging legislative maps.

"Other states continue to work on this; we shouldn't forfeit our ability to do so in Illinois," Spain said.