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Interior of the Apollo

Photo provided by Illinois Emergency Management Agency

Tornado Damages Apollo Theatre

By Charles Herbst

On Friday, March 31, at 7:44 PM, a powerful storm with 100 mile-per-hour winds struck Downtown Belvidere, causing severe damage to the Apollo Theatre at 104 N. State Street. The theatre was filled with about 260 concertgoers and staff. One person, Frederick Livingston, Jr., was killed and 48 others were treated for injuries at area hospitals. Several of the injuries were critical.

A heavy metal concert that was to feature the band “Morbid Angel” was in progress. The band “Crypta” had finished their set. At 7:24, tornado warnings for Belvidere had been issued by the National Weather Service, and sirens were activated. The next band, “Skeletal Remains,” delayed taking the stage because of the weather. The audience was encouraged to take shelter in the theatre’s basement, but most declined and remained on the main floor of the theatre.

The storm sheared the roof off of the fly tower sending it to the street at the front of the theater. Loosened bricks on the front façade of the tower and other debris fell on the house roof directly in front of the stage, causing that portion of the house roof to collapse and fall to the main floor of the theatre. The theatre marquee also collapsed from the force of the wind.

The fly tower is the area above the stage where the theatrical rigging system is located. The house is the portion of the theatre where the audience is located.

Audience members immediately began lifting heavy debris from the roof collapse, which had trapped others beneath the area near the stage. Firefighters and police arrived within minutes and took over the rescue. More

Continued on page 2



Roof of the Apollo

Photo Daniel Reyes



Clean-up of debris from the tornado

Staff Photo

Apollo

from page 1

than 100 firefighters and paramedics responded to the scene. Seven area ambulance agencies provided 28 ambulance runs. Victims were taken to three area hospitals.

Governor Pritzker, in a visit to Belvidere on Sunday, praised the quick work of the audience, local residents, and emergency responders, who rescued victims from the fallen debris. Pritzker

noted that the rescuers' actions saved lives.

The National Weather Service determined that an F1 tornado carved a 27-mile path from southwest of Davis Junction through Downtown Belvidere and finally lifting near the junction of Orth and Capron Roads. There was significant damage to other buildings around the theatre, and other damage along the path of the tornado, particularly from downed trees. Belvidere Park, Lincoln Avenue, and Hurlbut Avenue were especially hard hit. Beyond the theatre, there were no other reported injuries.

This tornado was one of many which struck the Midwest and Midsouth this past Friday. The NWS Chicago Office identified at least sixteen tornadoes that occurred within its jurisdiction. These included tornadoes in Machesney Park and Caledonia.

The site of the Apollo Theatre has been a community center and entertainment venue for Belvidere for about 175 years. Initially, it was the site of Union Hall, a multipurpose building which contained a theatre and burned to the ground in the 1860s. After the fire, Union Hall was replaced by the Derthick Opera House, built by energetic Civil War Veteran William Derthick. The Derthick was also a multipurpose building, with the theatre located on the second floor. The Derthick Opera House lasted until 1917, when it was also destroyed by fire.

The Apollo Theatre was built by Frank Rheinhart in 1921. The theatre was built with an emphasis on fireproofing. The Apollo featured stage

shows and vaudeville acts, as well as showing first-run motion pictures. Many Belvidereans will remember seeing classic films there. One of the most memorable occasions of that era was a parade to the theatre of local children led by an elephant on loan from a circus visiting Belvidere in 1953. The parade was staged by the theatre manager, "Nick" Nichols, to promote *The Greatest Show on Earth*, a Cecil B. DeMille movie about the Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey Circus, starring James Stewart and Charlton Heston.

Like many theatres of its day, the Apollo Theatre gradually declined and fell into disuse after a fire in the 1970s.

In 2001, the building reopened as the Apollo Theatre Banquet Hall. It has since been a venue for weddings and other social gatherings. It has also gained regional acclaim as a venue for heavy metal and Mexican musical performances, attracting an audience from a wide geographic area.

The future of the building is uncertain. Belvidere's Congressman, Bill Foster, has joined the rest of the Illinois Congressional Delegation in asking President Biden to approve Governor Pritzker's request for a federal disaster declaration and federal assistance.

OP-ED

Friday is for Fishermen

By Scott Reeder

Having married a Catholic and now being the only Protestant in a household of six, I've learned a few things in the past 20 years.

One of those things I've learned is how to bake really good macaroni and cheese during Lent. Like many families we don't eat meat on Ash Wednesday and the following Fridays leading up to Easter.

A couple of decades ago, I thought these fasts were silly and overly legalistic.

In fact, early in our marriage, I had no problem eating a steak while my wife and kids munched on pasta. To her credit, my wife never said anything to me about it.

My kids, on the other hand, eyed me with envy bordering on irritation.

But as I've aged and learned more, I've changed my view. It's a beautiful tradition that can be honoring to God if done not out of obligation but a desire to commemorate.

The problem is so many people don't fully understand the spiritual practice of fasting. Growing up Protestant, I never once heard a pastor extol the virtues of even a partial fast.

According to abstinence rules within the Catholic Church, meat includes flesh from warm-blooded animals and birds. Fish and other seafood are OK to eat on Lenten Fridays.

There are exceptions. In the New Orleans Diocese, it's permissible to eat alligator and in Detroit muskrat can be a Lenten Friday entrée. I'm not particularly keen on trying either exception.

Before Vatican II, Catholics abstained from meat on almost all Fridays throughout the year.

Even though I grew up post-Vatican II, my best friend's family continued the year-round practice.


When I ate at the Reeds on Fridays, on good days it was cheese pizza and on bad ones, pea soup.

Being a rather inquisitive child, I asked my friend's dad, just why they didn't eat most types of meat on Fridays. He gave me a rather long explanation about a pope centuries ago wanting to

Continued on Page 3

OBITUARIES

- Jeffrey Harrison, 64, Belvidere, March 31
- Billy Hodge, 76, Poplar Grove, April 2
- Michael Jones, 66, Cherry Valley, March 29
- Ruth Kirane, 85, Belvidere, March 26
- Kenneth Koch, 78, Garden Prairie, March 27
- Fred Livingston Jr., 51, Belvidere, March 31



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

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Each week, the Journal seeks to present a variety of voices.

Letters. Every attempt will be made to print all letters received with the exception of those that are libelous or obscene. Letters should be signed and include an ID or phone number, so that we can contact the author prior to publication to verify authenticity.

Guest columns. Community leaders are encouraged to submit guest columns consistent with our editorial guidelines for possible inclusion in the Journal.

Opinions. The opinions expressed in the Journal are those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Boone County Journal management or ownership.



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OP_ED

from page 2

help fishermen out.

Since my dad was a hog farmer, my 10-year-old-self worried that the pope had it in for folks like us. But, no, that isn't the case.

While it is an interesting, oft-repeated fable within the church, it also happens to be nonsense.

Another explanation I've been told by some folks of a more progressive bent is that chickens, hogs and cattle eat grain, so if Catholics abstain from eating their flesh more food will be available for hungry people.

It's a nice thought. But it also doesn't hold up to scrutiny. Modern aquaculture feeds soy, corn and rice to farm-raised fish. And some cattle, goats and sheep eat only grass.

Since I'm no theologian, I asked Springfield Bishop Thomas Paprocki to explain the practice.

"We don't have this visible presence right in front of us where we can actually see and talk to Jesus the way his disciples did," he said. "So, there is that longing in our hearts to be with Christ, to be present with him. And fasting in a way is analogous to that. When we're fasting, we get hungry. Hunger is a longing for food. ... We long to be with Christ. We look forward to the day when we'll be with Christ in his kingdom. But for the time being, we have to grow in the sense of patiently awaiting that day."

That makes sense. And it's something I'll be thinking about as I participate in the partial fast with my family this year.

I occasionally hear folks pooh-poo the practice. They'll say a partial fast doesn't amount to much.

This sort of disparagement of another's religious practice is perplexing. After all, why should someone care what someone else is giving up? And let's be honest, most of the folks critical of the practice are not giving up anything themselves.

In a self-centered age, it's refreshing to see others sacrificing to remember something greater than themselves. Isn't that the meaning of Lent?

Scott Reeder, a staff writer for Illinois Times, can be reached at sreeder@illinoistimes.com.

Defendant Invoked Ex-Speaker in Defense of Lobbying Contracts

Bribery trial continues after government's star witness spent 21 hours on the stand

By Hannah Meisel Capitol News Illinois

Former Commonwealth Edison executive

Fidel Marquez had been a government informant for less than a month when he had a meeting with longtime Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan in mid-February 2019.

The meeting was routine; Marquez, another executive and ComEd's relatively new CEO met with Madigan at the beginning of the General Assembly's new session in Springfield, as was the utility's custom.

But the speaker noticed something off

about Marquez, according to Madigan's close friend Mike McClain, a longtime contract lobbyist for ComEd.

"Fidel didn't say nothing," McClain related to fellow ComEd lobbyist John Hooker. "He sat there like a bump on a log."

The brief observation was included in a wiretapped phone call between the two men shortly after the meeting that was played for a federal jury in Chicago on Monday. McClain and Hooker are joined as defendants by fellow ex-ComEd lobbyist Jay Doherty and the utility's former CEO Anne Pramaggiore. All four are accused of bribing Madigan with jobs and contracts for his allies in exchange for favorable legislation for the utility.

Later in the call, the pair discussed advice they'd each recently given to Marquez about how he should handle telling new ComEd CEO Joe Dominguez about lobbying subcontractors connected to Madigan. The subcontractors had allegedly done little to no work in exchange for monthly stipends between \$4,000 and \$5,000 through Doherty's longstanding lobbying contract.

"I just told him to be transparent with Joe," McClain said of the counsel he'd given Marquez over lunch at a Springfield restaurant the week before.

That lunch, just like a similar one Marquez had with Hooker previously, had been secretly videotaped by Marquez at the feds' direction.

McClain said he told Marquez to appeal to Dominguez by comparing the subcontractor situation with a request Dominguez had recently honored from a labor leader who'd asked him to hire an ally as a contract lobbyist.

"We had to hire these guys because Mike Madigan came to us," McClain told Hooker. "It's just that simple... So if you want to make it a federal court suit, okay, but that's how simple it is."

Jurors heard that quip from McClain just a few minutes before hearing another, in which he told Hooker and Pramaggiore that he was worried Dominguez – a former federal prosecutor from New Jersey – would run ComEd differently than Pramaggiore, who'd been promoted from the CEO role the summer before.

"But Joe, I don't think he really respects Madigan," he said on the wiretapped call. "So I wouldn't trust Joe. I would trust Joe to think that this is a quid pro quo and that he's wired."

In early 2019, discussions were just beginning on what would eventually become another major energy-related bill – although that didn't end up taking shape until 2021, due in part to the investigation and the COVID-19 pandemic.

McClain, who had been officially retired from lobbying for more than two years at that point, was worried that there was still no successor for

his unique role as a go-between for Madigan and ComEd. He'd been trying to mentor two ex-Madigan staffers, but he told Pramaggiore and Hooker during the call that neither were ready for the job.

He was also worried that Marquez was not as reliable and quick to respond to Madigan-initiated requests as Hooker was when he held that job before his retirement in 2012, a worry that was exacerbated by Pramaggiore's promotion to CEO of Exelon Utilities, leaving Dominguez as her replacement.

"This is real serious. There's no one right now that I can actually tell our friend, 'This is the lead, and when you call, that guy will snap to or that gal will snap to,'" McClain told Pramaggiore and Hooker, using his common euphemism of "friend" to refer to Madigan. "Because I was the lead, but every time I called up John or you, you guys did things. I mean...there's no one in the company that has that kind of smack right now."

Later, the conversation returned to Dominguez, and McClain offered to have a "daddy talk with this guy."

"My instinct is that I come up to Chicago and I sit down with Dominguez and say, 'Now look-it asshole, if you want to pass this bill, this is what it requires,'" McClain said. "If you wanna fire me today that's fine but this is like serious business, it's millions of dollars. So either you wanna look like you're the leader, and be the leader, but that means you've gotta authorize your people to do things."

The next month, McClain, Hooker and Marquez sat down with Dominguez in a meeting Marquez recorded. In the recording previously played for the jury, Dominguez said he was fine with the subcontractor arrangement.

Earlier on Monday, Marquez finished 21 hours on the witness stand with the last of the defense's cross-examination. After playing an hour of recordings, prosecutors called Doherty's longtime administrative assistant to the witness stand to question her about payouts to the subcontractors.

The trial continues at 10 a.m. Tuesday.

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

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Unofficial Election Results April 4th

(many mail in ballots still unaccounted for)

PROPOSITION		
BOONE COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT NO. 2 PROPOSITION TO LEVY NEW TAX FOR AMBULANCE SERVICE		
Shall the Boone County Fire Protection District No. 2, Boone County, Illinois, be authorized to levy a new tax for ambulance purposes and have an additional tax of .40% of the equalized assessed value of the taxable property therein extended for such purposes?		
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	YES	
<input type="radio"/>	NO	
(1) The approximate amount of taxes extendable at the most recently extended limiting rate is \$1,040,513, and the approximate amount of taxes extendable if the proposition is approved is \$2,737,095.		
(2) For the 2023 levy year the approximate amount of the additional tax extendable against property containing a single family residence and having a fair market value at the time of the referendum of \$100,000 is estimated to be \$133.33.		
NORTH BOONE COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT NO. 3 PROPOSITION TO INCREASE THE LIMITING RATE		
Shall the limiting rate under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law for the North Boone Fire Protection District No. 3, Boone County, Illinois, be increased by an additional amount equal to 0.22% above the limiting rate for fire protection and ambulance purposes for levy year 2021 and be equal to 0.56917% of the equalized assessed value of the taxable property therein for levy year 2023?		
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	YES	
<input type="radio"/>	NO	
BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP PARK DISTRICT		
FOR PARK COMMISSIONER (VOTE FOR NOT MORE THAN TWO)		
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	MARY MARQUARDT	
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	GARY THACKER	
<input type="radio"/>	CARRIE LENZEN	
VILLAGE OF POPLAR GROVE		
FOR VILLAGE TRUSTEE (For a 4-year term) (VOTE FOR NOT MORE THAN THREE)		
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	OWEN COSTANZA	INDEPENDENT
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	JEFFREY GOINGS	INDEPENDENT
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	KRISTI RICHARDSON	INDEPENDENT
<input type="radio"/>	BRUCE MOORE	INDEPENDENT
<input type="radio"/>	DEAN SVARC	INDEPENDENT
<input type="radio"/>	DAVID ALLGOOD	INDEPENDENT
FOR VILLAGE TRUSTEE (For an unexpired 2-year term) (VOTE FOR ONE)		
<input type="radio"/>	RONALD QUIMBY	INDEPENDENT
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	ELIZABETH STRAW	INDEPENDENT

MUNICIPAL		
CITY OF BELVIDERE		
FOR ALDERPERSON WARD ONE (VOTE FOR ONE)		
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	JOHN ALBERTINI	DEMOCRATIC
	No Candidate	REPUBLICAN
<input type="radio"/>	CLAYTON STEVENS	INDEPENDENT
FOR ALDERPERSON WARD TWO (VOTE FOR ONE)		
	No Candidate	DEMOCRATIC
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	DANIEL K. SNOW	REPUBLICAN
<input type="radio"/>	JERRY L. HOINESS	INDEPENDENT
VILLAGE OF TIMBERLANE		
FOR VILLAGE TRUSTEE (VOTE FOR NOT MORE THAN THREE)		
<input type="radio"/>	GREGORY S. HILLS	
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	ANDREA B. ULBERT	
<input type="radio"/>	DONNA LEONE	
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ON THE BASIS OF EXISTING BOARD MEMBERSHIP, MEMBERS MAY BE ELECTED IN THE FOLLOWING NUMBERS FROM EACH CONGRESSIONAL TOWNSHIP.		
FOR MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO SERVE A FULL 4-YEAR TERM (VOTE FOR ONE)		
1 shall be elected from Belvidere Township 44N Range 03E BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP 44N RANGE 3E		
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	ALLISON REID-NIEMIEC	
<input type="radio"/>	SARAH BRENNER	
(VOTE FOR TWO)		
2 board members shall be elected from the remaining congressional townships.		
The remaining Congressional Townships		
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	JORGE HERRERA	
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	HOLLY HOUK	
<input type="radio"/>	MISTY A. CORYELL	
<input type="radio"/>	TOSCA DeGENNARO	



House Passes Bill Prohibiting Book Bans

Libraries would be disqualified from state grants

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

The Illinois House passed a bill Wednesday that would prohibit libraries from banning books or other material because of partisan or doctrinal pressure, prompting strong opposition from Republicans who called it an assault on local control.

House Bill 2789 is an initiative of Democratic Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias, whose office oversees the Illinois State Library and administers several grant programs for public and school libraries as well as adult literacy programs throughout the state.

The bill would require that as a condition of qualifying for those grants in the future, libraries or library systems would have to adopt a written policy prohibiting the practice of banning books. Alternatively, they could adopt the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, which includes a statement that "(m)aterials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval."

The bill came in response to a wave of high-profile controversies throughout the country, including at least one in Illinois. School districts and public libraries have come under pressure to remove certain material from their collections, often material dealing with issues involving race, sexuality and gender identity.

"Banning books is the sort of behavior that was once, for good reason, associated with the worst, most repressive and repugnant authoritarian regimes of the mid-20th century and before," the bill's lead sponsor Rep. Anne Stava-Murray, D-Naperville, said during debate on the House floor. "The fact that this is even up for discussion in America in the 21st century is disgusting. And yet, just last year in my district, that discussion was spurred on by a few radical parents and the Proud Boys hate group over a book called 'Gender Queer.'"

That book is a memoir by Maia Kobabe about a nonbinary person grappling with issues of gender identity and sexuality as a teenager and young adult. According to the New York Times, it has been pulled from library shelves in dozens of school districts around the country.

One of the school districts that came under pressure to remove the book was Community High School District 99, in Downers Grove, in Stava-Murray's district. According to a June 2022 Chicago Sun-Times story, the pressure was generated by a group of conservative parents and members of the Proud Boys, but students in the district pushed back and the board eventually voted unanimously to keep the book on the shelves.

"Students led a community-supported effort in my district to keep the book in the library," Stava-Murray said. "But kids shouldn't have to be the heroes... Nobody is forcing you or your children to check out or purchase or read these books. If they are not consistent with your personal beliefs, don't read them."

PEN American, in a report on book bans around the country, identified five enforced bans in the state between July 2021 and June 2022, including 3 bans of Gender Queer.

Some Republicans, however, argued that public libraries are governed by locally elected boards, and that those boards should have the authority to

Continued on Page 7

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

Dated: March 27, 2023
 Pamela Coduto, CIRCUIT CLERK

Published in The Boone County Journal: 4/6, 4/13, 4/20 - C

ASSUMED NAMES

STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE COUNTY
 ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION
 No. DBA4140 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a HEALTH CLUB business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of CHELITO'S HEALTHY CLUB that its location is or will be at 2024 N STATE ST. UNIT #800 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: 815-520-9409
 Consuelo Pasillas, 8872 Olson Road, Belvidere, IL 61008
 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: Friday, March 28, 2023, Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder
 Published in Boone County Journal 4/6, 4/13, 4/20 - P

STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE COUNTY
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 No. DBA4139 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a CLEANING business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of FLORES CLEANING SERVICES LLC that its location is or will be at 204 Warren Avenue 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: 815-520-4515
 Liliana Flores, 204 Warren Avenue, Belvidere, IL 61008
 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: Friday, March 24, 2023, Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder
 Published in Boone County Journal 3/30, 4/6, 4/13 - P

Book Banning from page 4

decide how best to serve their communities.
 "I find this a complete assault on local control," said Rep. Martin McLaughlin, R-Barrington Hills. "... These people volunteer as nonpartisan elected local officials, and for the state to tell a local library board, 'listen to the professionals; follow the professionals' - I don't understand why we have local elections anymore if a bill like this passes."

Rep. C.D. Davidsmeyer, R-Jacksonville, said that he used to serve on his local library board and when his own children visit the library, they are accompanied by a parent. But he said that is not necessarily the case when they are at school using the school library.

"I am not for banning books at all," he said. "I am for age-appropriate materials. And so, if a parent wants their kid to have those age-appropriate materials, they can certainly get them for them. I don't think that a librarian is the end-all, be-all decision maker in the state of Illinois on what books should be given to a child."

Stava-Murray, however, rejected those

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arguments, saying the bill would only add another condition onto the rules to qualify for grants administered by the secretary of state. Last year, the office awarded more than 1,600 grants totaling more than \$62 million, including a \$4,300 grant to Downers Grove Community High School District 99.

"In terms of the argument about local control, I find that disgusting. Local Control has long been a dog whistle for allowing statewide or nationwide racist or bigoted policies to persist," she said, eliciting loud boos from the Republican side of the aisle. "Today, I just strongly urge my colleagues to do the right thing and make sure that access to books is not infringed upon in our state."

The bill passed the House 69-39 with all of the no votes coming from Republicans. Three Democrats and one Republican were recorded as present but not voting. The bill next goes to the Senate for consideration.

"Public and school libraries are facing unprecedented censorship of books and resources, not just in Illinois but throughout the nation," Giannoulis said in a statement after the vote. "This important first-in-the-nation legislation combats book banning and upholds freedom of speech, which America has always stood for. I applaud the Illinois House of Representatives for passing this important measure and encourage the State Senate to do the same."

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Senate Votes to Lift Nuclear Construction Ban

Environmental, anti-nuclear groups oppose the legislation

By Andrew Adams Capitol News Illinois

The Illinois Senate approved a measure on Thursday that would lift a 1980s-era moratorium on nuclear power plant construction.

Senate Bill 76, sponsored by Sen. Sue Rezin, R-Morris, was approved on a 39-13 vote. The bill now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

"The bill is going to come to the House with a lot of momentum," Rezin said in an interview after the bill passed. "The unions are out and working their members to explain the importance of the bill and to just explain the technology."

Rezin said on the Senate floor that the bill would specifically allow for the construction of small modular nuclear reactors, or SMRs. These reactors operate at a much smaller scale than traditional nuclear reactors and are built in factories and assembled on site. SMR proponents say they can be deployed in places like factories,

replacing the need for things like coal-fired cogeneration plants.

"This is a large change in energy policy for the state of Illinois," Rezin said. "It's important to have a robust discussion and make sure the bill's been vetted."

Senate proponents of the bill, including Sens. Bill Cunningham, D-Chicago, and Patrick Joyce, D-Essex, said that lifting the ban would help the state attract investment in new technology.

Cunningham said the moratorium is preventing the state from "sending signals out to the market" for investment in new energy technology, including SMRs and using nuclear power for hydrogen generation.

"I'm here to make Illinois stay relevant, to make Illinois stay at the table," Joyce said. "With the moratorium in place, we're not even part of the conversation."

Rezin noted during floor debate that the federal government has signaled support for nuclear reactors and made funding available for small modular projects. The Department of Energy has several grant programs for the development and demonstration of SMRs.

"By lifting this ban, it allows Illinois, should they choose, to go after federal dollars that are provided by this administration, the Biden administration, who is embracing, supporting and investing in advanced nuclear reactors," Rezin said.

Sen. Ram Villivalam, D-Chicago, said the bill was "still not fully baked," adding that the question of what is done with nuclear waste still doesn't have a solution.

"Whether it's one pound or a thousand pounds, it's still nuclear waste," he said. "We can't wait for a national strategy, in my opinion."

The state's ban went into effect in 1987 and was intended to remain in effect until the federal government identifies a national nuclear waste disposal strategy. In 1987, Congress identified a site in Nevada as the nation's repository for nuclear waste, although later opposition from the state and the White House quashed that plan. No national disposal site has been designated.

Some of the state's largest environmental groups, including the Illinois Environmental Council, oppose the measure. Jack Darin, the head of the Illinois chapter of the Sierra Club, told Capitol News Illinois earlier this month that his organization doesn't believe nuclear energy is "clean energy," citing concerns over the environmental impact of nuclear waste.

David Kraft, the head of the Nuclear Energy Information Service, an anti-nuclear advocacy group based in Chicago, has said the bill will weaken the state's landmark energy policy, the 2021 Climate and Equitable Jobs Act.

"Small modulars are not climate solutions, they're not job generators until the 2030s and they'll generate more nuclear waste," Kraft said in a Thursday interview.

Kraft added he's worried that lawmakers are not fully considering the safety implications of SMR technology.

The federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission

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Nuclear

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has approved one SMR design, although no power plants using an SMR design are online in the United States. China and Russia both have SMRs of other designs online.

A similar bill was introduced in the House by Rep. Mark Walker, D-Arlington Heights. That measure, House Bill 1079, was approved in committee with a bipartisan majority, 18-3, although it hasn't been heard by the full House.

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It would also require the vlogger to report periodically to the Illinois Department of Labor the names and ages of any minors engaged in the work of vlogging, the number of vlogs that generated compensation, and the number of minutes each minor was featured in the vlogs. It would also give minors the right to sue if a vlogger knowingly or recklessly fails to set aside the minor's earnings in a trust account.

The bill passed out of the Senate 56-0 and will head next to the House for consideration.

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Senate Passes Bill Protecting 'Child Influencers'

Minors featured in commercial vlogs would have to be compensated

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

The Illinois Senate unanimously passed a bill Wednesday that gives financial protection to children whose parents make money posting videos of them on social media.

Those children are known as "influencers" because the videos, known as vlogs, are intended to generate interest in things like products and services or social and fashion trends. Vlogs that get enough views on platforms like YouTube, Facebook and TikTok can generate substantial revenue through things like advertising, partnerships with the platform or subscription fees.

Senate Bill 1782 was introduced by Democratic Sens. David Koehler, of Peoria, and Linda Holmes, of Aurora, but it underwent significant amendments before passing the Senate. Koehler said if the bill is signed into law, Illinois would be the first state in the nation to enact such legislation.

The final version would provide that if a minor is featured in at least 30 percent of a vlogger's revenue-generating video during a 30-day period, then the minor is entitled to a share of the revenue. That money would have to be set aside in a trust fund that the minor could access after they turn 18.

Lawmakers Advance Measure to Regulate Ride-Shares As 'Common Carriers'

2014 regulation subjected them to lower level of scrutiny for passenger safety

By Nika Schoonover Capitol News Illinois

Lawmakers are considering a bill that would treat ride-share companies such as Uber and Lyft as "common carriers," opening them up to the same level of liability as other forms of public transportation.

House Bill 2231 passed on the House floor this week with a 73-36 vote. The bill now awaits consideration in the Senate.

The common carrier status is defined as a "standard of care" under which passengers surrender their safety to certain modes of transportation. Currently in Illinois, this includes taxicabs, railways and elevators, among others.

"The reason for treating common carriers and holding common carriers to a higher standard of care is the lack of control that the rider has," Rep. Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz, a Democrat from Glenview and the bill's lead sponsor, said in an interview. "There is no difference between the lack of control that a rider has the moment they step into an Uber or a Lyft and the lack of control that a rider has when they step into a taxicab or a train or an elevator."

The push for the bill is spurred by concerns for rider safety, particularly after an Illinois Supreme Court case that was settled out of court in January 2022. The case's prior appellate court opinion affirmed ride-share companies' exemption from the common carrier status after a Lyft driver allegedly raped a passenger in 2017.

The alleged rape occurred in Chicago, when a woman identified as Jane Doe hailed a Lyft after a night out with her friends. The Lyft driver picked her up and, at some point during the ride, Doe fell asleep. The driver then drove to a secluded alley where he brandished a knife, zip-tied her hands and repeatedly sexually assaulted her, according to a court filing in the case that was settled in 2022.

Despite Doe's argument that ride-share companies such as Lyft should be held to the

The statute in question, part of the 2014 Transportation Network Providers Act, states Transportation Network Companies and their drivers "are not common carriers, contract carriers or motor carriers, as defined by applicable State law, nor do they provide taxicab or for-hire vehicle service."

"Were we to hold that TNCs are subject to the same liability standards as common carriers, it would strip the relevant language of (the section of the statute) of all meaning," Illinois First District Justice Bertina Lampkin wrote in the appellate court decision.

Gong-Gershowitz argued that, if not for the law, Lyft may have been liable in this instance.

"This exemption from the common carrier doctrine insulates TNC's liability from the acts of their drivers when injuries to their consumers occur," Gong-Gershowitz said in a committee hearing. "Other common carriers...do not enjoy this exemption and it has been used by ride-share companies to shield themselves from liability and auto crashes and cases where drivers have sexually assaulted their passengers."

Opposition to the legislation centered on a concern that the common carrier classification may negatively impact business for ride-share companies.

"One of the reasons these entities have been so successful has been costs aren't as great as they are with other entities," Rep. Patrick Windhorst, R-Metropolis, said on the House floor. "So by increasing regulations or burdens on business then we may drive them out or make them less successful."

In an interview, Gong-Gershowitz refuted that claim, asserting ride-share companies are not a cheaper option anymore.

"When you look at surge pricing, when you look now at what riders pay to take an Uber or Lyft from one place or another, I would argue that the price comparison to other forms of transportation...being a less expensive option no longer is what's born out in the market," Gong-Gershowitz said.

According to Crain's Chicago Business, the average fare for Ubers in Chicago increased by 80 percent and by 73 percent for Lyft since 2019. According to the same report, the average fare for taxis increased by 50 percent.

Gong-Gershowitz added the cultural landscape around ride-share companies has shifted since their inception, eliminating the need to treat them differently from alternative modes of transportation.

"I think almost everybody now, at all ages, has an app on their phone and knows how to use both ride-share apps for Uber and Lyft, as well as other things," Gong-Gershowitz said. "So the dominance of technology in terms of the way we handle transportation, and many other things, has transformed the world that we live in over the last 10 years. And so the rationale that existed in 2015 just doesn't hold up in today's market."

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same liability standard as established common carriers, the appellate court upheld the exemption because of the specificity of the statute. The case was settled out of court before the Supreme Court could rule on it.