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TRANSPORTATION THAT WORKS TODAY. NOT 1950 OR 2050.

by Charles Herbst

The 2020s are going to be a serious challenge for Belvidere. A city that relies on gasoline sales to motorists and building gasoline-propelled vehicles isn't going to thrive much longer without making major changes.

To celebrate our 25th Anniversary, The Boone County Journal is proposing a pragmatic, affordable approach to provide the transportation facilities that the overwhelming majority of Belvidere and Rockford are already demanding. We hope that this community and its leaders will take these ideas seriously and start the job that needs to be done.

We want to underscore that the ideas that we are presenting are not pie-in-the-sky, pipe dreams. What is a pipe dream is to continue to talk about a \$295 million passenger rail project that we all need to admit is not going to happen. It's pie-in-the-sky to pretend that we are all happily living in the Mid-Twentieth Century and that everyone has 2.1 cars and 2.5 children, all above average. Belvidere's (and Rockford's) vitality depends upon looking at the calendar, facing up to our challenges and exploiting our opportunities.



We have gone into considerable detail in this series, because we want to demonstrate the possibilities and practicality of what we are suggesting. There is a renewed interest in rebuilding American infrastructure, and the time to proceed is now, not a

generation from now.

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May 7 - The Rockford Rocket
May 14 - The Belvidere Oasis

Illinois to Lose Congressional Seat Based on 2020 Census

It is one of 3 states to see population decline over past decade

by Tim Kirsininkas Capitol News Illinois

The U.S. Census Bureau announced Monday Illinois will lose a seat in Congress based on the results of the 2020 census.

Illinois will move from 18 to 17 seats in the U.S. House, an expected result after some advocates had warned that an undercount could lead to the loss of two seats. The state has lost at least one congressional representative in eight of the last 9 decades after peaking at 27 seats in 1910 and remaining there until the 1940 census.

Six other states will also lose a seat, including California, Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York.

Illinois, Mississippi and West Virginia are the only three states to lose population over the past decade, Census Bureau officials said Monday. It's the first time the Census Bureau logged a decade-over-decade population loss in the state.

According to data released Monday, the state has a total population of just over 12.8 million people, a drop of 0.1 percent when compared to 2010.

While the population loss was not as pronounced as some had originally anticipated, Gov. JB Pritzker said in an unrelated news conference Monday that he was 'concerned' about outmigration in the state, which he said has been taking place 'for more than a decade.'

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Lawmakers Question Exelon Audit

Report calls for millions in subsidies to keep nuclear plants open

by Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

Members of a state Senate committee sharply criticized a recent audit of Exelon's nuclear power plant operations that suggested ratepayers may need to subsidize two of those plants by as much as \$350 million over the next five years.

Gov. JB Pritzker's office and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency commissioned the audit last year, at a cost of \$208,000, after Exelon announced in August that it plans to shutter its Byron and Dresden power plants later in 2021.

The audit, by the consulting firm Synapse Energy Economics Inc., was released in redacted form on IEPA's website Aug. 14.

But Sen. Michael Hastings, D-Frankfort, who chairs the Energy and Public Utilities Committee, criticized many of the redactions and insisted lawmakers be given complete copies of the report.

'As my mom would say, son, you have more degrees than a thermometer,' Hastings said. 'And you expect me to make some sort of determination based off of a report that's halfway redacted. I expect more of us, and I expect more of our government in terms of a report. And I find it just very troubling.'

Sen. Sue Rezin, R-Morris, the ranking Republican on the committee, also criticized the handling of the report, noting that the governor's office provided a quote for a news report about the audit that appeared online several hours before the report was given to lawmakers.

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Lawmakers, Pritzker Spar Over Projected Fiscal Year Revenues

GOP members says proposed tax changes undermine 2019 negotiations

by Raymon Troncoso Capitol News Illinois

Members of an Illinois Senate committee sparred with officials from Gov. JB Pritzker's

Continued on page 4

Kentucky Derby Betting Odds

MAY 1ST 5:50 PM (CENTRAL)

Table with 3 columns: Post, Postion, Horse, Odds. Lists 19 horses and their betting odds for the Kentucky Derby.

OP-ED

Mascot Hunting Season in Springfield: Bill would Change School Consolidation

by Roger Eddy

Spring break has come and gone for the 2021 spring session of the Illinois General Assembly. As the march toward adjournment heats up, this is a great time for you to get involved. Nothing stirs emotion and interest like a proposal to potentially reorganize or in some way consolidate school districts in Illinois. HB7 is just such a bill. It was filed on Jan. 13, 2021, and carries the title of "School District Efficiency Commission." This measure passed out of a House Committee prior to the spring break, and recently a couple of amendments were filed to change the original version of the bill.

This is not the first time there has been a push for some type of consideration of consolidation of the 852 school districts in Illinois. Myriad task forces and commissions have studied the topic for years. The latest well-known effort was called the Classrooms First Commission. It was "led" by then Lt. Gov. Sheila Simon in 2012, and I served on that commission. Its final report can be found online with a simple search. Recommendations dealt with removing barriers to consolidation and streamlining the process. There was no effort to force local districts into any type of consolidation or reorganization.

State law provides for several types of school

district reorganization. These methods allow for local input and decision making. Consolidation of school districts requires that a majority of voters approve the merger in each of the districts involved in the proposed consolidation. The process begins when a committee, called the "committee of 10," is formed, consisting of 10 individuals from the districts involved. Open meetings are held, and key decisions must be made in order for the group to serve the regional superintendent with a valid ballot proposal. In 2002, I was part of a local committee of 10 that worked to prepare a consolidation proposal between two rural unit districts in southeastern Illinois. Ultimately, that proposal failed, passing in one district and losing in the other, proving it is difficult to take down a school mascot. Overall, the important thing was that people were provided the opportunity to determine if the merger was a good idea.

HB7 would shift away from the committee of 10 process to another type of committee, the "school efficiency committee." It would ultimately be able to forward a proposed consolidation petition to the regional superintendent for voter consideration without specific local representation on the efficiency committee. The planned efficiency committee structure is much larger than the current committee of 10 and includes government officials, elected officials, union appointees, statewide management association appointees and parents from various regions of the state. In all, there are 25 proposed members of this efficiency committee.

The efficiency committee's responsibility is to identify a certain number of school districts, based on certain criteria, to be the subject of a local consolidation referendum. There are many more details in the proposal, including a clear focus on establishing unit districts (K-12) by merging existing dual high school districts with K-8 elementary districts.

If this concerns you, this is the time to be heard. Go to www.ilga.gov, and type HB7 into the search-by-number box, then click on "Full Text." At that point you can read through the proposal and amendments being offered to get a better idea of what this might mean to your local community

You can even file a witness slip online and make comments about the legislation you are interested in. Simply go back the General Assembly home page (www.ilga.gov) and click on the "GA Dashboard" link. That link is highlighted in red. Click the appropriate House or Senate committee hearing based on what you learned about where the proposal is in the process. Posted bills are listed, along with a link to file a witness slip. Fill the slip out and add your thoughts and your voice.

Of course, you could contact your representative or senator directly by using the Senate or House member directory on the General Assembly home page. Just click on the name of your elected official. Office locations in Springfield and in-district phone numbers are located on this page, and you could call to make an appointment to discuss your concerns or leave a message regarding your support or opposition.

Roger Eddy is a retired member of the Illinois House and served on the Special Investigative Committee on the impeachment of Rod Blagojevich. He served the 109th District as a Republican from 2003 to 2012. Recently, he authored a book highlighting the impeachment of Blagojevich. The book, "A Front Row Seat - The Impeachment of Rod Blagojevich," is available from Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

Midland States Bancorp Announces 2021 First Qtr Results

Summary

- Net income of \$18.5 million, or \$0.81 diluted earnings per share
- Efficiency ratio improved to 56.88% from 58.55% in Q4 2020
- Return on average shareholders' equity of 12.04%
- Return on average tangible common equity of 17.28%
- Tier 1 leverage ratio increased 29 bps to 7.79%
- Book value and tangible book value per share increased 2.2% and 3.5%, respectively

Midland States Bancorp, Inc. (Nasdaq: MSBI) reported net income of \$18.5 million, or \$0.81 diluted earnings per share, for the first quarter of 2021. This compares to net income of \$8.3 million, or \$0.36 diluted earnings per share, for the fourth quarter of 2020, which was negatively impacted by \$4.9 million of charges related to the prepayment of FHLB advances, a \$0.6 million loss on mortgage servicing rights ("MSRs") held-for-sale, and \$0.2 million in integration and acquisition expenses, and to net income of \$1.5 million, or \$0.06 diluted earnings per share, for the first quarter of 2020, which was negatively impacted by an \$8.5 million impairment on commercial MSRs and \$0.9 million in integration and acquisition expenses.

Jeffrey G. Ludwig, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Company, said, "Our first quarter results reflect a significant increase in our level of profitability resulting from the actions we took last year to increase efficiencies and optimize our business model. Despite operating in a low growth, low interest rate environment, we are seeing substantial improvement in our performance metrics including our efficiency ratio, return on average assets, and return on average tangible equity, as well as strong increases in our capital ratios and book value.

"We continued to execute on our strategy to increase our recurring fee income with the announcement of our acquisition of ATG Trust Company, which we expect to close during the second quarter of 2021. The addition of ATG Trust will further increase our assets under administration and provide additional expertise in specialized areas that will improve our ability to attract new clients to our wealth management business.

"During the first quarter, we saw an elevated level of loan payoffs and paydowns, which impacted our total loan balances. However, we are seeing encouraging signs of improving economic conditions in our markets and a growing loan pipeline. As a result, we believe that we will see stronger loan production and loan growth as we move through the year. The stronger loan growth and redeployment of our excess liquidity into higher yielding assets should enable us to realize additional operating leverage and generate further improvement in our level of profitability going forward," said Mr. Ludwig.



OBITUARIES

- Best, Robert, 86, Formerly of Belvidere, April 22
- Blachford, Donald, 90, Belvidere, April 22
- Oehler, Diane, 74, Belvidere, April 22
- Polhill, Terry, 82, Belvidere, April 16
- Robinett, Jerry, 69, Cherry Valley, April 20



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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.

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THE CASE AGAINST AMTRAK

by Charles Herbst

Belvidere and Rockford have spoken.

On November 6, 2018, Boone and Winnebago County voters were asked a question: "Shall the State of Illinois pursue reinstating passenger rail service to Northwest Illinois from Chicago to East Dubuque?" Sixty-eight percent of Boone County voters said yes. Eighty-one percent of Winnebago County voters also said yes. No officeholder who was in a contested election in either county received that large of a mandate.

This time Rockford and Belvidere really do have something in common: We want better transportation to Chicago and O'Hare International Airport.

Since the referendum, we have seen a token effort. A nice meeting the following February at Giovanni's attended by planners, politicians and railroad aficionados. Local representatives (namely Sen. Steve Stadelman) made sure it was included in the 2019 state capital plan to the tune of \$275 million. While that sounds impressive, it still has to be funded and approved by the Governor before the money is real. Given the state's finances, don't start lining up on the station platform just yet.

The *Journal* has spent several years studying the issue. In this series, we offer a modest solution. A better, feasible solution at a tenth of the price of a train. It's something we can have now instead of a decade or more from now.

Transportation or carnival ride?

Trains are a powerful icon in American culture. The train was integral to the Nineteenth Century westward expansion of the United States. In the first half of the Twentieth Century, before the ascendancy of the automobile and airplane, passenger trains were the dominant method of intercity travel. Many of our songs and movies glamorize traveling by train.

For those who enjoy the experience of traveling by train for its own sake, there are many opportunities that already exist. But this article is about providing economical, comfortable transportation, rather than pitching fantasies. Our goal is transit to Chicago, not building an expensive, \$275 million carnival ride.

The demand for public transportation to Chicago is well documented ...

There are about 25 buses running each way from Rockford to O'Hare or Downtown Chicago daily. None of these currently call in Boone County. There are also several Pace vanpools to Chicago that originate in Boone and Winnebago counties.

Current bus fare is approximately \$25 each way. A family of four using this service for a day trip to Chicago would pay well over \$200 for bus fare, local parking and connecting transit. Comparable Amtrak fares for similar distances include Mendota to Chicago for \$12, Kankakee to Chicago for \$8, South Bend to Chicago for \$16 or on South Shore trains for \$14.25. Many people from our area drive to McHenry County train stations or Elgin and ride Metra commuter trains to Downtown Chicago. The fare from Harvard is \$9.50, \$8.25 from Elgin.

Most travelers from this area to Chicago are not daily travelers, although, surprisingly, Boone County and Rockford have a growing number of "supercommuters," who commute to Downtown Chicago every day. A larger number commute to suburbs like Elgin, Hoffman Estates and Schaumburg.

... but we don't believe that passenger rail from Rockford to Chicago will work.

1. "Chicago" is huge. An Amtrak (or Metra) train would not go to where Rockfordians and Belvidereans want to go. Using any existing right of way, a train to Chicago from Rockford would terminate at Union Station. Although Union Station is reasonably convenient to the West Loop, it is a beast to connect from there to most any major Chicago destination. Union Station is not served by CTA trains (the El); the nearest is a subway station hidden under the Eisenhower Expressway three blocks away on Clinton Street.

The number one Chicago destination for Rockfordians and Belvidereans is O'Hare Airport. O'Hare is about one hour away from Rockford and is home to 60,000 new construction jobs and countless other high-paying, permanent positions at and near the airport. O'Hare has scheduled nonstop flights to over 262 cities worldwide. It is one of five airports in the world with nonstop service to all six populated continents. Unfortunately, providing a direct rail link from Rockford to O'Hare is not feasible. Existing rail lines don't offer a direct route.

Union Station has no practical connection between Union Station and either O'Hare or Midway Airport. Getting to O'Hare from Union Station takes over an hour. Union Station has no direct service to Wrigley Field, Guaranteed Rate Field, McCormick Place or the Museum Campus. Connections to Northwestern, DePaul, University of Chicago and UIC are also indirect.

2. Chicago, like many of the world's large cities, was built around multiple train stations. Although all Amtrak trains are located at Union Station, trains to the suburbs are located in four different stations and can require a long walk or taxi ride between them. Philadelphia, Paris and London have spent billions on "crossrail" trains to connect their suburbs to all parts of the central area. Proposals have been made to build a Chicago Crossrail to O'Hare from McCormick Place and Chicago's South Side. These plans could help O'Hare-bound riders on a Rockford to Chicago train. But these are currently utopian proposals that are decades and billions of dollars away from fruition.

3. The nearly \$300 million capital budget for Rockford train service presumes the reconstruction of two bridges. But it does not include adding an additional track along 23 miles between Elgin and Bensenville. That run is home to a busy Metra line between Elgin and Union Station. Without an additional track, Amtrak trains from Rockford would become stranded behind local Metra trains in the Western Suburbs. This adds millions to the budget. The train would also have to navigate the notorious A2 railway interchange in Chicago, a chokepoint where existing commuter trains are already frequently delayed.

4. Amtrak is an intercity, long-distance service. Rockford to Chicago is more suitable for a "commuter" service model to O'Hare and Chicago. If Amtrak is the operator, we would likely see stops only in Central Rockford, possi-

bly Elgin, and Chicago Union Station. Boone County would have no service. No one is going to drive from Belvidere or Perryville Road to Downtown Rockford to take a train to Chicago. If anything, they would take a Metra train from Woodstock, as is possible now, without spending \$275 million for a new rail line.

We see very few possibilities for continuing a railway journey originating from Rockford beyond Chicago. It would not make sense for Rockfordians to take a westbound train from Chicago. That leaves Champaign, Indianapolis, Michigan and the Northeast. Is there a local demand for such service? We've already established that Union Station is inconvenient for the Chicago-bound.

5. Commuter service needs far more frequency. Metra operates 9 trains a day from Harvard and even that is minimal. Each train needs a lot more people to fill than a bus or automobile. Assume 3 trains a day. We doubt that the schedule would please anyone.

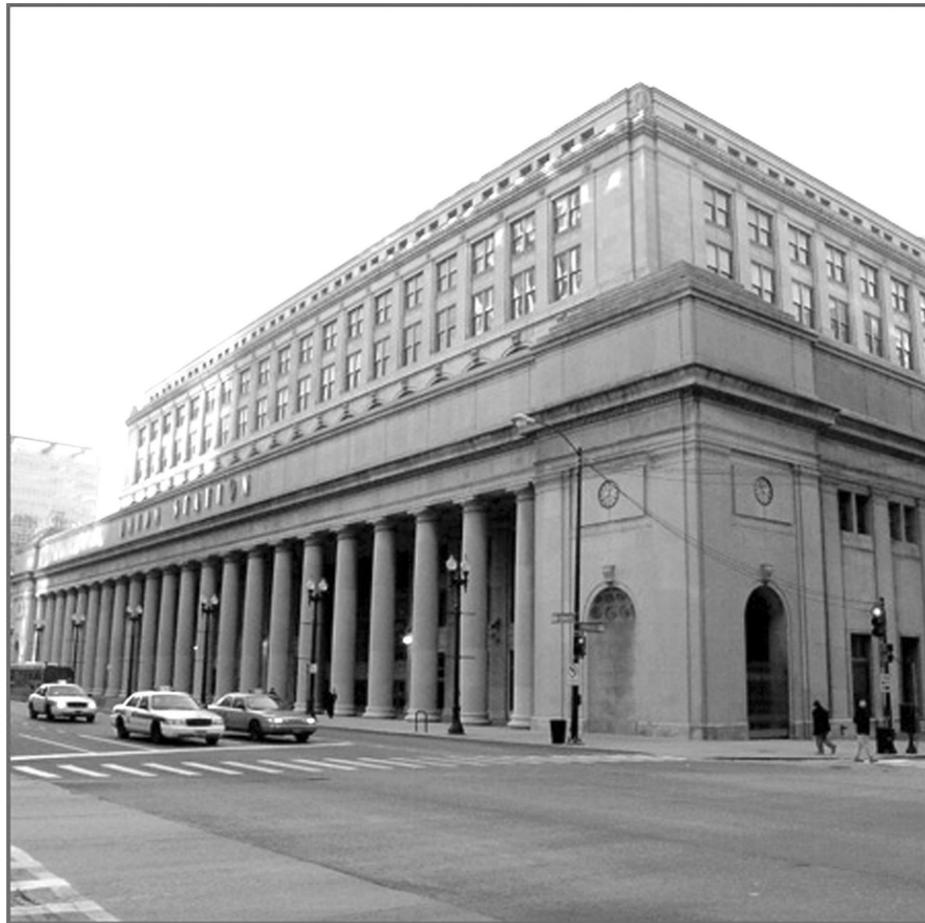
6. South Main Street in Rockford is not where the demand is. Whatever may happen to Downtown Rockford in 2040 or beyond, the 2021 demand for travel to Chicago and O'Hare is on the East Side of Rockford and in Boone County. Clinging to memories and dreaming of a 1940s-style Rockford is counterproductive. We need to build transportation facilities where people are now, not where the planners and dreamers wish they were.

7. Metra is not the solution. The same logistics problems would still exist if Metra were the operator. The Chicagoland RTA is designed to provide transit service in and to Chicago. In Rockford and Boone County, our transit needs are considerably different. The Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD) is much better suited to meet our transportation requirements.

Finally, \$275 million is a lot of money. It would buy many things this community needs. And that's just the capital budget for building a train line. There is still the matter of operating the trains. Who is going to pay for that? There is no support for a tax increase to finance ongoing railway operations.

Daydreaming about a train from Downtown Chicago to Rockford may be fun, but it is a waste of time. Worse, it overshadows serious discussion of how to provide effective intercity transport.

Next week: A better idea The Rockford Rocket



Chicago's Union Station at Canal and Jackson Streets is not connected to CTA trains or conveniently located to Chicago's many tourist and other attractions.

Census *Continued page 1*

“We’ve got to turn that around,” Pritzker said. “That’s something that unfortunately before I became governor was a bit set in clay, if not stone. And now, we’re working very hard to make sure we’re going the right direction.”

Pritzker attributed the population loss primarily to college students who choose not to attend school in the state.

Under the state constitution, members of the General Assembly are tasked with drawing new legislative boundaries following the decennial census. The new legislative boundaries are then sent to the governor for approval or veto.

Census Bureau officials said that specific data used for redistricting would be provided by Sept. 30. The delay in official numbers could cause complications for Illinois’ redistricting process, which is currently underway.

Some Democratic state lawmakers have proposed using data from the American Community Survey in place of census data to create legislative and congressional district maps by the end of June as required by the constitution.

Rep. Tim Butler, a Springfield Republican who is the minority spokesperson on the House Redistricting Committee, said in a Monday news conference that ACS data provides “a small snapshot” of population data when compared to the census, and could risk leaving populations out of consideration.

“We’ve heard witness after witness testify at our redistricting hearings that ACS data does not fully represent minority communities, that it does not fully represent rural communities,” Butler said.

“As we’ve said all along throughout these hearings, ACS data is not what you need to use to draw the maps because it’s not going to give you the granular data and the correct data,” he added.

Republicans have repeatedly called for an independent, nonpartisan commission to draw new legislative boundaries without taking partisan politics into consideration, a proposal which has not been entertained by members of the state’s Democratic supermajorities in either chamber.

“The maps need to be drawn, in my mind, without the political data put in them,” Butler said. “The most important data for the majority is going to be the political data and people’s home addresses that they include in there, and they’re going to draw the maps how they see fit probably.”

Sen. Omar Aquino, D-Chicago, who chairs the Senate Redistricting Committee, and Sen. Elgie Sims, D-Chicago, who is the committee’s vice chair, released a joint statement following the news.

“We are reviewing the information released today by the U.S. Census Bureau and remain committed to working with our partners in Washington to ensure Illinois continues to receive the federal resources and support our communities need,” the statement reads. “While the Census Bureau confirmed full redistricting information may not be released until September, we will not abandon our duty to craft a map by June 30 as required by the Illinois Constitution. As others seek to delay and distract, we are focused on gathering input from communities of interest across Illinois to create a fair map that reflects the diversity of our great state.”

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

Exelon *Continued page 1*

“So the governor’s office felt compelled to release this report to the media and actually give the media a quote before any member who has worked almost two years on this topic received the report, which we received at 10 o’clock that night,” she said.

Deputy Gov. Christian Mitchell, who testified during the hearing, said the report had been re-

acted to protect company trade secrets, but he said lawmakers would be provided unredacted copies upon request.

He also said the governor’s office responded to media inquiries because it began receiving inquiries about the report soon after it was delivered to Exelon, and because information about it was “out in the universe,” the governor’s office wanted “to make sure that we could get our side out.”

Shutting down the two plants would be a huge setback for Pritzker’s goal of transitioning Illinois’ power industry to 100 percent renewable or carbon-free energy production by 2050, and the governor’s office has already signaled its support for some kind of deal to keep the plants open.

But Mitchell said Thursday the administration has no intention of approving an agreement like the one made in 2016, as part of the Future Energy Jobs Act, that provided Exelon with subsidies totaling \$235 million a year for 10 years, “with no year-over-year review, or even midpoint review of the subsidy.”

“At no point during that effort was Exelon forced to publicly open their books and demonstrate to ratepayers of Illinois that their subsidies were right-sized or necessary to keep the plants open,” he said.

He also noted that Exelon’s utility subsidiary Commonwealth Edison has been the target of a long-running probe by the U.S. Attorney’s office in Chicago, “leaving the confidence of Illinois citizens and lawmakers at an all-time low after their admitted misconduct.”

In announcing its plan to close the plants, Exelon said even though they were licensed to continue operating for another 10-20 years, they had become economically unviable due to declining energy prices and new market rules that allow fossil fuel plants to underbid nuclear plants in capacity auctions.

The company also said its LaSalle and Braidwood nuclear plants were at “high risk for premature closure.”

The Synapse audit largely confirmed Exelon’s statements about the Byron and Dresden plants, although it disputed Exelon’s claim that the LaSalle and Braidwood plants were in danger of losing money, at least over the next five years.

That analysis was based on a number of assumptions about future energy prices, as well as Exelon’s actual operating costs. But many lawmakers on the committee challenged those assumptions.

In particular, Hastings noted that information supporting many of the assumptions was part of the material that had been redacted.

“And then when you look at the pages that are actually redacted, 34 of those pages actually have redactions in them,” he said to Synapse’s Max Chang, one of the coauthors of the report. “The information in those redactions

is essential for me and other members of the General Assembly to make a public policy decision on what we do moving forward here.”

Lawmakers are considering several major pieces of energy legislation this year. Those include the Clean Energy Jobs Act and the Climate Union Jobs Act which are both aimed at transitioning Illinois toward a clean-energy economy. Whatever measures lawmakers take to address nuclear energy policy will likely be included in one of those bills, or in a combined bill.

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Fiscal *Continued page 1*

administration Friday in a hearing on tax changes proposed by the governor in an effort to balance the state’s budget for the 2022 fiscal year.

The Senate Revenue and Appropriations committees held the joint hearing, questioning the directors of the Illinois Department of Revenue and the Governor’s Office of Management and

Budget among others.

In his budget proposal released in February, Pritzker outlined nine changes to the corporate tax code meant to generate \$932 million in revenue for the state in order to maintain a balanced budget while keeping income taxes and government spending flat for FY 22, which



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begins July 1.

“The governor’s budget proposal is a reasonable and balanced one,” IDOR Director David Harris told lawmakers. “Were it to be enacted as (Gov. Pritzker) proposed, there would be a \$120 million surplus at the end of FY 22 by estimate.”

The largest change in terms of building revenue would be a cap on how much corporations can deduct from their taxes based on their losses in a given year. Under current tax law a corporation can take their net operating loss and reduce how much of their income is taxable in future years by that amount.

Pritzker’s proposal would cap this deduction to \$100,000 annually for the next three years, which IDOR estimated would save the state \$314 million in FY 22.

Harris told lawmakers that the state’s 2,800 corporate taxpayers deducted \$6.4 billion in net operating losses from their taxes in 2018. Just 84 of those corporate taxpayers that year accounted for \$3.5 billion in operating losses.

“My point there is the biggest percentage of (net operating losses) are enjoyed by a very small number and that means that the overwhelming majority of corporations are not going to be impacted by this,” he said.

While the Pritzker administration has referred to the changes as “closing corporate tax loopholes,” three of the nine tax codes being removed or amended as part of the proposed budget were put into place by Pritzker as part of budget negotiations with state Republicans in 2019.

A phased repeal of the corporate franchise tax, an addition to what properties qualify for the state’s machinery and equipment sales tax exemption, and a tax deduction for creating new construction jobs in the state were added to the budget proposal put forth by Pritzker in 2019 to secure Republican support.

All three provisions would be delayed or removed in the governor’s plan in order to generate approximately \$102 million in savings for FY 22

That third provision, branded as the Blue Collar Jobs Act, was meant to go into effect Jan. 2021. At the time of its passage, the bill was touted by both Pritzker and Republicans as a tax credit that would bring more jobs and businesses to Illinois.

However, the construction worker tax credit had its implementation delayed by Pritzker, who cited losses in tax revenue due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Sen. Chapin Rose, R-Mahomet, questioned Sturm, the governor’s budget director, on why a program passed with bipartisan support needed to be cut if the state expected a surplus.

“Here we are at the end of COVID with Illinois as one of the top states in the nation for unemployment, people desperately needing work,” he said. “Why on earth did the administration—did Governor Pritzker— decide, he’s now going to back out, back out of, back down from, go back on, his word, his pledge, when he signed the Blue Collar Jobs Act?”

Democratic Sen. Linda Holmes, of Aurora, echoed his concerns.

“I kind of hesitate, wondering if that is almost a bit of a poison pill here, when we talk about eliminating some recent tax changes,” she said.

According to Sturm, the state’s short-term fiscal situation looked positive due to loans and an influx of funds from the federal government as part of several coronavirus relief packages passed in the last year. But for long-term stability, there were hard choices that had to be made regarding the tax code.

“Illinois has struggled with a persistent budget deficit for the last few years, many years. These are changes more permanent in nature that would go to try to address some of the underlying structural challenges of the state’s budget,” Sturm said.

Other corporate tax changes that raised concerns at the hearing are the reduction of a tax credit for individuals and businesses that

contribute to private school scholarships, a cap on the reimbursement retailers receive from collecting sales tax, and the expiration of a sales tax exemption for biodiesel fuel.

Multiple business organizations submitted either oral or written testimony against the proposals, including the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association, the Taxpayers Federation of Illinois and the Illinois Retail Merchants Association.

Chicago Democratic Sen. Elgie Sims, who chaired the hearing, said he heard “a large discussion this morning as if this is a one-year solution,” and offered support for the budget’s long-term goal of financial solvency.

“If there are other proposals, we certainly look forward to see, but these are the proposals as put forth by the governor,” he said.

Greg Cox, of the Illinois Soybean Growers Association, said he appreciated the difficulty of Sturm’s position since “she was given a task to build a budget with no general tax increases and with flat spending,” but that there would be serious policy implications for cutting the exemption for biodiesel fuel.

Those implications are increased air pollution as more petrol and less biodiesel would be used in fuel blends and the potential loss of 2,000 jobs tied to the biodiesel fuel industry in Illinois, which is the nation’s largest soybean producer.

He also presented Senate Bill 2394, submitted by the Growers Association, through Essex Democrat Sen. Patrick Joyce, as a compromise that would still gradually eliminate the tax credit and save the state money.

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

Springfield Republican Calls Out Democrats for Placing Bill ‘on Review’

GOP says House process remains unchanged despite new leadership

by Sarah Mansur Capitol News Illinois

Republican Rep. Tim Butler on Thursday accused the new Democratic leadership in the state House of Representatives of preserving practices from previous leadership which Republicans say unfairly benefits the majority party.

“So, what the speaker said back in January about this place being different and running in a different manner is a bunch of BS right now,” Butler said in a Thursday night floor speech during which he threw a paper calendar and pounded his desk out of anger.

Butler said Democrats have “ignored” important bills sponsored by Republicans, preventing them from being called for a vote on the House floor.

Specifically, Butler was speaking about the his own measure, House Bill 2994, which has not been called for a vote ahead of a Friday deadline to advance bills to the Senate.

HB 2994 would allow Capital

Township — which is wholly contained within the Springfield city limits — to dissolve into Sangamon County if the township and county boards of trustees establish resolutions that would place the question on a ballot referendum for the county and township voters to decide.

Despite the bill having bipartisan support and unanimous committee approval, Butler said he was told his bill was “on review.” He said he hasn’t received an explanation of what that means.

“I’ve got a bill that is important to my community that the leadership will not call!” Butler said on the House floor.

Both Butler and House Minority Leader Jim Durkin, of Western Springs, accused Democratic leadership of unfairly limiting the number of Republicans bills being called in the House.

Durkin said, based on his review, the House Republicans had only 10 of their bills called for a vote as of Thursday night, compared to 68 bills sponsored by Democrats.

“It doesn’t give me any inspiration that anything has changed over the years,” Durkin said.

Rep. Thaddeus Jones, a Calumet City Democrat, said Durkin was not including the number of bills on the consent calendar, and that the number of bills advanced by Republicans is actually 48 bills. The consent calendar allows for the passage of several uncontroversial bills in a single vote without further debate.

“I think we all need to recognize the decorum that we should operate under on the House floor,

Continued on Page 7


COMPETENCE IN FILMS

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

There are several opportunities for employment at Polifilm America. Located in Hampshire, IL (off I-90 and Route 20 exit). We are hiring **2nd shift** machine operators and mixers. Starting pay rates are 15.65 – 16.65 per hour.

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LEGAL NOTICES

STATE OF ILLINOIS IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
BOONE COUNTY

PROBATE DIVISION
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF GORDON W. TAYLOR,
Deceased CASE NO. 2021 P 26

CLAIM NOTICE

NOTICE is given of the death of GORDON W. TAYLOR, who died on March 22, 2021. Letters of Office were issued on April 13, 2021 to GRAHAM G. TAYLOR, 951 S. Natalie Ln., Anaheim, CA 92808, who is the Executor of the estate. The attorney for the estate is Douglas R. Henry, of Barrick, Switzer, Long, Balsley & Van Evera, LLP, 6833 Stalter Drive, Rockford, Illinois 61108.

Claims against the Estate may be filed on or before October 16, 2021, that date being at least six (6) months from the date of first publication, or within three (3) months from the date of mailing or delivery of Notice to creditors, if mailing or delivery is required by Section 18-3 of the Illinois Probate Act, 1975 as amended, whichever date is later. Any claim not filed by the requisite date stated above shall be barred.

Claims against the Estate may be filed in the Office of the Boone County Circuit Clerk, Probate Division at the Boone County Courthouse, 601 N. Main Street, Belvidere, Illinois 61008, or with the Estate Executor, or both.

Copies of claims filed with the Circuit Clerk's Office, Probate Division, must be mailed or delivered to the Estate Executor and to his attorney within ten (10) days after it has been filed.

Dated: April 13, 2021

/s/ Graham G. Taylor, Executor

DOUGLAS R. HENRY - #6229426

BARRICK, SWITZER, LONG,

BALSLEY & VAN EVERA, LLP

6833 Stalter Drive

Rockford, IL 61108

(815) 962-6611

dhenry@bslbv.com

Published in *The Boone County Journal* April 16, 23, 30

STATE OF ILLINOIS
CIRCUIT COURT BOONE COUNTY
PUBLICATION NOTICE OF COURT DATE FOR REQUEST FOR
NAME CHANGE (MINOR CHILDREN)

Case No.2021-MR-40

REQUEST OF: ROXANA NIED to change name of minor children:
Current Name of Minor Children OLIVIA ALEXA STOICA & NOELLE
GRACE STOICA; Proposed New Name of Minor Children OLIVIA
ALEXA NIED & NOELLE GRACE NIED. Court Date information:
May 25, 2021, at 9:30am, Boone County Courthouse, 601 N. Main St.,
Belvidere, IL 61008 Courtroom #3

Published in the Boone County Journal 04/ 16, 23, 30

STATE OF ILLINOIS IN THE CIRCUIT COURT
BOONE COUNTY
IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF
Sirena Angelique Bradley Case No.21-MR-47
NOTICE OF FILING PETITION FOR NAME CHANGE (ADULT)

– There will be a court date on my Request to change my name from:
Sirena Angelique Bradley to the new name of Sirena Angelique Gomez.
The court date will be held on 06/01/2021 10:15a.m. at the Boone County
Courthouse, 601 N. Main St., Belvidere, IL 61008 in Courtroom #3

Published in the Boone County Journal April 30, May 7, 14

ASSUMED NAMES

ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE

This is to certify that the undersigned intend to conduct and transact a high end tattoo studio for body art business in said County and State under the name of Ambitious Ink II at the following post office address: 109B Buchanan Street, Belvidere, IL 61008 that the true and real full names of all persons owning, conducting or transacting such business, with respective residence address of each, are as follows: Justin Rednour, 2880 Hanford Drive, Rockford, IL 61114; phone #815-721-2134.

Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 23rd day of April, A.D. 2021

Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk

Published in Boone County Journal April 30, May 7, 14

ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE

This is to certify that the undersigned intend to conduct and transact a Carpentry business in said County and State under the name of Greenfields Carpentry at the following post office address: 927 W. Boone Street, Belvidere, IL 61008 that the true and real full names of all persons owning, conducting or transacting such business, with respective residence address of each, are as follows: Richard Burns II, 927 W. Boone Street, Belvidere, IL 61008; phone #815-566-0219.

Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 9th day of April, A.D. 2021

Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk

Published in Boone County Journal April 16,23,30

ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE

This is to certify that the undersigned intend to conduct and transact a Landscaping business in said County and State under the name of Odi's Landscaping at the following post office address: 6991 Cora Lee Dr., Belvidere, IL 61008 that the true and real full names of all persons owning, conducting or transacting such business, with respective residence address of each, are as follows: Odilon Rivera, 6991 Cora Lee Dr., Belvidere, IL 61008; phone #(815) 323-0666.

Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 14th day of April, A.D. 2021

Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk

Published in Boone County Journal April 16, 23, 30 C.

ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE

This is to certify that the undersigned intend to conduct and transact a landscaping business in said County and State under the name of J.O.M. Landscaping at the following post office address: 528 East Lincoln Avenue, Belvidere, IL 61008 that the true and real full names of all persons owning, conducting or transacting such business, with respective residence address of each, are as follows: Manuel Aguilar, 528 East Lincoln Avenue, Belvidere, IL 61008; phone #815-621-3479.

Subscribed and sworn (or affirmed) to before me, this 28th day of April, A.D. 2021

Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk

Published in Boone County Journal April 30, May 7, 14

COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

Boone County is looking to fill a number of vacant board positions. Position information and length of term can be located at: https://cms8-revize.com/revize/booneil/government/county_board/appointments.php

Commissioners of the Housing Authority	
Term Expires	Length of Term
January 1, 2025	(5) Year Term
January 1, 2023	(5) Year Term

Fire Protection District #3	
1st Monday, May 2021	Remainder of Term

Regional Planning Commission	
December 31, 2023	Remainder of Term
December 31, 2021	Remainder of Term

Boone County Ethics Commission	
June 30, 2021	Remainder of Term

Boone County Zoning Board of Appeals	
June 1, 2021	Remainder of Term

Building Board of Appeal	
June 1, 2024	(5)Year Term
June 1, 2025	(5) Year Term

Capron Cemetery Association	
February 1, 2027	(6) Year Term

Boone County Conservation District	
June 30, 2023	Remainder of Term

Capron Rescue Squad	
2nd Monday, December 2022	Remainder of Term

Belvidere Cemetery Association	
May 3, 2027	(6) Year Term

Fire Protection District #1	
1st Monday, May 2024	(3) Year Term

Fire Protection District #5	
1st Monday, May 2024	(3) Year Term

Interested parties are asked to send a letter and/or resume expressing your interest and qualifications along with your contact information to Boone County Administration Office, Administration Campus, 1212 Logan Ave., Suite 102, Belvidere, IL 61008 or e-mail info@boonecountyil.org.

Laurent House Opens Tour Season: Frank Lloyd Wright's Laurent House opens its 8th tour season Saturday, April 10, 2021.

Tours are scheduled on Saturdays and Sundays from April through November and on Fridays from May through October. All tours follow COVID restrictions of distancing and masks.

The Laurent House partners with Anderson Japanese Gardens in offering tours Wednesdays and Fridays. Other specialty tours include holiday events in December and Twilight Tours in summer, depending on COVID restrictions in Winnebago County. Private group tours are available at any time.

All tours are by reservation and can be made online at <https://www.Laurenthouse.com/tours/book-a-tour> or by calling 815/877-2952

City Nature Challenge Unites Rockford-Area with Global Efforts:

Locals to Participate in Community Science Challenge: The City Nature Challenge is an international collaboration between cities to document wildlife using the website and app iNaturalist. Wildlife observations are collected between April 30-May 3. It is an opportunity for residents of all

ages and backgrounds to participate in citizen science and help scientists track biodiversity data, all while maintaining physical distancing protocols. This year, 22 events are scheduled between the 14 partner organizations.

Participation is easy! Anyone in Winnebago, Boone, DeKalb, Ogle, and Stephenson counties can participate in the Rock River Valley City Nature Challenge. First, locals must make an iNaturalist account on the website or the free app available for all phone types. After creating an account, locals simply go outside and start taking pictures of plant and animal observations between April 30-May 3. An iNaturalist Scavenger Hunt available on the website adds to the challenge. From May 4-9, the observations will be identified.

To learn more about the Rock River Valley City Nature Challenge, and register for one or more of the 22 events scheduled, please visit <https://www.seversondells.com/city-nature-challenge>

Winnebago/Boone County Genealogical Society – Regular Meeting
Saturday, May 1, 2021 at 1:30 P.M.

Norwegian immigration to the US did not gain much momentum until the mid-1800s. Dana Kelly from the Norwegian American Genealogical Center & Naeseth Library will give an overview of the resources available at NAGC and discuss some strategies for researching Norwegian ancestors.

This is a ZOOM event.

Please email wbcgensociety@gmail.com to get your ZOOM link BEFORE NOON on the day of the event. Your sign in information will be emailed to you a few days before the event.

For more information, call Diane at (815) 543-2287.

28th Annual Stateline Toy Collection Club and Marengo FFA Toy Show:

Sunday May 2, 2021 from 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. Located at Marengo Community High School. Admission is \$3.00 with children 10 and under are free. For more information call Bill 815-226-9010. Proceeds will be for needy children and Marengo FFA Agriculture Programs.

Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Chapter 1414 Pancake Breakfast

Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Chapter 1414 will be holding a pancake breakfast on May 9, 2021 from 7 A.M. to Noon at the EAA Hangar just North of the Poplar Grove Airport, at 5175 Orth Road. The event will include our popular pancake breakfast (\$7 for adults, \$4 for kids) as well as Young Eagle airplane rides (FREE) for kids ages 8 through 17 (weather permitting).

Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden Presents Go Public Gardens Days 2021:

Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden is excited to announce the organization will celebrate the spring season with Go Public Gardens Days, a week of garden-themed events as part of an initiative established by the American Public Gardens Association to enhance public gardens throughout the United States. Go Public Gardens Days will begin Friday, May 7 and run through Friday, May 14 during regular business hours of 9 A.M. – 4 P.M. at Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden, 2715 S. Main St, Rockford, IL 61102, and will showcase nature's beauty during the spring season.

More information about the events taking place the week of Go Public Gardens Days can be found on Klehm's website: <http://klehm.org/go-public-gardens-days/>.

Tour of Duty: World War I Re-enactment Weekend:

Saturday, May 22 and Sunday, May 23
Session Times: 9:15 A.M. 9:30 A.M. 9:45 A.M. 1:30 P.M. 1:45 P.M. 2 P.M.

Go on your own tour of duty as a visitor to this new immersive experience depicting 1914-1918. Visitors will be guided in small groups through history displays including authentic and replica vehicles, artifact exhibits, and presentations by more than 100 World War I re-enactors.

Visitors must follow social distancing protocols in place at the time of this special event. Everyone

visiting the museum campus must wear a mask. Light refreshments and snacks will be available for purchase. \$14 Adult, \$8 Children (ages 3-17), Infants (ages 0-2) are Free, Museum Members are Free.

Members may call the museum and talk to a Front Desk representative to reserve your ticket(s) or email store@midwayvillage.com with your name and ticket quantity.

As this is a timed special event it is important to arrive on time. Wear walking shoes for the tour and dress for the weather. This is a rain or shine event. Parking is free. The museum is taking advance reservation for this timed re-enactment and limited reservations are available. Call 815-397-9112 for more information.

2021 Rockford Midtown Market:

June 3, 2021 through September 30, 2021. Open from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. Held in the Rockford Public School District 205 Administration parking lot. Go to www.Rockfordmidtownmarket.com for more information.

Learn to Ride A Horse at Lockwood Park:

Make this the year you learn to ride a horse or improve your riding skills! Registration is open for group horse riding lessons and camps this season at Rockford Park District's Lockwood Park and Trailside Equestrian Centre. A variety of lesson programs are offered throughout the spring, summer, and fall for all skill levels ages seven through adult, including: for children ages 3-6, the My Little Pony program provides an introductory riding experience, with weekly four -week sessions beginning May 3 through September 30, 2021.

More information about Lockwood Park can be found at www.rockfordparkdistrict.org/lockwood.

Autism Spectrum Disorder Support Group "What to Do When School Is Out": Wednesday, May 5, 2021. This is a Zoom meeting. Zoom waiting room opens at 5:50 P.M. and the event is from 6:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. Please register to tap.rockford@eastersealschicago.org to receive the Zoom link. Registration is required to receive the link.



NIU Offers Online Summer Class for Grade School and High School Students

NIU online summer camps build creativity, community and career skills. Since 2020, many of NIU's popular summer camps for elementary through high school students have been offered online. Using imagination, ingenuity and creative problem solving, camp directors from NIU STEAM and Summer in the Arts have developed online communities of creative and curious learners. Online camps are returning this summer with an even wider variety of topics as instructors apply the latest technology to bring old-fashioned camp fun online.

"One of the things I want people to understand about our camps is that, even though these are virtual, we're all about hands-on exploration," says Kristin Brynteson, director of NIU STEAM, which offers camps exploring science, technology, engineering, arts and math for students in grades 3 through 12. "We want kids to experience and do the science and engineering, and not just read or hear about it, so we're really challenging our instructors to continue to do that in an online format. Campers will build connections with the instructors

and other campers online, but then they'll be able to go offline and do some of the activities, build their projects and explore on their own." According to Geof Bradfield – saxophonist, NIU professor of jazz studies and director of the Summer in the Arts high school jazz camp – the online format opens up some exciting new possibilities for the camp. "We will have more NIU jazz faculty involved this year, and involved to a greater extent than usual, with daily masterclasses, lessons and workshops. Evening activities like talent shows, jazz video night and the like offer students a chance to hang out in a less structured environment and chat with recent alumni. During the day, students are divided into smaller groups based on interests and instruments and will spend a lot of time in these cohorts with a faculty mentor." In fact, after a little more than a year of teaching, meeting and interacting online, this focus on the creative possibilities of the online format is a common refrain from camp staff. Jeremy Benson, director of NIU STEAM summer camps, is looking forward to offering campers in the Backyard Rocket Science sessions a chance to use SLOOH – an online network of robotic telescopes that participants can control from their home computers to take amazing pictures of space. "The SLOOH telescopes are online and hands on – giving campers the chance to explore space with these real working telescopes," he says. "In addition, the campers will be building and launching their own rockets in their backyards, and we'll be sending out equipment to build a couple of different rockets and their own rocket launch pad."

For those interested in a more general approach to career exploration and self-development, NIU STEAM is offering a new camp, "Level Up Your Life Skills," based on their popular Failure Bites podcast – in which a wide variety of successful people share the stories of their biggest failures and how they overcame them. "Why are some people more resilient than others? Why do some people recover from failures or face challenges differently?" Brynteson asks. "We listen to these stories from a wide variety of people, and we talk about what they learned through their struggles, whether it was one big life-altering catastrophic change, or a series of small challenges they had to overcome to push towards a goal. Then the campers will interview someone they look up to, ask about their failure stories and create their own podcast."

In addition to NIU STEAM and Summer in the Arts camps, NIU also offers On Track Speech and Language Summer Camp for children ages 3-8 with mild to moderate speech or language delays. Athletic camp schedules and registration will also be coming soon. Visit niu.edu/summercamps to access each department's camp website.



Springfield

Continued page 5

and not act like little children and throw stuff," Jones said.

The House continued action Thursday night and Friday after Durkin's and Jones' comments, including passing bills sponsored by Republicans.

Butler said his passion and frustration may have gotten the better of him on Thursday evening.

"But that's on behalf of the people that I represent, and on behalf of an issue that I've worked on almost the entire time I've been in this General Assembly," Butler said in an interview with Capitol News Illinois Friday. "A lot of times, things get a little bit out of hand in the legislature. They do in all these state legislatures, in Congress. But I certainly don't regret the fact that I'm speaking up for my community and my legislation."

The comments by Butler and Durkin were largely targeted at House Speaker Emanuel

"Chris" Welch, who replaced former Speaker Michael Madigan in January. Madigan controlled the House chamber for all but two years since 1983 and was a frequent lightning rod for Republican criticism.

After Welch was elected in early January, he gave a speech emphasizing unity between the parties.

"Today will be the last time I talk about us as Democrats and Republicans," Welch said in a speech to lawmakers. "I want to talk about us as being united. We are going to work together to be united."

A spokesperson for Welch declined to comment on Butler's remarks.

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



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

- Independent:** A public notice is published in a forum independent of the government, typically in a local newspaper.
- Archivable:** A public notice is archived in a secure and publicly available format.
- Accessible:** A public notice is capable of being accessed by all segments of society.
- Verifiable:** The public and the source of the notice can verify the notice was published, usually by an affidavit provided by the publisher.

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

Public Notice Network

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Pritzker Unveils Energy Plan Amid Session's Final Stretch

Several energy overhaul proposals have been in the works since 2019

by *Jerry Nowicki Capitol News Illinois*

Gov. JB Pritzker's office unveiled a 900-page energy overhaul bill Wednesday, accelerating a yearslong negotiating process which advocates hope will end in a comprehensive clean energy platform as the session nears its final month.

The stated goal of the bill is to drive Illinois to 100 percent "clean" energy by 2050. That, Deputy Gov. Christian Mitchell said in an interview Wednesday, would include nuclear power as a major contributor. Another goal is to bring Illinois to 40 percent of its utility scale energy being produced by renewables, such as wind and solar, by 2030. Right now, that number is around 8 percent.

The bill contains some of the provisions put forth in other legislation, such as raising the rate cap on ratepayer bills for renewable projects from about 2 percent to 3.75 percent; ending formulaic rate increases for utilities immediately; and prohibiting natural gas companies from assessing a certain surcharge on bills starting in January 2022.

It also requires an annual outside audit of Exelon Corporation – the parent company of scandal-ridden Commonwealth Edison – while providing about \$70 million in subsidies each year for the next five years to two struggling nuclear plants owned by the company, one in Byron and one in Dresden. A 2016 state law has already provided two other nuclear plants owned by the company with state subsidies.

ComEd has been in the headlines since last year after entering a deferred prosecution agreement with the federal government last July in which the company admitted to a yearslong bribery scheme through which they sought to "influence and reward" then-Speaker of the House Michael Madigan with jobs for his confidants in exchange for favorable action on legislation. Madigan has not been charged and denies wrongdoing.

With other added ethics and accountability measures such as a requirement that the Illinois Commerce Commission "initiate an investigation as to whether ComEd used ratepayer funds in connection with" conduct outlined in that court document, the governor's office is seeking to strike a balance between accountability and ensuring Exelon's nuclear fleet remains one of the state's driving forces in keeping the lights on and reducing carbon emissions.

"We believe that the best way to save our nuclear fleet is going to be at the lowest possible cost to the ratepayer. And what was recommended by our independent audit is some limited short-term help for the next five years," Mitchell said. "And if you combine that with a carbon price, you actually then can reduce the amount of that help, and if you keep these folks viable for the next five years, our audit – again using all of (Exelon's) assumptions – would basically say you're keeping them alive for the next 10 years."

Mitchell was referring to an \$8 per ton price on carbon emissions for fossil fuel providers, such as coal-fired power plants and natural gas plants, that is included in the bill. That fee would escalate each year by 3 percent.

The audit he mentioned was commissioned by the governor's office through Synapse Energy Economics Inc., costing the state \$208,000. It was based on cost numbers provided by Exelon that have not been made public due to a nondisclosure agreement.

Even state lawmakers have not seen unredacted copies of the audit as of Wednesday, which was a point of concern for the state senator who chairs a key energy committee deeply involved in energy negotiations.

Sen. Michael Hastings, D-Frankfort, who is a

supporter of a union-backed bill aimed at keeping the nuclear plants viable, said any decision on subsidizing Exelon should not be made until the company and the governor's office agree to release the unredacted audit.

According to Hastings, without those numbers, it's unclear what level of subsidy the nuclear plants will need, and whether Exelon will come back to the General Assembly in the future for additional subsidies if those in the governor's plan prove insufficient.

Still, Mitchell said the \$70 million annual subsidy is the best option "that doesn't fleece the ratepayer, that only gives Exelon exactly what it is they need and preserves the kind of resources we need to invest in things like putting 1 million new electric vehicles on the road by 2030, doubling our investment in renewable energy."

The bill aims to accomplish that electric vehicle goal by allocating \$70 million from the Rebuild Illinois capital infrastructure plan to speed the production of charging stations. The state would offer rebates to companies and organizations up to 90 percent for the cost of the implementing charging stations, up to \$4,000 or \$5,000, depending on the charger.

The bill does not include reforms to the energy capacity market – a measure that was a staple of previous energy reform bills that have stagnated in the General Assembly and was once a top priority of Exelon.

Capacity payments are funded by ratepayers, essentially paying electricity generators to stay open for a number of years in order to ensure the grid can meet peak capacity needs. Some bill language for other proposals would have taken capacity procurement processes out of the hands of the federally regulated PJM Interconnection regional transmission organization and put it in the hands of the state.

Advocates have said that will allow Illinois to target capacity payments to clean and renewable energy sources.

But changes at the White House and at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission have alleviated some of the pressure that such a proposal be included in Illinois' reforms, and the governor's office said their proposal would more efficiently stabilize the nuclear fleet and emphasize the importance of carbon reduction.

The carbon price is key to that effort, Mitchell said, and revenues derived from it are expected to reach between \$400 million and \$500 million annually.

About 40 percent of that would go to equity measures written into the bill, Mitchell said, while some of it would go to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency for its operations and some would go to bolstering the Illinois Commerce Commission on some of its new regulatory duties.

"There's also money that would go toward making sure that displaced workers and communities that are affected by plant closures have the resources they need," Mitchell said. "That (the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity) can do grants to provide additional economic development opportunity in those areas so that workers get the kind of job training they need to go into the jobs of the future. So it would be split up between priorities on both the operations and investments."

Some of the money would also go toward "budget stabilization," meaning it would aid the state's ailing General Revenue Fund, which is lawmakers' main discretionary spending account.

The governor's bill essentially jumpstarts the energy negotiation process that has been ongoing since several overhaul proposals sputtered in his first year. Other proposals in the General Assembly include the Clean Energy Jobs Act, a coal-to-solar proposal and a Path to

100 Act. There's also the labor-backed Climate Union Jobs Act, among others. The governor's proposal contains some priorities of many or all of them.

Hastings, who for months has been heavily involved in Senate energy working groups as chair of the chamber's Energy and Public Utilities Committee, said in a phone call Wednesday he saw some good points and some points of concern in the governor's plan.

The effect of the carbon price must be studied, Hastings said, to determine whether it would cause some fossil fuel plants to close too early, jeopardizing the state's available power.

He also said he was encouraged that the governor's office included a measure making the Citizens Utility Board subject to Freedom of Information Act requests and prohibiting it from accepting funds from a foundation tied to a public utility.

But Hastings said more is needed in terms of enabling battery storage for renewable energy – proposals he has touted as sponsor of a coal-to-solar measure backed by Vistra Energy.

"My view on battery storage is that it is probably one of the most key components of solar in general across the state of Illinois and across the country," Hastings said. "And I say that because, you know, the sun doesn't always shine, and the wind doesn't always blow. However, when the sun does shine, we want to make sure that we store that energy so we can disperse it when we need it. That's part of sustainable renewable energy that some folks overlook."

The governor's measure calls for the Illinois Commerce Commission and the Illinois Power Agency to "initiate a proceeding to examine specific programs, mechanisms, and policies that could support the deployment of energy storage systems," according to a fact sheet from the governor's office.

Mitchell said the governor's office chose that path to avoid "being so prescriptive that the ICC and the IPA can't keep up with changing technology."

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