

## Illinois' \$55.2B Budget 'incomplete,' Civic Federation President Says

*Democrats monitoring Congress for  
actions that could force changes to  
budget*

By Ben Szalinski      Capitol News Illinois

Illinois' latest budget misses the mark in several key areas, according to one independent nonprofit fiscal analyst.

State lawmakers sent Gov. JB Pritzker a \$55.2 billion budget on May 31 that raises \$1 billion in new revenue and increases spending by more than \$2 billion in fiscal year 2026 compared to the current year.

But the head of one of Chicago's top nonpartisan government research organizations said lawmakers made too many short-term decisions to balance the budget in fiscal year 2026 that could make future fiscal years more challenging.

"It's an incomplete budget," Civic Federation President Joe Ferguson told Capitol News Illinois. "It does not add in any meaningful way to discuss any structural issues the state has. It's a maintenance budget."

Read more: New taxes on sports bets, nicotine products as Democrats pass \$55.2B budget

Ferguson said a key reason for that is at least \$271 million in fund sweeps used to balance the general revenue fund. Fund sweeps occur when lawmakers dip into lesser-known and underutilized funds outside the main general fund to use as a source of revenue for the fiscal year. This year's budget also pauses several transfers to keep certain dollars available in the general fund for use this year.

For example, the budget calls for pausing the final transfer of motor fuel sales tax revenue to the road fund. The move would free up \$171 million of general fund spending in FY26, but delays putting that money toward road construction projects.

"It's not balanced on gimmicks," House Speaker Chris Welch, D-Hillside, told Capitol News Illinois for the latest episode of the "Illinois Lawmakers" program. "It's balanced based on revenues and expenditures, and it's based on what we know. We passed a budget based on what we knew at the time, and we weren't going to pass the budget with cuts alone."

The FY26 budget would also suspend the monthly transfer to the "rainy day" fund for one year, freeing up \$45 million for general fund use.

"It's absolutely a mistake," Ferguson said, calling that decision "troubling."

The "rainy day" fund should continue to grow over time, he said, especially "knowing that we are going to need to go to some last-case resorts in all likelihood when we understand the federal impact and when we approach the transit issues as well, and this was not the moment to go to that well."

The fund is still expected to grow from interest income and cannabis revenue in FY26.

*Continued on page 4*



*The Illinois Capitol Building is pictured on the final night of the 2025 spring session on May 31, 2025.  
(Capitol News Illinois photo by Andrew Adams)*



*The Illinois House is pictured in the waning hours of the spring legislative session on Saturday, May 31.  
(Capitol News Illinois photo by Jerry Nowicki)*

## Baby Food Safety, Press Freedom, Public Defender Measures Will Head to Governor

*Measures passed in legislative session's  
final hours*

By Ben Szalinski & Jade Aubrey  
Capitol News Illinois

Gov. JB Pritzker will have hundreds of bills to review after lawmakers concluded their spring session, including measures protecting press freedoms and baby food, as well as creating a state public defender's office.

Lawmakers voted along party lines Saturday

to pass House Bill 3363, which would create the "Office of State Public Defender" that would primarily be responsible for providing public defender offices around the state with more resources.

It also reforms how public defenders would be appointed by requiring a local nominating committee to appoint or remove public defenders, which is designed to give the public defenders more independence from the judiciary.

"Every Illinoisan deserves a strong defense, no matter their income," bill sponsor Sen. Robert Peters, D-Chicago, said in a statement. "Instating this new system would ensure real help reaches people who have been left behind in conversations about criminal justice reform for far too long."

*Continued on page 5*




# Despite Victories, Major Higher Education Policy Bills Stalled

*Funding overhaul, community college baccalaureates not brought up for votes*  
By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

Gov. JB Pritzker got some of what he requested from the General Assembly in the area of higher education, but some of his biggest requests fell short.

Pritzker’s wins include a \$10 million increase in need-based student financial aid and passage of a direct admission program to make it easier for eligible Illinois high school and community college students to apply to public universities.


But lawmakers did not approve the overall funding increase that Pritzker requested at the start of the session, settling on a 1% bump in their operational budgets instead of the 3% the governor proposed, Pritzker’s office, however,



What is the other way to reduce the debt other than cutting spending?

## OBITUARIES

- Earl Hanssen, 95, Marengo, June 1
- Andrew Mains, 74, Garden Prairie, May 31
- Juluia Steinke, 93, Belvidere, June 9
- Deborah “Debbie” Svartoiien, 64, Cherry Valley, May 26
- Lincoln “Linc” Wolcott, 66, Belvidere, June 2



real journalism for a real democracy

Publisher/Editor  
Senior Writer/Editorial  
Advertising  
Photography  
Office

David C. Larson  
Charles Herbst  
Bethany Staniec  
Susan Moran  
Amanda Nelson

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

Copyright 2025, The Boone County Journal.  
All rights reserved.

THE BOONE COUNTY JOURNAL  
419 S. State St • Belvidere, IL 61008  
Phone: (815) 544-4430 Fax: 544-4330  
www.boonecountyjournal.com  
news@boonecountyjournal.com

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.

has said there are contingencies to provide an additional 2% in the event of significant cuts in federal funding.

They also did not pass other major higher education policy initiatives, including Pritzker’s plan to allow community colleges to offer four-year bachelor’s degrees in certain high-demand career fields, and a long-sought overhaul in the way Illinois funds its public universities.

“You don’t get everything done in one year,” Pritzker said during a post-session news conference when asked about several of his initiatives that failed to pass this year. “Sometimes they (lawmakers) spend two years, four years, six years, trying to get something big done.”

### Community college proposal

In his State of the State address in February, Pritzker called for allowing community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees as a way of expanding access to those programs, especially for older, nontraditional students who may not live close to a four-year university.

“With lower tuition rates and a greater presence across the state — especially in rural areas — community colleges provide the flexibility and affordability students need,” Pritzker told the General Assembly. “This is a consumer-driven, student-centered proposal that will help fill the needs of regional employers in high-need sectors and create a pathway to stable, quality jobs for more Illinoisans.”

In the legislature, however, the proposal ran into stiff opposition from several sources, including universities that said the plan lacked sufficient safeguards to prevent community colleges from offering duplicative programs that would siphon prospective students away from their campuses.

Amid that opposition, House Bill 3717, which was carried by Rep. Tracy Katz-Muhl, D-Northbrook, failed to advance out of a key committee before a mid-session deadline in March. And even after amendments were negotiated that led to universities dropping their opposition and the bill was reassigned to a different committee, it still failed to gain enough traction to advance to the House floor.

That was mainly due to opposition from the Legislative Black Caucus, whose members said it still posed a threat to the three universities in Illinois that serve primarily Black and Latino students — Chicago State University, Governors State University, and Northeastern Illinois University — which are all located in the Chicago metropolitan area alongside multiple community colleges.

“Chicago State is hemorrhaging,” Rep. Curtis Tarver, D-Chicago, said during a May 23 House Executive Committee hearing. “And you all, as an administration, are handing them Band-Aids and they need stitches. And then you come in and you provide a bill that’s going to be even worse for them, with 11 community colleges within 25 miles of them. And I’m saying as we sit here that the Black Caucus has an issue with the bill.”

### Funding overhaul

Another proposal that failed to advance called for establishing a new formula for funding public universities.

House Bill 1581 and its companion Senate Bill 13, known as the Adequate and Equitable Public University Funding Act, called for establishing a funding structure like the Evidence-Based Funding formula used for K-12 education.

That formula would use objective standards to determine an adequate level of funding for each university. The bills then called for adding as much as \$1.7 billion in new funding for universities over the next 10-15 years, with most

of the funding going toward schools furthest away from their adequacy target.

The proposal grew out of a commission formed in 2021 within the Illinois Board of Higher Education. That commission worked for nearly three years to develop a proposal and issued its report and recommendations to the General Assembly in March 2024.

Under the proposed formula, Western Illinois University in Macomb would have earned top priority for new funding because it is currently funded at only 46% of its adequacy target. Northeastern Illinois University and Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, at 47% of adequacy, would have been next in line.

But the state’s flagship institution, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, currently at 89% of adequacy, would rank at the bottom of the priority list. For that reason, the U of I System opposed the plan.

“The University of Illinois System is absolutely dedicated to expanding equitable access, enhancing student success and promoting statewide economic growth,” Nick Jones, executive vice president and vice president of academic affairs for the U of I System, told a Senate committee in April. “The proposed legislation penalizes institutions that provide the most support for underrepresented and rural students while failing to ensure long-term access.”

Senate Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford, D-Westchester, who sponsored the Senate bill and was a cochair of the study commission, said she was disappointed it did not pass this year, but vowed working for a more equitable funding formula.

“While it is far past time to pass an equitable funding model, I am reminded that many of the comprehensive plans I’ve passed have taken years of research, input and negotiations,” she said in an email statement. “This legislation is no different.”

Robin Steans, president of the education advocacy group Advance Illinois, who also served on the commission, said in a separate statement that she expects lawmakers to continue discussing the bill over the summer. Action could come during the fall veto session or early in the 2026 regular session, she said.

“Eventual adoption of the Adequate & Equitable Funding bill represents a significant change, one that requires new investment by our state in what remains the surest path to greater mobility and opportunity for Illinois families,” she said. “The questions and comments made during legislative committee meetings indicate that Illinois lawmakers get that, and powerful testimony from the state’s university leaders drove home the urgency of this issue.”

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

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

FOR SALE:  
50 Walt Disney VHS movies in the original  
box, 2 VHS players. Would like to sell as a  
group, if possible –  
BEST OFFER, (815) 218-1885



# With Electric Prices Going Up, Advocates Failed to get Reforms The Energy Sector

*Sweeping legislation would have incentivized energy storage, allowed new nuclear development*

By Andrew Adams Capitol News Illinois

Heading into the end of the legislative session, consumer advocates, renewable energy industry groups and environmental advocates were hopeful about a bill that would have overhauled Illinois’ energy industry.

It would have been the largest energy reform in years, touching almost every part of the state’s electricity sector. Some said it would have been as significant as the 2021 Climate and Equitable Jobs Act — the law that requires fossil-fuel burning power plants to shutter by 2045.

But lawmakers declined to take up the bill, kicking the can down the line on energy reform for the second time this year after initially punting on the issue during the January lame duck session.

“It was a confluence of factors,” Christine Nannicelli, a Sierra Club organizer and longtime environmental advocate, told Capitol News Illinois. “To a certain extent, it was a product of running out of time.”

Lawmakers had a fairly large to-do list going into the final day of the legislative session, including approving the multiple bills that make up the state’s annual budget and a large reform package dealing with public transit in northern Illinois.

That transit legislation was also a high priority for environmental groups and labor organizations — both of which were central to the fight over energy reform.

In addition to environmentalists and labor, the bill was being negotiated by representatives of the governor’s office, major utilities and representatives of the renewable energy industry.

The push for an energy reform package grew out of a growing sense of concern that the state won’t be able to meet its ambitious climate goals. The rise of power-hungry data centers has placed significant demands on the electric grid at a time when the supply of electricity is stagnant or falling.

This situation has already led to higher prices. This month, prices on residential electric bills are increasing by an average of \$10.60 per month for Commonwealth Edison customers in northern Illinois and by \$45 per month for Ameren Illinois customers downstate.

While lawmakers couldn’t do anything to stop those increases, the prospect of prices staying high for longer has frustrated some advocates.

“We’re gonna lick our wounds,” Anna Markowski, who works on Midwestern issues for the Natural Resource Defense Council, said in an interview.

Signals that negotiations were heating up — and possibly breaking down — came two weeks before session ended on Saturday. A proposal from environmental groups to impose new costs on data centers drew fierce public criticism.

A letter urging Gov. JB Pritzker to oppose the proposal was released by a coalition of interest groups including the AFL-CIO, Climate Jobs Illinois, Illinois Manufacturers’ Association and Constellation Energy — the last of which operates all the state’s commercial nuclear power plants. A similar letter was signed by several economic development officials from around the state.

Continued on page 4

# Amid Court Battle, Lawmakers Look to Push Back ‘Swipe Fees’ Ban

*General Assembly approved the partial ban at behest of retailers last year*

By Ben Szalinski Capitol News Illinois

Illinois lawmakers have decided to delay a ban on “swipe fees” for another year as bankers are locked in a court battle with the state over the ban.

Lawmakers passed the Interchange Fee Prohibition Act last spring as part of the legislative package that enacted the state budget. It prohibits financial institutions from charging fees on the tax and tip portions of credit and debit card transactions. The rest of the transaction, including the price of goods or services, would still be subject to the fees.

The ban was supposed to take effect on July 1, but lawmakers voted with strong bipartisan majorities Sunday morning to pass House Bill 742 to push the ban back until July 2026.

Banking groups filed a lawsuit last August challenging the law on the grounds it superseded federal banking regulations. Bankers argued the law forces banks and credit card companies to implement costly new computer systems to differentiate between the transaction, tax and tip, and contended they can’t comply with the law by July 1.

A federal judge issued a preliminary injunction in December preventing the law, once it takes effect, from applying to federally chartered banks while declining to extend the injunction to state banks and credit card companies.

In February, the judge declined to extend the injunction to credit unions, though it was extended to out-of-state banks that operate in Illinois. The case has remained unresolved in the courts since then, leading lawmakers to push back the start of the ban.

The measure pushing back the effective date still needs approval from Gov. JB Pritzker.

Banking groups supported the delay and continued their messaging campaign against the underlying legislation that passed a year ago.

“This law will cause widespread economic disruption, and mounting evidence shows that the measure overwhelmingly benefits corporate megastores while placing an undue financial burden on small businesses and smaller financial institutions that form the backbone of our local economies,” Illinois Bankers Association Executive Vice President Ben Jackson said in a statement.

The ban was a request of the Illinois Retail Merchants Association as part of a deal during budget negotiations last spring. State lawmakers capped a monthly sales tax deduction claimed by retailers at \$1,000 to generate \$101 million to fill a budget hole. In exchange, lawmakers passed the ban on swipe fees.

Continued on page 4

# ‘This Issue Isn’t Going Away’: Illinois Lawmakers Delay Pension Reform Again

*Fiscal year 2026 budget allocates money to address Social Security compliance concerns*

By Ben Szalinski Capitol News Illinois

Public employees hired since 2011 must continue to wait for pension reform after Illinois lawmakers declined to take up the issue during the spring session.

Lawmakers and labor unions have both expressed concern that benefits for Tier 2 employees – those who entered the public sector after 2011 – are inadequate and that some workers in that category are in line to receive benefits out of compliance with federal law.

Tier 2 benefits are less generous than those received by Tier 1 employees, who also had to work only five years to become vested compared to 10 years for Tier 2, but the state constitution prohibits diminishing benefits for people to whom they have already been guaranteed.

But problems have arisen from Tier 2, according to a coalition of labor unions seeking reforms, including that the lower level of benefits makes public sector jobs less attractive and hurts recruitment and retention.

## ‘Safe Harbor’ test

Illinois lawmakers have learned in recent years that Tier 2 benefits for some employees fail the “Safe Harbor” Social Security test, which requires that pension benefits be at least equal to Social Security benefits. If a pension system fails to meet that requirement, the employer must make up the difference.

Officials from pension systems have said falling short of Safe Harbor would be costly, though exactly how much so is unclear.

Despite more than a year of legislative hearings about pension reform and pushes to get it done in previous sessions, lawmakers left Springfield at the end of May without taking up the issue.

“This issue isn’t going away,” the We Are One Illinois coalition of labor unions said in a statement. “Public employees are leaving their professions and our state because they can’t rely on a pension that ensures dignity in retirement.”

Continued on page 6

## Charles Herbst Tax Attorney



### Tax Practice:

- IRS Defense
- Tax Preparation
- Tax Planning
- Nonprofits

### Related Areas:

- Wills, Trusts, Probate
- LLCs, Real Estate

### Experience:

- International Tax Associates, Director of Federal Tax Research
- Ernst and Young LLP, Manager; Writer, Washington National Tax Writing Center
- Private Practice in the Rockford Area for over 20 years
- Former chairman of the publications committee, Indiana State Bar Association

Over 35 years of experience  
With a comprehensive approach to tax management.

Licensed to practice before the Internal Revenue Service nationally and in state courts in Illinois.

815 484 9482  
taxviking.com



Budget from page 1

Lawmakers used some of the fund sweeps to give the governor authority over a new \$100 million “emergency” fund to plug unforeseen budget shortfalls.

Pritzker argued at a news conference after the budget passed that the state’s “structural” deficit – or the gap between ongoing spending and baseline revenues – has improved since he took office in 2019.

“We’re diminishing the one-time expenditures that we have to make,” Pritzker said. “So we’ve gotten, really, much closer than ever before to balancing that structural deficit.”

Relying on fund sweeps will only make budgeting more challenging if a crisis arrives, Ferguson said.

“Everyone acknowledges that it is all but certain that there are additional things that are going to need to be attended to in the coming months,” Ferguson said.

An eye on Congress  
New action from Congress that punches holes in state budgets, coupled with the state’s public transportation fiscal cliff, could be a wake-up call for lawmakers, Ferguson said.

Read more: Legislative leaders discuss next steps for failed transit reform push

The U.S. House has already passed a domestic policy plan that would shift more cost of government programs to states, cut Medicaid funding and phase out clean energy tax credits. The Senate is expected to make changes to the legislation, but President Donald Trump wants to sign the bill into law by July 4.

While many components may not hit Illinois’ budget this year, state lawmakers are watching

for any changes that could require them to return to Springfield and adjust the FY26 budget.

“We have told the caucus to stand on the ready,” Welch said. State lawmakers boosted spending in the FY26 budget for safety net hospitals and federally qualified health centers, but the state wouldn’t be able to absorb major federal cuts to Medicaid.

“We got some room in there to be able to respond, but it’s hard to prepare when you don’t know exactly what’s coming down the pipe,” House budget leader Rep. Kam Buckner, D-Chicago, said during a news conference Thursday with the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee.

House Republican Leader Tony McCombie, R-Savanna, was less worried Congress will cut Medicaid and other key benefits.

“After conversations with the Illinois delegation, I don’t feel that there’s going to be any concerns with cuts that are important in our Medicaid budget,” McCombie told Capitol News Illinois.

Last-minute budgeting  
Democrats unveiled a more than 3,300-page spending plan about 24 hours before it passed the General Assembly, while the \$1 billion tax plan was filed about five hours before lawmakers took a vote.

Ferguson, the Civic Federation president, criticized the legislative process that gives lawmakers and the public little time to review the budget’s contents.

“It was chaotic, nontransparent—nontransparent even to the legislators that had to vote on it – and not really the way that we want to go about this business, especially at a sensitive time,” he said.

A group of conservative lawmakers also

contended the process was illegal in a lawsuit filed this week in Sangamon County. The Illinois Freedom Caucus argues that the budget amendments were not read on three separate days in each chamber of the General Assembly, which they say violates the state constitution.

The constitution states a bill “shall be read by title on three different days in each house,” but does not specify that each amendment to a bill receive the same.

Each of the bills were read on three separate days this spring in both chambers, even though the substantial amendment containing the budget was filed in the final hours. For example, the bill lawmakers used to raise \$1 billion of revenue was originally filed to establish an Emmitt Till commemorative day. The bill met the three readings requirement in both chambers before the Emmitt Till Day provision was removed in the final hours of session in favor of the tax plan.

The constitution also states that it’s up to the House speaker and Senate president to “certify that the procedural requirements for passage have been met.”

In applying what’s known as the “enrolled bill doctrine,” the Supreme Court has consistently declined to infringe on the legislature’s authority to certify its own bills, due to separation of powers concerns. It has also consistently upheld broad authority for the General Assembly to gut the original contents of a bill and amend it with a new subject, making the lawsuit a long shot.

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

Fees from page 3

IRMA said in a statement it was disappointed lawmakers have decided to delay the ban.

“By refusing to require compliance as originally intended, legislators are again taking hundreds of millions of dollars out of the pockets of working families and Main Street businesses and giving it to big banks, credit card companies and credit card processors,” IRMA CEO Rob Karr said in a statement.

However, other business groups such as the Illinois Chamber of Commerce said lawmakers made the right decision and urged the legislature to fully repeal the law.

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

was dropped from the bill shortly after.

While the data center provision drew the most public controversy, other parts of the bill were being negotiated until the last minute, reflecting a lack of consensus among activists, industry groups and other stakeholders.

The bill was also set to outline a battery storage incentive program, similar to how the state incentivizes solar energy. Advocates for the would-be program said it would spur historic levels of private sector investment in renewable energy.

The bill would have required 6 gigawatts of energy storage developments over the next decade, with half by 2030. This is in line with recommendations from an Illinois Commerce Commission report that lawmakers commissioned earlier this year in anticipation of this bill and in line with an analysis done by the Union of Concerned Scientists last year.

Nannicelli said this provision was opposed by some labor organizations, contributing to the demise of the bill. As of Saturday afternoon, the bill drew overall opposition from at least one union, although several others indicated via “witness slips” that they were neutral on the bill.

“These are critical issues to get right for

consumers and working families that shouldn’t be forced by a deadline,” Joe Duffy, executive director of the labor-affiliated group Climate Jobs Illinois, said in a statement. “We look forward to continuing conversations over the summer to take the time needed to get it right.”

That program also drew serious concerns from some industrial groups. The Illinois Manufacturers Association worried the rate increases to pay for the battery program would have cost businesses too much.

An estimate from the American Petroleum Institute, who represents businesses that operate refineries, pegged the cost of the program over the next 11 years at about \$9 billion.

“My main argument at the macro level is that it’s very expensive for very little return,” Jim Watson, who handles API’s efforts in Illinois, said Saturday. “And it does little to address capacity issues.”

An analysis from the Solar Energy Industry Association, a solar trade group, found the savings from a battery storage program would outweigh the costs, saving consumers money in the long run.

Continued on Page 5

Energy from page 3

The provision, which would have required data centers and other large electric customers to fund new energy developments to offset their demand,



ROCKFORD  
BUSINESS  
SYSTEMS

- Digital Color & Black & White
- Multi Functional
- \* Copy \* Print \* Fax \* Scan
- \* Service • Supplies • Toner

Sharp ~ Canon ~ Toshiba ~  
Lexmark ~ HP ~ Xerox ~ Richoh

Sales

Service

815-608-1173 815-282-4002

### Pro Tree Care & Landscaping

Linda Johns owner

Over 30 years of service • 24 hr emergency service

General and Safety Pruning

Hedge and Shrub trimming • Tree and stump Removal

Spring and Fall cleanup • Firewood pickup and delivery



815-547-3345 jackoftrade81@mchsi.com



## Energy

**from page 4**

A solar industry insider said lawmakers will “stay at the table” to reduce energy prices as federal support is “incredibly unlikely” under the current political climate.

“Unfortunately, Illinois’ spring legislative session ended without a lasting solution to the continued and unprecedented energy cost increases that are taking money out of families’ wallets,” Lesley McCain, head of the Illinois Solar Energy & Storage Association, said in a statement. “While this was a disappointing conclusion to the session, we have every reason to believe leaders in Springfield remain committed to moving Illinois’ clean energy transition forward.”

Several other provisions of the bill drew significant attention as the pitch made its rounds in Springfield. One such aspect of the bill would have outlined an “integrated resource plan” process for the Illinois Commerce Commission.

This would have been a major shift at the ICC, giving the regulatory agency more authority over

the state's electric grid and more ability to alter the emissions-reduction goals of the state. Since the passage of CEJA in 2021, the ICC has become a primary enforcer of the state's climate goals.

But, like other elements of the plan, it faced pushback from business groups. The Manufacturers' Association was concerned that lawmakers would be ceding too much authority to state regulators.

While the bill contained several other provisions, another major issue on the table was lifting the state's longstanding moratorium on new nuclear power developments.

Two years ago, the state loosened restrictions, allowing for the development of small nuclear reactors — the type that has only become possible in recent years thanks to technological breakthroughs. Those remain in the early stages of commercial development.

Ending the nuclear moratorium for large nuclear reactors was one of the least controversial issues in the bill. While some environmentalists were opposed, others did not feel strongly about

it. Business groups were broadly in favor of it.

Like other aspects of the bill, it may return in a future legislative session. But for a broader reform package, it's back to the drawing board.

Environmental and consumer advocates, union organizers, utilities and energy companies all indicated that negotiations would continue into the summer and that there is, broadly, a desire from lawmakers to move forward in some way to lower energy prices raised by data centers' demand.

But what that could be, and when it might happen, is now up in the air.

“If you kick the can down the road, even a month, things could have pretty significant impact,” Nannicelli said. “We need to make a clear decision: who’s going to pay for these costs of unprecedented load growth that’s coming in large part from data centers?”

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

## Legislative Briefs

from page 1

Public defender offices throughout the state have been starved for resources, with some defense attorneys at public defender offices handling hundreds of cases at a time. Supporters of the legislation say the main goal of the office, at least initially, will be to provide more comprehensive state resources to public defender offices, which now are typically subject to the limitations of county budgets.

Limited data shows all Illinois counties need more public defenders. According to an analysis of county public defender budgets compiled by Northwestern University, no Illinois counties have “sufficient” staffing in public defender offices.

State lawmakers appropriated \$10 million for county public defense services in the FY26 budget and have appropriated as much each year since 2023. If signed by the governor, Peters' legislation won't fully take effect until 2027.

## Safer baby food

Lawmakers in both chambers unanimously passed Senate Bill 73, which bans the sale and distribution of baby food in Illinois that contains levels of toxic elements – including arsenic, cadmium, lead or mercury – that surpasses the limits set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The bill now only needs a signature from the governor to become law.

Under SB73, any manufacturer selling baby food in Illinois would be required to test a sample of their product monthly to ensure the levels of toxic elements contained in the product fall in line with the limits set by the FDA. The bill also gives the Illinois Department of Public Health the right to request and review manufacturers'

testing results and requires manufacturers to publish the levels of each toxic element in each of their products on the manufacturer's website.

Manufacturers who sell products in Illinois would also have to print a QR code on the label of any baby food that contains toxic elements that are limited by the FDA. The QR would be required to direct consumers to the product's testing information and FDA guidelines on "the health effects of the toxic element on children."

The bill comes after a study published in 2019 by Healthy Babies Bright Futures, which found that 95% of 168 baby foods tested for toxic elements contained one or more contaminants. One in four of the baby foods tested in the study contained all four elements, with arsenic being found in 73% of the baby foods tested and lead in 94% of the products.

The study gained public traction after its publication, resulting in the creation and implementation of “Closer to Zero” – an FDA initiative that aims to reduce the percentage of toxic metals found in baby food to zero.

If signed by the governor, the bill will take effect on Jan. 1, 2026.

## Press protections

Pritzker will also consider a measure to bolster news media protections against lawsuits.

Senate Bill 1181 explicitly adds news media as an entity protected under the state’s Citizen Participation Act, which prohibits “strategic lawsuits against public participation,” or SLAPPs. It passed the House 75-38 and the Senate 47-10.

It was spurred by a recent state Supreme Court ruling that allowed a defamation suit filed by a former government employee against the Chicago Sun-Times to progress.

The Supreme Court’s ruling in that case differentiated “investigative” reporting from the paper’s coverage of a state inspector general’s investigation into the Illinois Property Tax Appeals Board’s executive director.

Lawyers from the Chicago Sun-Times sought to use the Citizen Protection Act to dismiss the executive director's 2021 lawsuit against the paper, which contended it mischaracterized the inspector general's investigation.

But the Supreme Court declined, ruling the paper's coverage lacked any intent to elicit action or a solution from the government – which was needed to apply SLAPP protections – because the coverage was not investigative in nature.

“We are simply holding that the (Citizen Participation) Act specifically protects government participation and does not encompass all media reports on matters of public concern,” Justice David K. Overstreet wrote in the opinion.

SB 1181 directly addresses that sentiment. The bill states, “The press opining, reporting, or investigating matters of public concern is participating and communicating with the government,” meaning organizations doing so would be protected under the law if the bill is signed. It would apply to actions taken after Jan. 1, 2026.

The measure also provides that all legal proceedings in a case would be paused while a party's Citizen Participation Act lawsuit motion progresses in court.

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

**MID-NIGHTER ★ FLEA MARKET ★**  
**Sat. June 21<sup>st</sup> • 3pm-12am / \$6 | OUTDOORS • TENTS • INDOORS • TREASURES GALORE**  
**• Boone County Fairgrounds •**  
**BELVIDERE, IL • 715-526-9769**  
**www.zurkopromotions.com**

**It's  
MOON-LITE  
Madness**

*Free Parking!  
Great Food!  
Family Fun!*

**\$1 OFF ADMISSION W/AD!**



LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
U.S. BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, PLAINTIFF,  
v. CASE NO.: 2025FC16  
ALICIA ROSS; CANDLEWICK LAKE ASSOCIATION, INC.;  
ILLINOIS HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY; UNITED  
STATES OF AMERICA ACTING BY AND THROUGH ITS AGENCY  
THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT;  
UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS;  
DEFENDANTS.  
PROPERTY ADDRESS:  
110 POSEIDON LN SW POPLAR GROVE, IL 61065  
NOTICE BY PUBLICATION

The requisite affidavit for publication having been filed, notice is hereby given to you:  
ALICIA ROSS

UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS  
that Plaintiff commenced this case in the Circuit Court of Boone County against you and other defendants, for foreclosure of a certain mortgage lien recorded against the real estate described as follows:

LOT TWO HUNDRED THIRTY-NINE (239) AS DESIGNATED UPON THE PLAT OF CANDLEWICK LAKE UNIT NO. 4, BEING A SUBDIVISION OF PORTIONS OF SECTIONS 27 AND 28 TOWNSHIP 45 NORTH, RANGE 3 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, IN THE COUNTY OF BOONE AND STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE PLAT OF WHICH IS RECORDED AS DOCUMENT NO. 72-415 IN THE RECORDER'S OFFICE OF BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS; SITUATED IN THE COUNTY OF BOONE AND STATE OF ILLINOIS.

Common Address: 110 POSEIDON LN SW POPLAR GROVE, IL 61065  
PIN: 03-27-152-002

Said mortgage was executed by ALICIA ROSS, as mortgagor(s) and MORTGAGE ELECTRONIC REGISTRATION SYSTEMS, INC., AS MORTGAGEE, AS NOMINEE FOR FIRST CENTENNIAL MORTGAGE CORPORATION, as mortgagee, on 11/9/2018 and recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds of Boone County, Illinois as Document Number 2018R05845.

You have been sued. Read all documents attached to this Summons. To participate in the case, you MUST file an official document with the court within the time stated on this Summons called an "Appearance" and a document called an "Answer/Response". The Answer/Response is not required in small claims or eviction cases unless ordered by the court. If you do not file an Appearance and Answer/Response on time, the court may decide the case without hearing from you, and you could be held in default and lose the case.

After you fill out the necessary documents, you need to electronically file (e-file) them with the court. To e-file, you must create an account with an e-filing service provider. For more information, go to [ilcourts.info/efiling](http://ilcourts.info/efiling). If you cannot e-file, you can get an exemption that allows you to file in-person or by mail.

You may be charged filing fees, but if you cannot pay them, you can file an Application for Waiver of Court Fees.

It is possible that the court will allow you to attend the first court date in this case in-person or remotely by video or phone. Contact the Circuit Court Clerk's office or visit the Court's website to find out whether this is possible and, if so, how to do this.

Need help? Call or text Illinois Court Help at 833-411-1121 or go to [ilcourthelp.gov](http://ilcourthelp.gov) for information about going to court, including how to fill out and file documents. You can also get free legal information and legal referrals at [illinoislegaldad.org](http://illinoislegaldad.org). All documents referred to in this Summons can be found at [ilcourts.info/forms](http://ilcourts.info/forms). Other documents may be available from your local Circuit Court Clerk's office or website.

¿Necesita ayuda? Llame o envíe un mensaje de texto a Illinois Court Help al 833-411-1121, o visite [ilcourthelp.gov](http://ilcourthelp.gov) para obtener información sobre los casos de la corte y cómo completar y presentar formularios.

Unless you file your Appearance and Answer/Response in this case in the office of the clerk of this court by 7/7/2025 A JUDGMENT OF FORECLOSURE OR DECREEE BY DEFAULT MAY BE ENTERED AGAINST YOU FOR THE RELIEF ASKED FOR IN THE PLAINTIFF'S COMPLAINT.

David Mazzella  
6344319  
Robertson Anschutz Schneid Crane & Partners, PLLC  
6400 Shafer Court Suite 325  
Rosemont, IL 60018  
Phone: (561) 241-6901  
E-mail: [ILmail@raslg.com](mailto:ILmail@raslg.com)  
File: 25-271680  
NOTE: This law firm is a debt collector.  
Service may be made via e-mail at [ILmail@raslg.com](mailto:ILmail@raslg.com).  
6088-954444  
Published June 5, 12, 17, 2025 SW

TAKE NOTICE  
CERTIFICATE NO. 2021-00202  
TO: Mary E Nepermann, Spouse of Mary E Nepermann, Occupant  
John Hellyer, Michelle Hellyer, Boone County Clerk  
Persons in occupancy or actual possession of said property;  
Unknown owners or parties interested in said land or lots.  
A Petition for Tax Deed on premise described below has been filed with the Circuit Clerk of  
BOONE COUNTY, IL as Case No. 2025TX5  
The Property is located at:  
26 Acres E. of 7055 Gardan Pairie Rd, Garden Prairie IL 61308  
Property Index Number: 06-25-300-026  
Said Property was sold on 10/27/2022 for Delinquent Real Estate Taxes and/or Special Assessments for the year 2021.  
The period of redemption will expire on 10/8/2025. On 10/28/2025 at 10:00 AM the Petitioner will make application to such Court in said County for an Order for Issuance of a Tax Deed.  
1095 Investments, LLC, Petitioner  
Published in *The Boone County Journal* June 12, 19, 26, 2025 sw

NOTICE  
Belvidere Community Unit School District #100 is seeking bids for Fuel.  
All bids are due by 1:00 P.M., Monday, June 23rd, 2025, and a public bid opening will take place at 2:00 P.M. the same day at the Central Office Building. All bids must be submitted through SECURE BIDS. Link to CUSD 100 website with SECURE BIDS <https://colbisecurebids.com/agency/bcUSD100>.  
Bid specifications will be available through the SECURE BIDS website on Thursday, June 12th, 2025. Questions should be submitted to [Purchasing@District100.com](mailto:Purchasing@District100.com) and are due by EOD Tuesday, June 17th. Answers to submitted questions will be posted by EOD Wednesday, June 18th. to the SECURE BIDS website.  
The Board of Education reserves the right to reject any and all bids.  
Holly Houk  
Board Secretary  
Board of Education  
Published in The Boone County Journal June 12, 2025

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

Notice of Change of Meeting Dates  
Village of Poplar Grove, Illinois  
Notice is hereby given that commencing on June 25, 2025, the regularly scheduled Board meetings of the Village Board of Trustees of the Village of Poplar Grove, Illinois, will be held on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month and will begin at 7:00 p.m. All meetings will take place at Poplar Grove Village Hall, 200 N. Hill Street, Poplar Grove, Illinois.  
Karri Miller  
Village Clerk  
Village of Poplar Grove  
Published in The Boone County Journal June 12, 2025

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SEL STORAGE AUCTION  
Notice is hereby given that Boxed Up Self Storage, or its affiliates, on behalf of the Owner of the facilities indicated below, intends to hold s public sale to satisfy a lien by selling personal property belonging to those individuals listed below for cash on July 16 , 2025, at approximately 7pm CST.  
Boxed Up Self Storage - Belvidere  
1930 W. Chrysler Dr. Belvidere, IL, 61008  
Unit #-Tenant  
#512- Enriquez, Eric  
The auction will be listed and advertised on [www.storage treasures.com](http://www.storage treasures.com). See website for terms and conditions. Units will be available for viewing prior to the sale on [www.storage treasures.com](http://www.storage treasures.com). A buyers premium, up to 15%, and a cleaning deposit will be charged per unit. Purchases must be made with cash only and paid at Boxed Up Operations Center located at 1511 E. Riverside Blvd. Loves Park, IL 61111 in order to complete the transaction. Boxed Up Self Storage may refuse any bid and may rescind any purchase until the winning bidder takes possession of the personal property. All sales are final.  
Published in The Boone County Journal June 12, 2025

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
ON ANNEXATION AGREEMENT  
BELVIDERE CITY COUNCIL  
BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS  
On, July 7, 2025 at 6:00 P.M., a public hearing will be held by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Belvidere, in the City Council Chambers, 401 Whitney Boulevard, Belvidere, Illinois, for the purpose of considering and hearing testimony as to an ordinance authorizing an Annexation Agreement relating to real property generally located North of Bus. U.S. Route 20 and East of Beaver Valley Road consisting of the following addresses:  
4324 RUSA TRL BELVIDERE, IL PIN 05-21-104-016  
4300 RUSA TRL BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-104-017  
322 BROCKET TRL BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-101-006  
336 BROCKET TRL BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-101-003  
4454 SPOTTED DEER TRL BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-104-010  
4483 SPOTTED DEER TRL BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-102-038  
4396 MANIPUR CT BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-102-026  
4432 MANIPUR CT BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-102-024  
4458 MANIPUR CT BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-102-023  
4484 MANIPUR CT BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-102-022  
4475 MANIPUR CT BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-102-021  
4453 MANIPUR CT BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-102-020  
4507 SPOTTED DEER TRL, IL PIN: 05-21-102-037  
356 WHITETAIL TRL BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-102-013  
368 WHITETAIL TRL BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-102-001  
372 WHITETAIL TRL BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-102-002  
4558 MUNTJAC TRL BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-16-351-008  
4574 MUNTJAC TRL BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-16-351-007  
4571 MUNTJAC TRL BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-16-351-004  
4553 MUNTJAC TRL BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-16-351-003  
4469 TUFTED DEER CT., BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-102-032  
4457 TUFTED DEER CT. BELVIDERE, IL PIN: 05-21-102-031  
The proposed Annexation Agreement and legal description of the Territory is available for review in the City Clerk's office 401 Whitney Blvd. Belvidere Illinois.  
By order of the Corporate Authorities of the City of Belvidere,  
Boone County, Illinois.  
Dated: June 10, 2025 Erica Bluege, City Clerk  
Published in The Boone County Journal June 12, 2025

ASSUMED NAMES

STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE COUNTY  
ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION  
No. 4233 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a HEALTHCARE business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of HEARTFELT MEDICAL SERVICES that its location is or will be 1779 SANDALE DRIVE in CALEDONIA, in the County of Boone County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.  
Phone Number: 815-494-2101  
JODY GOSNELL 1779 SANDALE DR CALEDONIA, ILLINOIS 61011  
I, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk And Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do the hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: May 22, 2025  
Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder  
Published in Boone County Journal 5/29, 6/5, 6/12/25 - P

STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE COUNTY  
ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION  
No. 4234 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a HEALTHCARE business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of HUNTER HEALTH that its location is or will be 660 MCCURRY RD in CALEDONIA, in the County of Boone County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.  
Phone Number: 815-703-3704  
RACHELE BECKER 660 MCCURRY RD CALEDONIA, ILLINOIS 61011  
I, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk And Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do the hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: May 23, 2025  
Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder  
Published in Boone County Journal 5/29, 6/5, 6/12/25 - P

Put 28 Years of Experience  
Publishing Legal Notices  
To Work for You.  
815-544-4430

Pensions from page 3

Public employee shortages have been reported all across Illinois, impacting critical services for our residents. Delaying a fix only makes the problem more costly and damaging.”

The coalition said it was “inexcusable” that a proposal they introduced in the House during the final week of session did not receive a committee hearing.

Reforms that fell flat  
Reforms filed in late May in Senate Bill 1937 would have accomplished several of the unions’ goals had they passed. Cost of living adjustments would increase 3% annually, and people would have been able to retire as early as age 62 if they had maxed out on their pension. Age 67 is the standard retirement age under Tier 2. Many police officers and firefighters would be able to retire at 52 rather than 55 following 20 years of service under the proposal.

To address the Safe Harbor issue, the bill called for increasing the limit on earnings for people entering the pension system between Jan. 1, 2011, and Jan. 1, 2027, to be equal to the Social Security wage base for that year. Beginning in 2027, the earnings limit could be no more than the Social Security wage base.

The final average salary calculation would also be redefined for Tier 2 employees. The current maximum salary for Tier 2 employees is more than \$40,000 below the Social Security salary base and has increased at half the rate of inflation.

It’s not clear how much addressing the Safe Harbor problem or broader pension reform will cost, but prior estimates last year by the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability found it could cost \$5 billion over the next two decades to tie earnings to the Social Security wage base and improve the annual cost of living adjustment. Lowering the retirement age could also cost about \$3 billion over that span.

The bill also would have set a schedule to fully fund pensions by 2049, rather than reach 90% funding by 2045 as required by current law.

Why it stalled  
The bill quickly fizzled out when it was introduced, however, despite garnering more than 40 House Democratic cosponsors. The governor’s office said the bill’s late introduction left little time for a full analysis, which in turn contributed to the bill’s demise.

“While we were provided with a short summary of their ideas, the governor’s office cannot and will not conduct any policy due diligence based on only a few bullets,” Alex Gough, a spokesperson for Gov. JB Pritzker, said in a statement. “When it comes to the long-term fiscal health of the state and meeting our pension obligations, the governor welcomes these discussions but will not make major financial decisions that impact taxpayers without the opportunity and time to review the details.”

The union coalition argued the governor’s office was part of discussions throughout the process.

“For more than a year, our coalition has engaged  
Continued on Page 7

Get instant cash for your GOLD



**WE PAY HIGHEST PRICES**

**Belvidere Collectible Coins**

880 Belvidere Rd.  
Belvidere, IL  
815-547-7111

Additional 10% off Jewelry with this ad  
Mon-Fri 10am - 5pm  
Sat 10am - 2pm

Visit us Online at [www.goldsilverjewelrycoin.com](http://www.goldsilverjewelrycoin.com)



Pensions

from page 6

in good faith with lawmakers to address this critical issue,” the We Are One Illinois coalition said. “Throughout, we communicated consistently with the governor’s office and legislative leaders to develop a comprehensive, fiscally responsible solution that met their legislative criteria.”

Funding provided

Despite the reform’s failure, lawmakers sought to address the problem with Safe Harbor in the budget. Part of the budget package created a new Tier 2 reserve fund that can be accessed if there are violations of the Safe Harbor law. Lawmakers appropriated \$75 million for the fund this year, in line with Pritzker’s proposal.

Other pension reform was passed for Chicago police officers and firefighters. Lawmakers unanimously passed House Bill 3657 that aligns calculations of Tier 2 benefits for Chicago first responders with those in the rest of the state. Chicago officials warned the plan will cost the city billions, however.

Both the budget and Chicago pension bill still need the governor’s signature.

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

Legislative Leaders Discuss Next Steps for Failed Transit Reform

Service cuts to begin in 2026 without financial help from state lawmakers

By Ben Szalinski Capitol News Illinois

Minutes before the clock hit midnight and the calendar flipped to June 1, the Illinois Senate advanced a much-watched legislative proposal to reform and fund public transportation in the Chicago area and prevent dire cuts to service.

But Chicago Democrat Sen. Ram Villivalam’s Hail Mary attempt to avoid cuts was downed short of the end zone as opposition mounted to the bill’s revenue plan, particularly its creation of a \$1.50 package delivery fee in the state. The House declined to take up the transit funding bill, as the stroke of midnight meant the chamber required a three-fifths majority vote to advance any legislation that would take effect before June 2026.

Chicago’s public transit agencies are now entering an uncertain future. Public hearings

on service cuts could begin this summer, but lawmakers say they are dedicated to finding solutions.

“The funding doesn’t run out until Dec. 31 of this year,” House Speaker Chris Welch, D-Hillside, told Capitol News Illinois for the latest episode of the “Illinois Lawmakers” program. “We have time, so I think it’s important to take our time and get it right.”

The transit agencies will each run out of pandemic relief funding at various points in 2026, creating deficits in their budgets if lawmakers don’t find new funding sources.

Meanwhile, Senate President Don Harmon, D-Oak Park, acknowledged he had reservations about the proposal’s revenue-generating measures, which include the delivery fee as well as a statewide tax on electric vehicle charging and the expansion of a Chicago tax on real estate transfers to the suburbs.

“Frankly, I don’t like them all that much,” Harmon said of the revenue measures in an interview with Capitol News Illinois. “I wish there were better alternatives. But if you don’t like them, come and tell us how you’d pay for it, because this is going to be expensive and most of the stakeholders seem to be worried about protecting or expanding their own power and having somebody else pay for it.”

The impending cliff

While there’s technically time before the funds run dry, transit agencies say they’re planning next year’s budgets now.

Regional Transportation Authority spokesperson Tina Fassett Smith said in a statement Sunday that agencies will move forward on evaluating their budgets based only on funding that the systems are “confident” they will receive in 2026. Right now, those budgets collectively contain a \$771 million shortfall as pandemic relief funds expire.

Read more: Senate’s transit funding, delivery tax proposal stalls in House

Both the RTA and Chicago Transit Authority have meetings scheduled next week where talks will presumably focus on how the agencies will maintain a balanced budget in 2026. The RTA previously projected that if lawmakers fail to deliver funding, it would lead to thousands of layoffs and 40% service cuts.

Civic Federation President Joe Ferguson told Capitol News Illinois the end of October appears to be a clearer deadline for legislative action, because the agencies finalize budgets in November.

“This is a sooner-than-later exercise because the closer we get to the next budget cycles of the service boards themselves, the more that this gets driven by doom-and-gloom scenarios – which

are correct scenarios – but they’re going to be an effort to drive the revenue imperatives without the reform imperatives,” Ferguson said.

The agencies are federally required to have public hearings before enacting service cuts.

Why reform failed

Both legislative chambers introduced separate plans late in the final week of May, which although similar in many ways, contained key differences showing lawmakers were still apart on a deal. The differences only became more magnified as labor organizations and suburban communities opposed a series of taxes designed to plug the funding shortfall.

That new funding proposal surfaced in the Senate on Saturday afternoon, hours before the legislature was scheduled to adjourn. The plan did away with proposed toll increases and a diversion of sales tax revenue away from collar county governments. Instead, it proposed the new statewide tax on deliveries, and kept a statewide tax on EV charging, as well as suburban taxes on real estate transfers and rideshares.

Lawmakers negotiating the bill had vowed “no funding without reforms,” a pledge they remain committed to, Villivalam told Capitol News Illinois, noting they should be tackled at the same time.

The two chambers are generally in agreement on transit reform, which includes giving new decision-making authority to the RTA to set fares and schedules and renaming the agency to “Northern Illinois Transit Authority.”

But when the adjournment deadline came, the House wasn’t prepared to take up a bill addressing funding even after months of negotiations, Rep. Eva-Dina Delgado, D-Chicago, who is leading transit reform for House Democrats, told Capitol News Illinois.

“We spent hours and hours and hours in negotiation, so our reform bills were very similar,” she said. “What we didn’t spend hours and hours and hours talking about was the revenue.”

Villivalam said the tax increases and other revenue solutions in his plan would raise \$1.5 billion – enough to plug the budget hole and fund transit at a level that the RTA says would significantly improve public transportation. But House Democrats didn’t have time to review the funding options.

“Based on my conversations with members, they needed to know more,” Delgado said. “They needed to understand more and, you know, that is now my job is to make sure that whatever revenue plan we come up with, it’s communicated, and people understand what it is.”

Despite facing an uncertain future in the House, Villivalam said the Senate voted on the bill because “we believe in responsible governance, and we believe in avoiding 40% cuts to service and more than 3,000 workers getting layoff notices.”

Reaching a deal to stop cuts

With November being the next pressing deadline for action, lawmakers could return to Springfield for a special session this summer or wait until the annual fall veto session to act on transit reform.

Whenever the General Assembly reconvenes, they will need broader agreement, as the three-fifths vote requirement remains in effect through the calendar year. While the House could still send Villivalam’s bill to the governor’s desk, it passed the Senate on a 32-22 vote – short of three-fifths of the chamber. Several Democrats voted against the plan, foreshadowing the headwinds in the House.

Gov. JB Pritzker hasn’t expressed an opinion on the proposed taxes. He told reporters on

Continued on Page 8

Boone County License & Title

Stickers - Titles - Plates

We Are OPEN

Bring your plate number

M-F 9-5  
Sat 9-1

419 S. State St. Bel.  
815-544-2075



Transit from page 7

Sunday he learned about the taxes at the same time Villivalam unveiled them to the public.

“We were not the leaders of that endeavor, but we were at the table, listening and helping whenever we were asked to,” Pritzker said. “And again, I think there’s significant work that will need to be done over the summer and in the fall to make sure that it gets across.”

The tax increases were nonstarters for Republicans, who haven’t proposed their own funding plan – and Democrats don’t need their votes to reach a three-fifths majority.

“We need to look at things holistically and restructure rather than continuously adding more taxes to pay the bills,” House Minority Leader Tony McCombie, R-Savanna, told Capitol News Illinois.

Senate Minority Leader John Curran, R-Downers Grove, told Capitol News Illinois lawmakers should not be depending so much on new taxes.

“We would put out a much more constrained proposal ... there’d be a little more skin in the game on efficiencies and fares, and then we would be coming to taxpayers last in that,” Curran said. “And, quite frankly, we’d be taking a more regional approach on that, and not a statewide approach.”

Pritzker to Consider Bill Mandating Gun Owners Lock Up Firearms Near Minors

Republicans argue bill is unconstitutional; Democrats say it’s about safe ownership

By Jade Aubrey Capitol News Illinois

A bill that would require gun owners to keep any firearms in a locked box whenever a minor is present will soon head to Gov. JB Pritzker.

Senate Bill 8, also referred to as the Safe Gun Storage Act, is the latest gun safety measure pushed by Democrats in the General Assembly. It passed the House 69-40, with Republican lawmakers warning that it could be found unconstitutional if challenged in court.

The bill mandates that gun owners store their firearms in a secure, locked box in any place where they know or “reasonably should know” that a minor without permission to access a firearm, an at-risk person or someone who is prohibited from obtaining a firearm can access the weapon. Gun owners who violate the act would be subject to civil penalties.

The law would apply to both handguns and long guns, such as rifles and shotguns.

Under the state’s current criminal code, firearm owners are required to store their guns in a place that’s inaccessible to a child under the age of 14 – SB8 raises the age requirement to a child under 18 and mandates that the gun must be locked away or equipped with a device making it temporarily inoperable.

It also defines an at-risk person as someone who has shown behavior or made statements that a “reasonable person” would consider indicative that the individual may physically harm themselves or others.

“An estimated 30 million children in our country live in a home with at least one firearm, with 4.6 million children living in homes with unlocked and loaded guns,” bill sponsor in the House, Rep. Maura Hirschauer, D-Batavia, said during floor debate. “We

are all familiar with the chilling statistics that guns are the No. 1 cause of death for our children in the United States.”

The bill exempts firearms carried on a person who has a concealed carry license. The gun owner also would not be liable if a minor, at-risk or prohibited person uses the firearm in self-defense or uses it after accessing it illegally – for instance, in circumstances like breaking and entering.

The Safe Gun Storage Act also makes changes to a variety of existing Illinois gun laws, including a mandate that firearm owners report a lost or stolen firearm within 48 hours of the owner finding the firearm missing, instead of the current 72-hour timeframe. Illinois State Police would also be given the ability to revoke a firearm owner’s identification, or FOID, card if a gun owner fails to report a stolen or lost firearm twice or more under the bill.

If a minor, at-risk or prohibited person gains access to an unlocked firearm, the bill provides the gun owner could face civil penalties ranging from \$500 to \$10,000 if the gun to hurt or kill another person in a crime.

A separate section of the bill allows for a \$1,000 fine and a Class C misdemeanor charge against a gun owner if a minor under the age of 18 causes death or bodily harm while accessing a firearm without permission. That language previously only applied to minors under the age of 14.

“Safe firearms storage and responsible gun ownership are practices on which all of us in this room, gun owners and non-gun owners alike, can agree,” Hirschauer said. “Safe gun storage can reduce unintentional injuries, suicides and intentional harm, like school shootings, by stopping unauthorized access.”

Under SB8, if a firearm owner fails to store their firearm in a secure, locked box and a minor, at-risk or prohibited person illegally obtains the firearm and uses it to hurt themselves or others – the owner could be charged with negligence.

The Safe Gun Storage Act also requires Illinois State Police to expand an online database that was required under a previous law to house all information on the make, model and serial number of reported lost or stolen firearms. By Jan. 1, 2027, ISP would have to make the portal accessible to licensed firearm dealers, who would be required to cross-reference the database to ensure any firearms they are selling or transferring are not a firearm listed in the database.

Another aspect of the bill classifies anyone traveling through the state with a firearm that’s prohibited under state law as gun trafficking – a felony charge that can result in up to a 15-year prison sentence.

Arguments of unconstitutionality

During debate about the bill on the Senate floor in April, Sen. Neil Anderson, R-Andalusia, took issue with the bill giving Illinois State Police the ability to revoke a person’s FOID card.

He said that aspect of the bill would not pass the Rahimi test – referencing the 2023 United States v. Rahimi Supreme Court case, which ruled a court can temporarily revoke a perron’s firearm rights if the court determines the firearm owner is a threat to public safety when in possession of a firearm.

SB8 would allow Illinois State Police to revoke a person’s FOID card, which Anderson said is in direct conflict with the Rahimi decision – which said only courts had the power to revoke a person’s firearm rights.

Bill sponsor Sen. Laura Ellman, D-Naperville, disagreed with Anderson, saying the Rahimi case did not exclude law enforcement from being able to revoke a person’s FOID card. The bill passed the Senate on a vote of 33-19.

A similar debate happened on the House floor Wednesday before the bill’s eventual passage.

Rep. Patrick Windhorst, R-Metropolis, took issue

with the bill’s creation of a potential negligence charge for gun owners who do not safely secure a gun that’s used by a minor, at-risk or prohibited person to harm someone. He said he believed such a burden shift to be unconstitutional.

Hirschauer responded that the burden shift only applies when the reasonable standard is met – when it’s reasonably found that the gun owner should have known to safely store their firearm – or, if “some terrible negligence” occurs.

Windhorst also raised concerns about the fact that cable locks, which are locked cables inserted through a firearm’s chamber and out of the magazine well, are not considered “safe storage” under the bill. Under existing law about storing guns away from minors, a cable lock is considered safe storage of a firearm. Windhorst said that conflicts with the new language pertaining to gun storage, which does not mention devices that render a gun temporarily inoperable.

“Under the criminal code of this bill where we are changing our current child access protection law, a cable lock would suffice,” Hirschauer said. “Under the new Safe Storage Act, it would not.”

He also argued that the bill impeded the rights of concealed carry license holders who carry a gun in a vehicle, as some firearms owners currently store their gun in the center console or glove box. Under the Safe Gun Storage Act, the center console or glove box would have to be lockable in order to render the firearm safely stored.

Windhorst also voiced concerns that the gun trafficking charges in the bill could be brought against a person passing through Illinois with firearms in their vehicle that are legal in their home state – a point which Hirschauer responded to by reading language in the bill that expressly excluded non-residents from the charges.

“If someone is a non-resident of Illinois and is passing through and they are a legal gun owner in the state in which they reside, if that state doesn’t have a FOID card system and if they are authorized under federal law to own a gun, then they would not be subject to this,” she said.

Rep. C.D. Davidsmeyer, R-Murrayville, raised concerns about the bill’s definition of “lawful permission” and its limitations on minors who hunt. The bill requires firearm owners to safely secure their firearm in a locked box when around a minor who does not have “lawful permission” from a parent or guardian to access a firearm. On the House floor, Davidsmeyer asked what constitutes “lawful permission,” to which Hirschauer answered it, “could be several things.”

When asked whether permission must be written down or notarized for parental permission of a minor using a firearm to hunt to be considered lawful, Hirschauer answered that “hypothetical points are fact dependent.” Davidsmeyer said the question was not a hypothetical, and that it is an issue that will crop up in “daily life” for minors who hunt.

“This bill, I believe, violates recent Supreme Court decisions under the Second Amendment and will likely be found unconstitutional,” Windhorst said at the end of debate.

Hirschauer disagreed.

“Firearm theft compromises the effectiveness of our commonsense gun laws and often results in these weapons being acquired by people who are legally prohibited from possessing them,” she said. “The reporting measures strengthened in this bill will give law enforcement the tools they need to crack down on lost and stolen guns.”

Opponents to SB8 include the ACLU of Illinois, Illinois State Rifle Association and the Illinois State Crime Commissions; the Illinois State Police did not officially oppose or support the bill. SB8 passed the Senate 33-19 last month and awaits approval from the governor before it can become law.