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FREE

Illinois School District Administration Spending

League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford and the Illinois League of Women Voters

The Question:

Should the Illinois General Assembly establish reasonable limits on the percentage of a public school district's operating budget that may be spent on central administration, with the goal of directing more funding to classrooms?

What Is This Question About?

This guide is to help voters understand the question, identify the important details, and make their own informed decision.

This question is about how school districts spend their money.

It asks whether the Illinois General Assembly should limit how much of a school district's operating budget can be spent on central administration.

The stated goal is to direct more money toward classrooms and student instruction.

What Is "Central Administration"?

Central administration includes people and services that help run a school district as a whole, rather than one classroom.

Examples may include:

- Superintendent and central-office staff
- Business and financial services
- Human resources
- District-wide administration
- Some central support services

Illinois law already defines certain types of administrative spending. These include executive administration, school administration, business support, internal services, and central support services.

The definition matters. A new law would need to say which costs count toward any percentage limit.

What Does Illinois Law Do Now?

Illinois law already limits the growth of certain administrative spending for most school districts.

Under current law, covered school districts generally cannot increase these administrative expenditures by more than 5% over the previous year's actual administrative expenditures

There are some exceptions and waiver options under the law. Chicago Public Schools are also treated differently under state law.

The current law is about the growth of certain administrative costs.

The ballot question asks about a limit on the

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Marion Woman Duped Out of \$318k In Elaborate Gold-Bar Scheme

The scammers planned for a second \$272K drop, telling her to hand over the gold to a federal agent who would give the code word 'poker queen.' This time, she called their bluff.

*Soph Levinson & William Mize
Saluki Local Reporting Lab*

Molly Parker

Capitol News Illinois

A 78-year-old southern Illinois woman was alarmed when a popup message appeared on her computer in April warning that it had been compromised. She Googled the number for Microsoft support and called the first option that appeared in her search results.

The man on the other end of the line told her his name was Mike Williams, identifying himself as a supervisor on Microsoft's fraud prevention team. He gave her the bad news first: Her computer had been hacked, he said, and her sensitive data potentially compromised.

But he had a solution: If she followed his directions and gave him remote access to her computer, he could look inside and determine the extent of the damage.

She did as instructed.

Unfortunately, the supposed Microsoft supervisor told her, it was bad.

That was the beginning of an elaborate, monthslong scheme that would lead the Marion woman, identified only as D.B. in federal court records, to move nearly \$1.8 million from her investment accounts. She was instructed to move the money into money market accounts, federal court records show, and spend more than \$823,000 on gold bars that she believed a federal agent needed her to turn over for safekeeping while authorities worked to secure her compromised accounts.

But the agent wasn't real, and the first load of gold bars she handed over in the Marion Walmart parking lot, worth \$318,459, is gone, Kathleen Howard, an assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, told a federal judge in Benton last week.

One of the fraudsters admitted guilt in the conspiracy.

Those who duped the Marion woman and others they targeted across the country, including the defendant who appeared in court to accept a plea deal that day, did so knowing their victims were

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Lights, Camera, Tax Credits!

Illinois lawmakers give big boost to movie industry while academics claim the Hollywood giveaway is a bad deal for taxpayers.

*Beth Hundsdorfer Capitol News Illinois
Casey Toner Illinois Answers Project*

When developer Christopher Breakwell came to Wood River last year, he was selling a glittery dream to a gritty, blue-collar southwestern Illinois town in search of a renaissance — a Hollywood-style studio that would thrive in the shadows of aging refineries.

He envisions building a \$95 million development that would provide sound stages to film production companies lured to the state by new legislation that allows them 45% of their expenditures or more back in income tax credits.

This puts Illinois at the top of the heap in the country, with New York, California and Georgia, in film tax credits offerings, according to industry magazine Wrapbook, which could mean billions of dollars of spending in the state, industry advocates say

The 105-acre site is within view of a Mississippi River levee, formerly home to an ammunition manufacturer's headquarters and a recycling center. After clearing trees from the site, pouring foundations and installing prefabricated studios, he's looking for a site to erect large white letters, reminiscent of the Hollywood sign in California, spelling out the name of his studio: "Hollywood River."

"I was already looking at Illinois, and then the talk about the enhancements came. I mean, it certainly is the reason that we're investing here," Breakwell said of the tax credits. "Between the governor's vision of the film tax incentive and the state legislature actually moving forward with it too, because you need both to get it done, as he said. The latest enhancements are amazing, and it really pushed, especially for downstate."

Gov. JB Pritzker signed legislation last year providing enhanced incentives, expanding the base credits from 30 to 35% on resident labor and vendor spending. The governor made the move despite mounting evidence from academics who say these types of credits amount to corporate handouts that shift potentially hundreds of millions of dollars of fiscal burden to taxpayers while doing little to stimulate local economies.

"These incentives are a way for governors to curry favor with a small group of people in the industry who happen to live in their state while

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percentage of the entire operating budget that could be spent on central administration

These are different types of limits.

What A “Yes” Vote Means

A YES vote supports asking the Illinois General Assembly to establish a limit on the percentage of a public school district’s operating budget that could be spent on central administration.

The stated goal is to direct more school funding toward classrooms.

A law would need to determine:

- What counts as central administration
- What percentage limit would apply
- Which school districts would be covered
- Whether there would be exceptions
- How the limit would be enforced
- What would happen if a district exceeded the limit

Possible effect

School districts could have to change how they divide their operating money among administration, instruction, and other services.



Cheryl Van Abbema, 82, Belvidere, October 1
Norma Johnson, 91, Belvidere, October 3
Mercedes Rico Garcia, 84, Belvedere, October 6
Karen Ryan, 83, Belvidere, October 3



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

What A “No” Vote Means

A NO vote does not support establishing the proposed percentage limit.

Existing state laws about school district budgets and administrative spending would remain in place unless changed through other legislation.

School districts would continue to make budget decisions under existing state requirements and local processes.

The Key Issue

This question is about how much authority the state should have over school district administrative spending.

A statewide limit could:

- Set one rule for school districts
- Limit the share of operating money used for central administration
- Seek to direct more spending toward classrooms

Local budgeting could:

- Allow school boards to consider their district’s needs
- Allow districts to make different choices about administration and services
- Give local officials more flexibility

The important question is:

How should Illinois balance statewide limits on administrative spending with local school districts’ ability to manage their own budgets?

Questions To Consider

Classrooms

- Would a limit on central administration make more money available for classrooms?
- How would “classroom spending” be defined?
- Would savings actually go to teachers, classroom materials, programs, or student services?
- Could reducing administrative spending affect services that schools need?

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School District Budgets

- What percentage of a district’s budget currently goes to central administration?
- Would the same limit work for small, medium, and large districts?
- Do some districts have special costs that make one statewide limit difficult?
- Would the limit apply to all operating funds or only certain funds?

School Staff

- Could the limit affect administrative jobs?
- Could it affect support staff who work across several schools?
- Could changes in administration affect services for teachers and students?
- Could districts move employees or expenses into different budget categories?

Local Control

Illinois school districts have local school boards that make budget decisions within state law.

Consider:

- How much control should local school boards have over their budgets?
- How much should the state control school district spending?
- Should one statewide limit apply to every district?
- Should local conditions be considered?

Fairness

- Would the same percentage limit affect districts differently?
- Do small districts have different administrative needs than large districts?
- Do districts with many schools or special programs have different costs?
- Should there be exceptions for unusual circumstances?

Student Services

Central-office spending does not necessarily mean spending that does not benefit students.

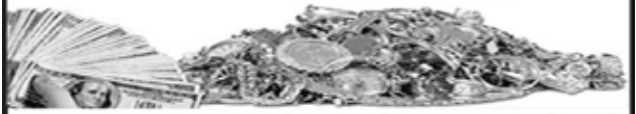
Ask:

- What services does central administration provide?

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Mike Carlyle
For
County Board

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Mr. Editor,

WE MUST STOP THE PROPOSED BELVIDERE, IL DATA CENTER!

The Mayor of Belvidere, IL Clinton Morris has been scheming with Datawatt Energy of Chicago to bring one of the **WORLDS LARGEST** Data Centers to Boone County. I only use the word scheming because Mr. Morris denied knowledge of any plans until letters between himself and Datawatt were released dated early 2025.

This Data Center would be massive. Datawatt's largest project (Hawkeye) would cover 760 acres, use enough electricity to power 2.5 million homes and use up to 3 million gallons of water **PER DAY**. Forever.

Com Ed has informed the parties involved they cannot supply enough power for the project and have received approval for changes in their rates and tariffs to increase power to the area.

Datawatt would construct a 500 MW Fuel Cell to provide the remaining required power.

Plans are in the works to purchase adjoining property and annex part of Genoa Road south of I90 and almost 800 acres of farmland bordered by Fern Hill, Genoa Road and Huber Road so the project can move forward. A Pledge and City Reimbursement Agreement was signed in May without City Council approval or knowledge of the residents of Belvidere, IL.

We do not need our Electric Bills to increase exponentially.

We do not need our water and aquifer depleted and polluted for the foreseeable future.

We do not need this large piece of farmland

destroyed.

We do not want surrounding livestock negatively affected.

We do not want to see our wildlife displaced.

We do not want to see our property values lowered.

Mr. Morris's back room dealings will harm our community for years, decades and generations to come. I would hope that residents of Belvidere and Boone County who think the same way I do would contact Mr. Morris, Belvidere city aldermen, Boone County and State representatives plus anyone else they can think of to help put a stop to this project before it destroys our community.

Thank you for your time,

A concerned Boone County Resident

Lauren Roloff



EPA Conducts Five-Year Review of Parsons Casket Hardware Co. Superfund Site, Belvidere, Illinois

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is conducting the fifth five-year review of the Parsons Casket Hardware Co. Superfund site, 424 Fairview Avenue, Belvidere, Illinois. The review should be completed by May 2027.

The five-year review at the Parsons Casket Hardware Co. site gives the public an opportunity to comment about site conditions or concerns.

Superfund law requires regular checkups of sites that have been cleaned up – with waste managed on-site – to ensure the cleanup continues to protect people and the environment. This is EPA's fifth review of the Parsons Casket site.

Parsons Casket Hardware Co. made decorative metal fittings for caskets on-site from the early 1900s until 1982. Facility operations included the use of hazardous chemicals. Poor storage practices and spills led to soil and groundwater contamination.

Starting in 1982, Illinois EPA removed corroded and leaking hazardous waste drums stored at the factory. By 1985, Illinois EPA removed 4,800 gallons of waste, 166,500 gallons of liquid waste and 1,230 cubic yards of sludge.

Sampling indicated that groundwater under the Parsons Casket Hardware Co. site was contaminated with nickel, chromium and chlorinated volatile organic compounds, covering approximately 30 acres. The nearby Kishwaukee River was not affected by the site.

Illinois EPA finished soil cleanup in 2002. Since then, EPA has monitored groundwater to determine if there is any residual contamination at the former factory. EPA's groundwater cleanup will involve treating the contaminated groundwater by injecting material to enhance degradation of contaminants.

For more information:

Online: <https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/cursites/csitinfo.cfm?id=0500189>

How to Comment

Please contact us regarding comments or concerns you may have about the Parsons Casket Hardware Co. Superfund site.

Glenn Lautenbach

Francisco Arcaute

Remedial Project Manager EPA Community Involvement
312-353-8892 312-886-7613

(lautenbach.glenn@epa.gov)
(arcaute.francisco@epa.gov)

You may also call EPA toll-free at 800-621-8431, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., weekdays.

Visit www.illinoistreasurer.gov/icash to see if you have unclaimed property. Need internet access? Visit your local public library.

Reported to Treasurer's Office 3/1/2026 - 8/31/2026

Available for return to owners: Over \$5 Billion

Reports: 17,175

Properties: 1,310,494

Cash: \$284,559,989.60

Shares: 5,485,622

Returned to Owners 3/1/2026 - 8/31/2026

Paid Claims: 111,830

Cash & Share Value Returned: \$176,604,959.34

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Referendum

from page 2

- Which services directly support teachers and students?
- Could reducing administrative spending reduce some student services?
- Which costs could be reduced without affecting students?

What Does The League Of Women Voters

Say?

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports stable, reliable, and adequate funding for public schools through federal, state, and local sources.

The League also supports adequate funding so school districts can provide students with an education that meets state standards and legal requirements.

The League's published position does not specifically set a percentage limit for school district central administration.

For this question, voters can consider:

- How to make sure public-school funding meets student needs
- How spending decisions affect classrooms and other services
- How much authority the state should have over local school district budgets

A Key Question For Voters

Instead of asking only:

"Should schools spend less on administration?"

Also ask:

"Which administrative costs could be reduced, what services might be affected, and would the money saved actually go to classrooms and student needs?"

Nonpartisan Voter Tip

Before voting, look for the actual legislation or rules that would implement the proposal.

Pay attention to:

- What counts as central administration
- What percentage limit would apply
- Whether the limit would apply to every school district
- Whether there would be exceptions
- How the limit would be enforced
- What happens if a district exceeds the limit
- How savings would be directed toward classrooms
- Whether teachers or students could be affected
- How local school-board authority would change
- How the proposal would interact with Illinois' existing 5% limit on the growth of certain administrative expenditures

Remember

A smaller share spent on administration does not tell you which services would change.

More money available for classrooms does not tell you how that money would be used.

The details of the implementing law would matter.

Film

from page 1

sending the tab to a much larger group of taxpayers," University of Southern California public policy professor Michael Thom, who has studied tax credits, wrote in an email. "Your readers can decide if that's good policy or just politics as usual."

But people who work in the industry say the expanded incentives are needed to lure and keep film jobs in Illinois and stay competitive with global tax havens as well as other states that have increased their own film incentives.

"It's mostly a difference between making a decent living and thinking I might have to move to a different location because there's not enough work," said Phillip Koch, a Chicago filmmaker whose production company used the tax credits to film music videos for the Smashing Pumpkins and Chance the Rapper. "It's night and day."

Illinois was an early adopter of film income tax credits. Under a law signed by Gov. Rod Blagojevich in 2003, the state began issuing them to qualifying productions as a proportion of their overall expenses. These credits, which can sometimes exceed millions of dollars per production, are typically then sold to insiders or wealthy corporations, with no ties to the film industry, who will use them to pay less in Illinois state income taxes.

In the past six years alone the state has issued nearly \$1 billion in income tax credits under the program, shifting the tax burden onto the shoulders of state taxpayers to make up the difference. Recent tax credit buyers or recipients include large corporations such as Kraft Foods and U.S. Bank as well as prominent individuals, including JB Pritzker's cousin, Jennifer Pritzker, Smashing Pumpkins founder Billy Corgan and Peng Zhao, the CEO of the multibillion-dollar private equity firm Citadel Securities, once based in Illinois.

The largest tax credits were issued to production companies that filmed seasons of Chicago Fire, Chicago PD, Chicago Med on NBC, and Dark Matter on Apple TV.

Film expenditures in the state reached a record-breaking high of \$703 million last year before the enhanced incentives, designed to stimulate the film industry's growth downstate and outside Chicago, were signed into law.

"There's some really great opportunities to build some of this industry in places that aren't named Chicago or Cook County," said Pritzker, at a news conference earlier this year at the Cinespace Studios in Chicago, where he announced the expanded incentives. "The industry itself wanted to have ... more backdrops because not every scene is going to be a city street with a lot of people on it, or a lot of homes next to each other."

While the credits are typically touted

as boosting the TV and movie industry statewide, data shows that the tax incentive program also supports smaller budget projects, such as a \$115,000 commercial filmed four years ago for Illinois House Democrats. Unlike other states that offer tax credits only for film production, commercials and music videos with as little as \$50,000 budgets can qualify for Illinois' program.

Since 2005, Illinois' film tax credits have subsidized nearly 3,000 small-budget commercials such as advertisements for McDonald's, Illinois Lotto and Kraft macaroni and cheese — nearly three times the number of television and movie projects combined.

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity spokesperson Eliza Glezer stated that the small budget commercials are a major economic driver. State officials pointed to one example — a Walgreen's commercial filmed earlier this year in Chicago for \$1.6 million.

But the larger set of incentives aimed at luring big budget productions, such as television series and movies, such as Dick Wolf's "Law and Order" to Illinois are key to Breakwell's business model.

The future of storytelling

Flanked by union leaders, lawmakers and even Chicago Fire actor Joe Miñoso, Pritzker stood in the backdrop of Cinespace Studios in March to celebrate Illinois' film industry and one of the hallmarks of his economic agenda: the expanded film tax credits.

Their expansion would ensure that "the future of film, the future of storytelling, is going to be shaped" in Illinois, Pritzker said.

State records show that production companies that received the tax credits employed 153,000 people who worked as crew members and talent during the past two decades.

In 2022, Illinois added incentives for non-resident labor. Thirteen non-resident crew members and four to six non-resident actors are eligible for incentives. The number of actors depends on the size of the film's budget.

Salary caps and limiting the number of non-residents eligible for credits creates an environment to lure small, independent productions that would hire Illinois workers and businesses, state officials said.

But two extensive studies of tax credits in the

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Film

from page 4

past decade have reached the same conclusion: the programs do little to stimulate the economy or create permanent jobs.

A 2018 study co-authored by Penn State University economics professor Mark Owens estimated that Illinois spent about \$19,652 per job and received about \$.22 in state revenue for every \$1 of tax credit spent.

“The other side of this is almost every state is offering some kind of credit right now and so if you don’t offer it, you could be missing out on films that could be produced,” Owens said. “Whether it pays for itself, I have my doubts.”

Thom, the USC public policy professor, wrote a 2016 study that analyzed 40 states' tax incentives designed to lure film productions out of California and New York from 1998 through 2013. It found that while the transferable tax credits had a small effect on movie production employment, there was no effect on wages or movie industry concentration.

“The general rule of thumb is that for every \$1 taxpayers give Hollywood, taxpayers get back 10 to 20 cents,” he said. “Who would invest their money in something with that kind of a return on investment?”

But a study commissioned by the Illinois Production Alliance found that Illinois' tax credit resulted in \$6.81 overall return on investment for every dollar spent with \$3.70 coming directly from productions filmed in Illinois. State officials said this resulted in more than \$4.5 billion in economic activity from fiscal year 2017 to 2024 — with 94% attributed to the enhanced incentives.

The film tax credit has succeeded in “creating new jobs, attracting more productions and bolstering an important industry in Illinois’ economy,” while helping launch studios such as Hollywood River Studios in the Metro East, a DCEO spokesman said.

Separate from the economic impact, Thom said film tax credits can help forge relationships between ambitious politicians and wealthy studio heads.

Pritzker, who is courting a national audience in advance of the 2028 president race, has ties to California and traveled across the country ahead of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 2024 to hobnob with entertainment moguls on behalf of the Democratic party.

Pritzker also held meetings with Carol Turner, Disney's head of television production, and Mike Posey, Netflix's vice president of production for the United States and Canada, while the tax credit legislation was on his desk in December 2025 awaiting his signature, according to copies of his schedule obtained by Illinois Answers and CNI.

Weeks later, Pritzker appeared at Flyover Studios in Rantoul with Jennifer Shelby, president of Flyover. The studio formed in late 2024 in the decommissioned six-acre Chanute U.S. Air Force base. Artists such as Wiz Khalifa, Bryan Cranston and John Goodman have already filmed projects on the site.

Shelby said Flyover has benefitted from a 15% bonus for hiring workers from high-poverty or

high-unemployment areas, plus a 5% bonus for hiring Illinois residents working outside the Chicago metro area — an incentive to film in places like Rantoul and Wood River.

Fees charged when the tax credits are issued also fund the state's Film and TV Workforce Training Program, which helps supply entry level workers from places like Rantoul to film productions statewide.

“We would very much like to attract more people and do more training in some of the small towns that would fall under that and give them an opportunity to work and give the filmmakers additional tax credit that they can earn back,” Shelby said. “So, there are a lot of different spokes to the wheel to make this and work successfully, and we are trying to make sure we’re hitting all of them.”

Benefits for the wealthy and connected

Under Illinois' film credit expansion that Pritzker signed, the percentage of the income tax credit increased from 30% of qualifying expenditures to 35% with added sweeteners that stack for green productions, productions that move into Illinois from other states, in addition to the extra credits for downstate and low-income locations.

“We’re trying to encourage those folks to do business in other parts of Illinois, so that we can employ people in other parts of Illinois,” Pritzker said.

The Illinois film credits, which will not expire until the end of 2038, have historically been uncapped, meaning that a production company could finance a movie for hundreds of millions of dollars that would be eligible for 35% or more of its expenditures in tax credits. The change in the state law promises a financial windfall for film productions, increased sales for the tax credit resellers, and greatly reduced tax liabilities for the credit recipients and buyers.

The way it works is that production companies apply for income tax credits based on a proportion of their expenses after filming ends. Usually, an accountant tallies the qualifying expenses and submits them to the Illinois Film Office, which reviews the expenditures for approval and issues the tax credits.

Production companies can take the credits for themselves or sell them to a broker who takes a commission when they sell them to buyers for 90% of face value, according to interviews with brokers. The buyers can then resell the tax credits or apply them to their income tax bills.

Records reviewed by Illinois Answers Project and Capitol News Illinois show the wealthy and connected benefiting from the state's tax credits.

For example, William Pritzker, JB Pritzker's cousin, was an executive producer on the 2025 feature film *Pools*, a coming-of-age drama, starring Odessa A'zion. The production company, Pools Film, had a production budget of about \$950,000.

The state of Illinois, in turn, issued the company an income tax credit of \$274,000, which was transferred to William's parent, Jennifer Pritzker. They did not respond to messages seeking comment.

The governor and his office have no knowledge of or role in individual film tax credit transfers, according to a Pritzker spokesman.

In a statement, DCEO said it does not determine who buys or receives the tax credits, but only provide support overseeing the transfers.

Peng Zhao, CEO of the hedge fund Citadel Securities, which has since moved from Illinois to Florida, purchased \$13.7 million worth of income tax credits from 2021 to 2025, state records show.

And after producing the Smashing Pumpkins video “Beguiled,” Koch/Marschall Productions transferred the \$15,553 income tax credit to band leader and longtime Highland Park resident Billy Corgan.

On the higher end of the spectrum, the 10th season of *Chicago Fire*, which was shot in 2021, had \$104 million in Illinois expenses and the production company received a \$30 million tax credit in 2025.

The credits can also be used as a financing tool for small productions, which can borrow against the anticipated tax credit to finance their projects.

Records show that about \$250 million in film tax credits were issued to nearly 3,000 small commercial projects in the two decades. That's more than the \$170 million issued for 301 movies, but less than the \$1.2 billion issued for nearly 767 television projects.

Additionally, it creates a market for intermediaries to sell the tax credits from approved productions to purchasers for a 1 to 2% commission.

One of the state's most prolific brokers, Credits and Incentives Corp., based in Puerto Rico, has sold more than \$125 million million in Illinois tax credits. Its co-founder, Kenneth Blaine, said the business is "relationship based."

“When you think about it at the corporate level, they are not going to buy tax credits from anybody off the street,” said Blaine, who sits on the board of the Illinois Production Alliance, a film production advocacy group. “You want to make sure they are a company that has a proven track record and reputation.”

Jake Prine, a Chicago-based tax consultant and budget strategist, said the process of submitting receipts for film tax credits requires a deep knowledge of the law and accounting, a niche specialty.

Handling these types of transactions is “very lucrative” for the few people who do it, Prine said.

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LEGAL NOTICES

Early Voting Hours

Early Voting for the November 3rd, 2026, General Election will begin on Thursday, September 24th, 2026 and end Monday, November 2nd, 2026. Early Voting for Boone County residents will be conducted at the Boone County Clerk's Office, 1212 Logan Ave, Suite 103, Belvidere, IL 61008. The office is open Monday through Friday, 8:30AM to 5:00PM, except for holidays. The office will also be open on Saturday, October 31st, 2026 from 9:00AM to 12:00PM.

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

Amy E. Ohlsen
Boone County Clerk & Recorder
Published in The Boone County Journal Sept 22 to Oct 27

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ORDER FOR NAME CHANGE
(MINOR CHILDREN)
Request for Name Change 2026-MR-33
Zayden Amir Rucker to Zayden Amir Kremsreiter
Court date on November 3, 2026 at 9:00 am at 610 N Main St, Belvidere, IL courtroom 3.
Published in The Boone County Journal 9/29, 10/6, 10/13/2026 - P

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SELF 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 its public sale to satisfy a lien by selling personal property belonging to those individuals listed below for cash on October 21, 2026, at approximately 7pm CST.

Boxed Up Self Storage – Poplar Grove
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#802 - Wilson, Thomas
#326 - Herriman, Robin
Boxed Up Self Storage - Belvidere
1930 West Chrysler Drive, Belvidere, IL 61008
Unit # - Tenant
#427 - Buffington, Tori

The auction will be listed and advertised on 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. A buyer's 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 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 Oct 6, 13, 2026

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF
THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
BOONE COUNTY

SUSANA BELTRAN VAZQUEZ
Case No. 26-DN-48 VS
VICTOR MANUEL CASTRO RANGEL
NOTICE OF PUBLICATION

Notice is given to you, Victor Manuel Castro Rangel, Defendant that this case has been commenced against you in this Court asking for Dissolution of Marriage and other relief.

Unless you file your response or otherwise file your appearance in this cause in the office of the Circuit Clerk of Boone County, Boone County Courthouse, 601 N. Main St., Belvidere, Illinois, 61008 on or before the 18th day of November, 2026, a Judgment or other relief as prayed for by the Plaintiff may be granted.

Dated: 09/30/2020
Pamela Coduto
Clerk of the Circuit Court
17th Judicial Circuit
Boone County, Illinois
Published in the Boone County Journal 10/06, 10/13, 10/20 W.

Notice of Public Hearing Concerning the Intent of
the Board of Park Commissioners of
the Belvidere Township Park District, Boone County, Illinois
to Sell \$1,375,000 General Obligation Limited Tax Park Bonds

Public Notice is Hereby Given that the Belvidere Township Park District, Boone County, Illinois (the "District"), will hold a public hearing on the 27th day of October, 2026, at 4:45 P.M. The hearing will be held at the Baltic Mill Annex in Belvidere Park, 920 West Lincoln Avenue, Belvidere, Illinois. The purpose of the hearing will be to receive public comments on the proposal to sell bonds of the District in the amount of \$1,375,000 for the payment of land condemned or purchased for parks, for the building, maintaining, improving and protecting of the same and the existing land and facilities of the District, for the payment of outstanding obligations of the District and for the payment of the expenses incident thereto.

By order of the President of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Belvidere Township Park District, Boone County, Illinois.
Dated the 29th day of September, 2026.
Mary Marquardt
Secretary, Board of Park Commissioners,
Belvidere Township Park District, Boone County, Illinois
Published in The Boone County Journal October 13, 2026

The following amount must be received in CASH or MONEY ORDER at the office of H&H Mini Unit Storage LLC, at 4760 IL RT. 173 Ste. 3, Poplar Grove, IL 61065

Or the contents of the below listed units, located at 4760 IL Route 173, Poplar Grove, IL 61065 will be sold or otherwise disposed of on or after 10/27/2026.

Bryan Schulze, 107 Sterling Drive, Rockford IL 61107 for Unit D01 \$1,900.00 plus the cost of postage and advertising.
Bryan Schulze, 107 Sterling Drive, Rockford IL 61107 for Unit D02 \$2,065.00 plus the cost of postage and advertising.
Published in The Boone County Journal 10-13-26 and 20th

ASSUMED NAMES

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

No. DBA4302 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a WOODWORKING, CRAFTS business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of LA JOIE DU BOIS WOODWORKING that its location is or will be 1605 RIVERSIDE ROAD in Belvidere, in the County of Boone County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.

Phone Number: 815-222-2094
BRUCE STILES 1605 RIVERSIDE ROAD
BELVIDERE, IL 61008

I, Amy E. Ohlsen, Clerk & Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office.
Dated: September 28, 2026
Amy E. Ohlsen, Clerk & Recorder
Published in Boone County Journal 09/29, 10/06, 10/13 -P

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

No. DBA4303 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a QUILT SHOP business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of ANCHORS AWEIGH QUILT CO that its location is or will be 1310 RIVERBEND LANE in BELVIDERE, IL 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: 815-742-5761
CAROLYN M. SEVERING 1310 RIVERBEND LANE
BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS 61008

I, Amy E. Ohlsen, Clerk & Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: September 28, 2026
Amy E. Ohlsen, Clerk & Recorder of Boone County
Published in Boone County Journal 10/06, 10/13, 10/20 - P

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

No. DBA4301 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a CONCRETE business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of STAPLETON CONCRETE that its location is or will be 404 N MAIN STREET in BELVIDERE, IL in the County of BOONE COUNTY, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.

Phone Number: 779-770-3660
GEOFF STAPLETON SR. 404 N. MAIN STREET
BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS 61008

I, Amy E. Ohlsen, Clerk & Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: September 24, 2026
Amy E. Ohlsen, Clerk & Recorder of Boone County
Published in Boone County Journal 10/06, 10/13, 10/20 - P

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

No. DBA4300 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a PROPERTY LEASING business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of GENERATIONS COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES that its location is or will be 11595 OLSON ROAD in BELVIDERE, IL 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: 815-540-9855
KERRY ADELE DAWSON 11595 OLSON
ROAD BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS 61008
ABBIELYN AVONNE DAWSON 11595 OLSON
ROAD BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS 61008

I, Amy E. Ohlsen, Clerk & Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: September 14, 2026
Amy E. Ohlsen, Clerk & Recorder of Boone County
Published in Boone County Journal 10/06, 10/13, 10/20 - P



Film from page 5

And it can be beneficial for the buyers as well, who are able to reduce their state income tax liability.

The largest buyer in recent years is U.S. Bank, which has purchased \$70 million in income tax credits from 2021 to 2025, state records show. That means that the bank, which in 2024 had a net income of \$7.6 billion and more than 160 locations in Chicago alone, could use those credits to pay less in taxes that support schools, pensions and other state services, shifting the burden to other regular Illinois residents and businesses.

A U.S. Bank spokesperson said that by purchasing these credits, the company funds films and carries out the Illinois film tax credit's mission by "creating jobs and generating economic activity in Illinois."

It's a wrap

Even though the new incentives went into effect earlier this year, the state is already seeing investment in film production.

Start-up studios have popped up in Rock Island and Rantoul and Breakwell's studio in Wood River is scheduled to be up and running in the fall.

Breakwell isn't a stranger to the entertainment business. As a former executive at JPMorganChase, he was the banker for former National Football Leagues Rams owner Georgia Frontiere.

After helping Frontiere's son, Dale "Chip" Rosenbloom, finance the movie "Alice Upside Down", filmed in St. Louis with Penny Marshall and Luke Perry, Breakwell went on to run 31st Street Studios in Pittsburgh. At its peak, the studio was used in the filming of such blockbuster films as "Avatar" and "The Dark Knight Rises" and the Netflix series "Mindhunter."

But Breakwell's company that ran the studio, Gateway Entertainment Studios, fell on hard times and declared bankruptcy in 2016, listing \$12.1 million in assets and \$9.9 million in liabilities, court records show. The studio, which fell into disrepair due to alleged water leaks, owed \$147,000 to the city of Pittsburgh and \$9,400 to Allegheny County in addition to hundreds of thousands of dollars owed to contractors, law firms and other vendors. Those debts were satisfied before Breakwell sold the studio for \$14 million in 2017.

In an interview at his offices in Granite City, Breakwell blamed Pennsylvania politics and the legislature's lack of continuing support for the studio's sale. Pennsylvania made available \$60 million in annual film tax credits before and during the studio's bankruptcy.

Breakwell says his Illinois venture will be different. He will operate solely as a vendor — running the studio, supplying subcontractors, transportation and logistical support to film producers and potentially offering financing. In addition, he says he plans to build an E-Gaming stadium, a hotel and recording studios.

He's optimistic this project will succeed.

"The key for us downstate is to just get on their radar and provide them knowing that we're right across from St Louis. ... There's so many things to shoot, and even Southern Illinois, it's just beautiful.

Film

from page 6

You can do anything over there,” Breakwell said.

The city of Wood River, where nearly 14% of the 10,000 population lives in poverty, is taking the risk. The city has an annual budget of \$28 million and is desperate for an economic driver to replace the blue collar jobs lost over decades.

To lure Breakwell, the city sold the property to him for \$1 million, and City Manager Steve Palen put together a tax-increment financing package to reimburse 90% of the project development costs. Those reimbursements are capped at \$50 million and will sunset in 2042 when the district expires.

The city council passed the deal unanimously, but board member Bill Dettmers called the agreement “not very well put together” and argued for clawbacks in case the project fails.

“There’s not a definitive provision in there on what has to be done, in order for us to buy the property back,” said Dettmers, who nevertheless voted to approve the deal.

While the development is still under construction, Breakwell said one studio has already expressed interest in filming a series at Hollywood River Studios — with an “A-list” actor, a project that could start as early as this fall.

Will Wood River soon see George Clooney or Emma Stone at the local coffee house Roasterz or the downtown restaurant Burger Bar? Palen believes it’s possible.

“This is going to be a boon for our town,” Palen said.

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.

Gold Scam

from page 1

“elderly and otherwise vulnerable,” Howard told the judge.

Gold-bar scams on the rise

In September 2025, the FBI warned that it was seeing an increase in what it described as “gold bar and bulk cash courier scams” that can unfold in a variety of creative, insidious, and increasingly sophisticated ways that weaponize trust and fear.

Criminals pose as tech-support workers, financial institution representatives and agents of the FBI, Department of Justice, Federal Trade Commission and U.S. Treasury Department. In this case, the Marion woman believed the man who greeted her in the Walmart parking lot in June was an agent of the U.S. Treasury.

The precious metals industry has also taken notice.

Gold can be a smart investment alongside traditional portfolios, but it’s also attractive to scammers because it’s hard to trace once it changes hands, said Paul Cox, director of sales for California-based Freedom Gold USA. It may be natural to wonder how someone could fall for these scams, but Cox said that until you’ve seen one up

close, it’s hard to comprehend just how manipulative they can be. He’s seen smart people duped. Those who threaten to plant illegal material are particularly effective, he said: “People will do anything the minute they feel fear.”

They may also use the opposite tact, building a close rapport over weeks with vulnerable seniors who come to trust them explicitly. Cox recalled one woman who had already lost about \$50,000 in a gold-bar scam when she was approached by real police officers hoping to put an end to it. Yet the woman remained so convinced by the scammers that she doubted the sworn officers and chose to keep working with those stealing from her instead, he said.

The FBI reported that between 2023 and May 2025, it had documented more than 1,700 bulk cash and gold-bar scams, resulting in losses of more than \$186 million.

An NDA, a tracker phone and daily check-ins

The scammers started working right away to get their hooks into D.B. and separate the Marion woman from the hundreds of thousands of dollars in her nest egg.

After D.B. followed Williams’ instructions to give him remote access to her computer, he was able to learn about D.B.’s Edward Jones Investments account, according to a sworn affidavit by a Homeland Security Investigations agent, who worked the case with Marion police and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

Williams then transferred the elderly woman to another man, who identified himself as Kevin Jones, and who claimed he worked in Edward Jones’ fraud prevention department.

Jones told D.B. that her Edward Jones account had indeed been compromised — and protecting it would require extreme measures. He then had her sign a purported nondisclosure agreement in which D.B. agreed to keep the operation a secret from family and law enforcement. Jones mandated that D.B. maintain regular contact with him, asking that she send “good morning” and “good night” texts every day. She was provided a “tracker phone” that Jones monitored.

Jones later told D.B. that in order to protect her money, D.B. needed to convert her assets to gold. She did as instructed and moved \$1.8 million from her Edward Jones accounts into a money market account. She then spent \$318,459 on six one-ounce bars and 20 100-gram bars. Jones instructed D.B. how to package the gold for transportation, and then gave her instructions for handing the gold bars over to a U.S. Treasury agent.

She was instructed to meet the agent on June 8 — 67 days after she first made contact with the scammers. They’d meet in the Marion Walmart parking lot, D.B. was told, and after exchanging the code word “black bug” she should hand over the gold bars.

The exchange went as planned, and the scammers were pleased. Not long after, Jones began instructing her to convert even more of her assets into gold — this time just over a half-million dollars. She did that, too.

D.B., though, started to grow suspicious. The federal seal on the documents Jones sent her af-

ter handing over the gold bars didn’t look real. That’s when she finally contacted the Marion Police Department, federal court records show. D.B. believed them when officers told her she’d been duped.

A sting turns the tables on the scammers

For months, the scammers had called the shots. This time, they would be the ones set up.

With the help of Marion police, another drop was arranged with Jones, who once again guided D.B. as she packaged two kilograms of gold bars worth about \$272,000. On July 7, Jones told D.B. to meet the agent at the Cornerstone Church in Marion near Sam’s Club. And once again, he told her, she should exchange a password with the U.S. Treasury agent.

Federal prosecutors say law enforcement watched Ruoyu Lian approach the elderly woman outside a Marion church later that day. He exchanged a new secret code word with her — this time, “poker queen” — and took the box he believed contained two kilograms of gold.

Instead, it was filled with sandbags.

Investigators arrested Lian moments later. Just 12 days later, he was indicted by a federal grand jury for his role in the conspiracy. He’s the only one facing charges to date connected to D.B.’s lost investments.

On Sept. 24, Lian, 30, of Flushing, New York, sat in federal court in Benton wearing an orange jumpsuit, his wrists and ankles shackled. Lian told U.S. District Judge Phil Gilbert that he understood only a little English. Appearing via Zoom, a Mandarin interpreter translated the words of the judge, prosecutor and his own attorney for him through headphones, then translated Lian’s responses back to the court.

He pleaded guilty to felony wire fraud and conspiracy to commit wire fraud, offenses that could carry sentences of up to 20 years and \$250,000 in fines each. No family or supporters appeared in court with him.

Defense attorney: To ring leaders, ‘Lian is expendable’

Federal court records make clear that Lian didn’t operate alone, but his lawyer, former Jackson County State’s Attorney Joe Cervantez, said prosecutors painted a picture that made Lian appear to have a more active role than Cervantez believes he actually did. Cervantez said they pointed to his New York apartment and the fact he drove a Porsche to suggest he’d benefitted financially from this scheme or others.

But Lian shared the apartment with his girlfriend and another roommate, drove an older, four-door model Porsche, and his father still provided him financial support so he could make ends meet, Cervantez said. Lian, he said, worked as a sushi chef in New York.

He said Lian became acquainted with people in New York he didn’t previously know, at a New York establishment frequented by people who shared his cultural background. Over time, Cervantez said, they convinced Lian to play the role of the U.S. Treasury agent — making him the

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Gold Scam

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scheme's "courier," and thereby putting him at the greatest risk of arrest for little reward.

He received only a relatively small payment — amounting to about two weeks' pay at his restaurant job — to fly to southern Illinois and collect the gold from D.B., Cervantez said.

Cervantez said that, unfortunately, he believes Lian's arrest will do little to deter such schemes.

"Lian is expendable to them," he said of the fraud ring leaders. "At the end of the day, everybody in the scheme is still on to the next one."

In exchange for Lian's guilty plea, prosecutors agreed to pursue a sentence within federal guidelines, which Cervantez said ranges from 40 to 52 months in federal prison. The plea agreement preserves Cervantez's ability to argue for a sentence below that range. In addition to any prison time or fines, Lian will be required to pay more than \$318,000 in restitution for the gold taken from D.B. and never recovered, Howard, the assistant U.S. attorney, told the court. Judge Gilbert told Lian, a Chinese citizen and legal permanent resident, that he will be deported after completing his sentence.

His sentencing hearing is scheduled for Jan. 14.

The Saluki Local Reporting Lab is a special project of the SIU School of Journalism and Advertising and is designed to give students from diverse backgrounds practical reporting experience while providing news coverage to underserved communities.

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.

Illinois Attorney General Claims Victory In Lawsuit Against Trump Administration

Federal judge strikes down rules barring noncitizens from certain emergency public benefits

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul has claimed victory in a legal battle against the Trump administration over noncitizens' access to a host of publicly funded health, education and social service programs.

A federal judge in Rhode Island on Monday struck down the administration's attempt to require states to verify a person's citizenship or lawful immigration status before allowing them to access services such as Head Start, mental health crisis programs, homeless shelters and many other programs.

The lawsuit challenged the administration's attempt to expand the application of a three decades-old law known as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, the signature welfare reform law of the Clinton administration.

Among other things, that law prohibits certain categories of noncitizens from receiving federal benefits such as Medicaid and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or TANF. After the law was enacted, federal agencies issued guidance to states interpreting the law to exclude vital community services that were open to all.

But soon after taking office for his second term in 2025, President Donald Trump issued an executive order titled "Ending Taxpayer Subsidization of Open Borders" that directed federal agencies to realign their programs to "prevent taxpayer resources from acting as a magnet and fueling illegal immigration to the United States."

In July 2025, several federal agencies issued notices that they were changing their interpretation of the 1996 law.

The Department of Justice, for example, announced it was revoking exceptions it had previously allowed for programs deemed necessary for the protection of life and safety, including crisis counseling and intervention programs, child protection services, violence and abuse prevention, and services for domestic violence victims.

The Department of Health and Human Services reversed its policy that excluded Head Start and certain public health programs from the verification requirement.

Other agencies that expanded the requirement to verify lawful status to qualify for benefits included the Department of Education, Department of Labor and Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Illinois, along with a coalition of 21 other Democratic state attorneys general, filed suit challenging the new rules. Among other things, they argued the change in interpretation violated the Administrative Procedures Act, which requires agencies to publish notice and take public comment before enacting new administrative rules.

In September 2025, Judge Mary S. McElroy, a Trump appointee, issued a preliminary injunction blocking enforcement of what she called a "Show me your papers" policy.

"If the Government's plan goes into effect, immigration verification will be necessary for individuals to access emergency services for domestic violence victims and veterans, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, mental health crisis programs, and plenty more," McElroy wrote.

On Monday, she granted the plaintiff states' motion for summary judgment declaring the agency notices "unlawful" and blocking the agencies from enforcing them.

The order did not, however, prohibit the agencies from promulgating new rules if they go through the proper administrative process, including public notice and comment.

"I am proud to have secured this legal victory protecting some of our most crucial social service programs," Raoul said in a statement. "I will continue to oppose arbitrary and illegal actions by the Trump administration and will use all the tools at my disposal to fight unlawful orders."

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