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## Sorensen Introduces Bill to Stop Social Security Office Closures

*Press Release*

Congressman Eric Sorensen (IL-17) is fighting to protect Americans from the Trump-Musk plan to gut Social Security. Sorensen introduced the

Keeping Our Field Offices Open Act, which aims to prevent the closure of critical Social Security field and hearing offices. This bill would ensure continued access to vital services for seniors, people with disabilities, and families across the country.

The Keeping Our Field Offices Open Act, would impose a moratorium on Social Security field and hearing office closures until January 21, 2029 — one day after the end of President Trump's second term. The bill would also allow the Commissioner of Social

Security to lift the moratorium only after submitting a detailed report to Congress outlining a clear and justified process for office closures.

"For so many people in my district, Social Security isn't just a check — it's the difference between putting food on the table or going hungry, affording medication or risking their health. It's a lifeline thousands of people depend on every day,"

said Congressman Eric Sorensen. "Closing field offices would place unnecessary hardships on the very people who rely on these services the most — our seniors, individuals with disabilities, and hardworking families. I proudly stand with my colleagues

in introducing this legislation to make sure everyone has access to the benefits they've earned, because no one should have to struggle or travel miles out their way to get the help they deserve."

"I am strongly opposed to the proposed closure of our local Social Security Administration facility. Shutting down the Rockford office is an unacceptable decision and would create unnecessary barriers — especially transportation challenges — for thousands of

residents, seniors, people with disabilities and working families who rely on these critical services the most.

said Rockford Mayor Tom McNamara. "We must ensure that our most vulnerable residents have access to the support they need, not make it harder for them. Our residents have worked hard and paid into the system for decades; they deserve accessible and reliable

support. We must stand together as community leaders, elected officials and residents to demand the Rockford Social Security office remain open."

"Lifescape's mission is to help older adults access the programs and services they need to remain living as independently as possible for as long as possible.

## Pritzker Wants Illinois To be Latest State to Ban Cellphones in Classroom

*Limits already are in place in some Illinois school districts*

*By Ben Szalinski*

Are cellphones a useful tool or a distraction in the classroom? According to Gov. JB Pritzker, they're a distraction, and he has proposed banning them during classroom instruction.

Pritzker proposed legislation during his State of the State speech in February that would call for banning cellphones during classroom learning time. However, his proposal would not ban

*Continued on page 2*

## Partisan Politics Infiltrating Non-Partisan Local Illinois Elections

*Illinois Democrats backing candidates in new strategy to get involved in all elections*

*By Ben Szalinski & Bridgette Fox  
Capitol News Illinois*

It's been just four months since the last election concluded, but another election is on the horizon in Illinois: the April 1 elections for school boards and municipal offices.

*Continued on page 4*

## New State Transportation Chief Hopes for 'A Good Kind of Disruption'

*IDOT Secretary Gia Biagi comes in as feds pause some program funding*

*By Andrew Adams  
Capitol News Illinois*

Gia Biagi made her name building parks. Now, she's leading the department that oversees more than 145,000 miles of roads, 7,000 miles of railways, 1,000 miles of waterways and 26,000 bridges.

In December, Gov. JB Pritzker tapped Biagi to replace former Illinois Department of Transportation Secretary Omer Osman. Biagi took the reins of the department in mid-January as acting director and is tasked with leading IDOT through several high-profile projects around the state — as well as a five-year, \$29.7 billion spending plan to keep the state's highways up to par.

*Continued on page 7*

## Illinois Schools Turn to Stop Gaps to Combat Teacher Shortage

*Annual educators' survey showed lack of applicants, salary issues and poor working conditions among main causes*

*By Jessie Nguyen, Jordan Owens and Medill  
Illinois News Bureau*

From hiring retired educators to adjusting class offerings, Illinois schools are relying on a variety of short-term, innovative measures to cope with a prolonged and critical statewide teacher shortage.

The most recent survey of education leaders from the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools, or IARSS, shows overall shortage percentages similar to pre-

*Continued on page 3*

## Republican Bills Aim To Assist Illinois in Its Battle Against Fentanyl

*The bills have attracted bipartisan support*

*By Jade Aubrey  
Capitol News Illinois*

Illinois Republican senators have filed bills that would combat the state's fentanyl crisis and further punish major possessors of the drug.

One bill would reclassify a fentanyl overdose as a "poison," while another would consider major fentanyl possessors a threat to public safety.

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, Illinois experienced 3,261 fatal opioid-related drug overdoses in 2022, and 2,855 in 2023.

*Continued on page 5*

## Current Flag Wins State Flag Redesign Vote

*Senator behind flag contest has no 'preconceived notions' about next Illinois flag*

*By Bridgette Fox  
Capitol News Illinois*

The Illinois state flag may be around a lot longer, it turns out.

About 43% of the 385,000 votes in an advisory state flag revision contest decided they'd prefer to resist change and keep the current design.

There were 12 other flag choices. Ten were designed by Illinois residents, students and even the great-grandchildren of Civil War veteran and past Illinois Attorney General James McCartney. The remaining two were designed for past state anniversary celebrations.

A flag design depicting the sun on the horizon, designated "Design #2246," finished in second place with "Design #3679" finishing in third place. That design depicts Abraham Lincoln's

*Continued on page 8*

# Foster Leads Colleagues In Demanding Answers On NSF Firings

## Press Release

Congressman Bill Foster (D-IL) and Congressman Don Beyer (D-VA) announced that they led 37 Members of Congress in expressing their concern with the recent firing of 168 workers at the National Science Foundation (NSF).

In a letter to President Trump and NSF Director Sethuraman Panchanathan, the Members wrote:

“These rash decisions, alongside the Administration’s freeze on NSF grant funds and cancellation of all grant review panels, will not only cause our country to miss out on the scientific breakthroughs that cancelled research could lead to, but we could also lose a generation of scientists who cannot complete their NSF-supported graduate and postdoctoral training. A “brain drain” from the federal government, or from the STEM fields overall, would be catastrophic [...]

“If our country fails to continue to make these advancements, we fear that China and our other research-focused adversaries will fill the gap and get ahead. This poses a threat to our national security not only because of the potential improvements in defense-related technologies, but also because more and more of the free world will become dependent on their inventions and economy, giving China the upper hand in world affairs.”

## OP-ED

### Initial Observation

To paraphrase the old Western, “There’s a new sheriff in town, and his name is Donald Trump. Everyone else seems to sense what this means. How can we not?”

The French president and the British prime minister knew to propitiate the new sheriff when they visited the White House. Deputy Sheriff Vance reprimanded and insulted the Munich Security Conference in his address. He upbraided European security officials for their ingratitude and reluctance to follow the American lead. The new German chancellor announced bluntly that European independence from the new sheriff would be his first priority. Beleaguered Ukrainian President Zelenskyy experienced the new order when double teamed and denounced as a war monger and dictator by Trump and Vance in the Oval Office. Russian leaders literally could not contain their glee, and actually described themselves as “gob-smacked”.

It is indeed a new day, and there is indeed a new order, when our putative allies are offended and seek to distance themselves from us, while Russian officials declare publicly in American slang their joy over our behavior. What international regime does this new sheriff seek to establish and enforce? How is it different, and what does it portend?

Donald Trump, in the opening days of his administration, promised tariffs, tariffs, and more tariffs. He called for a reduction, if not the elimination, of humanitarian foreign aid. He threatened a “pull back”, if not the pull out, from NATO. Other nations need to create and maintain their own security and welfare. They should not look to us. “America First” is the mantra. America alone is its meaning. Americans have harkened to the siren song of isolationism before.

President Trump’s foreign policy would indeed generate a new international order. Ever since World War II the United States has been active in creating and maintaining a world of alliances and international communities. Think of all the treaties, alliances, and other commitments the US has either initiated or joined.

Our engagement with the world has been truly extraordinary. The term used, approvingly, to describe the last 80 years is the “rules based inter-

national order”. No one could plausibly claim purity of motive or perfection of results, but we may well be just about to discover what the opposite condition will be like.

According to one commentator Donald Trump envisions foreign policy from a perspective of radical self interest, not even enlightened self interest. Foreign policy becomes for all nations the relentless, incessant pursuit of power and influence. Such a view leads inexorably to the acceptance of spheres of influence as the natural order. Russia and China have theirs. We have ours.

We must, after all, correct our initial observation. There is no new sheriff in town. In fact, we now have no sheriff at all. But there are still plenty of bad guys.

**Bob Evans**  
**Rockford University**

### Cellphone Ban

from page 1

cellphones in school entirely, meaning students may still be allowed to use their devices between classes. Private schools would not be included in the ban.

“In conversations with educators from around the state, there is one thing most commonly cited as an impediment to classroom learning: cellphones,” Pritzker said at a news conference Thursday in Champaign.

Some of Illinois’ largest school districts already have adopted their own limits on cellphones in their classrooms, including Springfield, Peoria and Champaign.

“We want our students’ phones turned off so their minds can be fully engaged in learning,” Champaign Unit 4 School District Superintendent Sheila Boozer said.

The Champaign district implemented cellphone limits beginning last fall and said the response from parents and teachers has been positive.

“Since every student is provided with a Chromebook for schoolwork, a cellphone is not really necessary for their learning,” Boozer said.

Schools would be required to come up with their own guidelines for securely storing the phones during instructional time. Pritzker’s plan would also prohibit students from being fined or punished by a law enforcement officer for violating a no-cellphone policy.

“Study after study has demonstrated the benefits of a ban in classroom use of cellphones, not just on student performance but on overall health and well-being,” Pritzker said. “Bullying goes down while grade point averages and Advanced Placement test scores goes up.”

Pritzker’s proposal would include several exemptions to such a ban, including in the event of an emergency, when a teacher allows students to use wireless devices for educational purposes or when a doctor requires a student to have or use their phone for medical reasons.

At some recent school shootings, such as in Uvalde, Texas, students made critical 911 calls. Rep. Patrick Sheehan, R-Lockport, who is a Plainfield police officer, told Capitol News Illinois its important students can access a cellphone in emergencies.

“The kids having these devices to be able to call 911 dispatch so that they can get to the police officers, it cuts down on the response time and completely saves lives,” Sheehan said.

Sheehan said it’s important students have a distraction-free environment, but he cautioned against schools enacting a policy that could lock phones away from students.


**John Albertini For Mayor**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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## OBITUARIES

- Marcia Barefield, 66, Belvidere, Mar. 3
- Alfredo Calderon, 76, Belvidere, Mar. 6
- Charles “Roger” Cannon, 77, Marengo, Mar. 6
- Charles Cunningham, 90, Belvidere, Mar. 5
- Maria Garcia Bravo, 85, Harvard, Mar. 7
- Myrtle Hermanson, 94, Belvidere, Feb. 28
- Anne Manley, 91, Belvidere, Mar. 2
- Jay Nolan, 75, Harvard, Mar. 4



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## Cellphone Ban

from page 2

“Taking away the cellphones and putting them in some sort of lock or away from the student, as a parent I don’t like it,” Sheehan said. “And as a police officer, I definitely don’t like it.”

Eight states enacted some type of limit on cellphones in schools last year, Stateline reported last month. This year, Illinois is one of 13 states where legislation has been proposed to limit cellphones in schools.

A 2023 Pew Research poll of public school teachers found 72% of high school educators believe cellphone distractions are a “major problem” in their classroom. But 60% of high schools teachers said it is also difficult to enforce cellphone policies.

Bans on cellphones during class time are generally popular among U.S. adults. While 53% do not support banning phones in schools for the entire day, 68% support banning them during class, according to a 2024 Pew poll.

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## Teachers

from page 1

pandemic levels, yet school districts are still struggling to ease less-than-optimal student-teacher ratios.

“For our school districts throughout the state, (the teacher shortage) is not universally created everywhere. It looks different in every place, but I think everybody believes – or at least feels like – it’s a challenge,” said Gary Tipsord, IARSS Executive Director. “So let’s accept that as a reality, and then that will allow us to best solve this sustainably.”

This is the eighth year the IARSS has partnered with Goshen Consulting to produce the report.

Of more than 750 schools surveyed this year, 87% said they have a “minor, serious or very serious (shortage) problem.” The report also found that 91% of schools said they struggle to hire substitute teachers, while 65% said more than half of teacher candidates don’t have the proper credentials for the teaching positions they’re applying to.

“I think the biggest impact that (the shortage) has is on teacher morale. If there aren’t enough people to do all of the jobs, then those of us who are committed and dedicated to what we do automatically do more,” said Gretchen Weiss, a special education teacher at Macomb Middle School in West Central Illinois.

Illinois had roughly 140,000 teachers for the 2023-2024 school year, according to a report by the Illinois State Board of Education. This number has grown every year since the implementation of Evidence-Based Funding, or EBF, in 2018. The student-teacher ratio was 17:1 in 2024 at both the elementary and high school levels, a steady decrease from roughly 19:1 in 2016.

The IARSS 2024-25 teacher shortage survey

found that while alternative teaching methods helped districts see an increase in the number of educators, the shortage persists due to a lack of new teachers entering the profession.

School leaders surveyed said a limited applicant pool, compensation issues and “poor working conditions” are among the main causes of the shortage, though Tipsord said the term “working conditions” is broad and its meaning can vary from one respondent to another.

“When people talk about working conditions ... that potentially means something different to every teacher or every district or every building,” Tipsord said. “I don’t know that we’re in a good space to truly understand that yet, and I think that’s the place where we need to continue to dig.”

### Pandemic

In 2020, Illinois schools, like others across the country, were hit with temporary school closures due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Rachael Mahmood, a teacher at Georgetown Elementary School in Aurora and the 2024 Illinois Teacher of the Year, noted that students and teachers alike struggled with the effects of an upsurge in online learning.

“I missed my students being in the classroom, and I missed all the community of a classroom, so I was ready to return,” Mahmood said.

In the 2020-2021 academic year, administrators saw a spike in unfilled positions or low-quality hires. Budget and health concerns due to the pandemic in school districts caused a decrease in the number of educators working in K-12 schools. Though the shortage seemed to improve the following year, it has proved to be a continuing issue with shortages rising between 2022-2024.

Because of the pandemic, school districts in the state are working to return shortage rates back to pre-pandemic levels. In 2018, 85% of education leaders reported “a major or a minor issue” in filling teaching positions. This number grew by 3% in 2019.

To help relieve issues caused by the pandemic, schools across the country received an infusion of federal money called Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds.

Illinois saw this money distributed in three rounds over the last five years through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act; the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act; and the American Rescue Plan (ARP ESSER). About \$7.7 million of the \$8 million funds were spent, with final ESSER dollars being allocated to schools

in September of this school year.

“I think what is going to be very interesting is after this year, all those ESSER dollars will have expired unless they get an extension through March of 2026,” said Tipsord. “But as those have expired, what’s the landscape? And will data next year - raw data next year - look worse?”

### Alternative measures

About 3,864 positions are left unfilled this school year at a vacancy rate of 2.8%, a decrease from 4,096 positions last year, or 3%.

For the 2024-2025 school year, Illinois schools filled 6,117 teaching positions with innovative alternative measures like using retired teachers, going virtual, modifying class offerings and utilizing third-party vendors to find educators. Many of those positions were in areas such as bilingual or special education, early childhood and elementary education.

At Macomb Middle School, these measures include having two Leading, Educating and Partnering in Schools, or LEAP, advocates and a “paperwork day” for special education teachers.

LEAP advocates are the school’s support staff who help with school attendance, academics and student well-being, according to the Macomb Regional Office of Education’s website. A paperwork day is when teachers take time off from school to complete an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) outlining the special education students’ academic goals and deficits for the school year.

Weiss said in addition to teaching, she also writes IEPs for 14 of her students.

“The district hires a sub for me, and I find a quiet workspace in the building, and I can work on paperwork,” Weiss said. “That speaks to my district’s commitment to work-life balance... That’s something that my district does very well

*Continued on page 4*

## To the citizens of Belvidere,

I am John Albertini. I am running for Mayor in the next April 1st election.

I find it hard to rationalize for anyone to take credit for work they did not do. The city council works as a whole unit. No council member should take credit for any resolved city issues. Especially when they did not initiate it.

I will continue to listen to and help the citizens of Belvidere even if I am not elected as your new Mayor, no matter where you reside in Belvidere and guide you in every way I can and try to resolve any problems or issues you may have and make Belvidere a proud place to live.

Please come to the City Council meetings if you can or follow us on YouTube and on your local TV channel. Keep informed as to what is happening in your community.

Hope you will vote for me come April 1st.

**Thank you,  
John Albertini**



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**Teachers****from page 3**

in terms of taking care to make sure that teachers have the support they need.”

This year, school districts hired about 1440 substitute teachers, including some retired teachers. To accommodate those retirees, many downstate school districts increased the number of days retired educators can work as substitutes without affecting their retirement benefits. Of the schools surveyed, 86% said this measure helped with the shortage.

“We do have one retiree that’s helping us with a math vacancy right now,” said Travis. “She just retired, and she signed up right away to be a substitute. We reached out to her, and she said, ‘Absolutely,’ because she’s familiar with the curriculum and the students.”

**Policy recommendations**

Increasing state funding for K-12 schools, investing in teacher and school leadership and helping support staff become educators are some of the recommendations school leaders mentioned in the survey as possible ways to ease the shortage crisis.

Fifty-nine percent of school leaders said EBF money allowed districts to add additional staff, while others said the teacher vacancy grants and career and technical education pathway grants can also help ease the crisis.

EBF is a school funding formula lawmakers adopted in 2017 that seeks to reduce funding gaps in the state by sending more resources to the most underfunded districts. CTE programs prepare students for high-skill, in-demand occupations like engineering or culinary arts.

In his February State of the State address, Gov. JB Pritzker reiterated Illinois’ ongoing support for K-12 education funding, including a \$350 million increase in EBF and a \$1.3 million increase in CTE programs. This brings the total EBF funds to \$8.9 billion since the program was enacted in 2017.

Pritzker also proposed continued funding of \$45 million for the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program.

“We are recipients of the teacher vacancy program. I should say that has helped us retain teachers because we were able to offer some signing bonuses for hard-to-fill positions,” said LaTesh Travis, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources at Berkeley School District 87.

Launched in the 2023-2024 academic year, the teacher vacancy grant allowed districts to fill educator positions and offer money for education training. For the Berkeley School District, Travis says they were able to offer signing bonuses for math, special education and bilingual teachers.

Though the state has pledged its support for education funding over the past couple of years, some say there is still room for improvement.

“We understand that this budget, although compassionate, still has a long way to go when it comes to really being able to close gaps. Illinois has committed to education, and I think that has to be part of (the budget) as well,” said Jelani Saadiq, director of government relations with Advance Illinois, a nonprofit agency that promotes public education in Illinois.

Aside from funding, the report proposed more support for shortage research — to better understand what is working to ease shortages — and the implementation of Illinois Vision 2030, a five-year policy framework for state legislators and education officials to better support K-12 public education.

One of the framework’s focuses is on attracting

and retaining high-quality educators through marketing campaigns, strengthening educator pathway programs and improving educators’ experience. Vision 2030 also advocates for grow-your-own programs that encourage local high school students to consider careers in education.

Mahmood said one other way to keep teachers in the workforce is through leadership, though balancing a professional’s “natural desire” to be promoted and their sense of duty can be challenging.

“Every teacher is a leader — they lead classrooms, they’re in charge of little people and they’re making all these decisions as a leader. But are we treating them as leaders?” Mahmood said. “Teaching is the only job where going up means going out of the classroom, and we need great teachers to choose to stay in the classroom.”

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**Politics****from page 1**

Though municipal and school board races in Illinois are nonpartisan, voters may see many of the same political themes that were hallmarks of races during the 2024 presidential election cycle. The Democratic Party of Illinois is applying many of the same tactics it uses in partisan elections to this year’s local races.

“We as the Democratic Party of Illinois should be defending Democratic values in every single election in nonpartisan and partisan elections alike, because all of these local offices have jurisdiction over super critical controls and we think our party has the best platform for governance,” Democratic Party of Illinois Executive Director Ben Hardin said.

The 2025 local elections are the second time that Illinois Democrats are getting involved in nonpartisan races. After recruiting more than 1,000 prospective candidates last year, the state party is supporting 270 candidates for a variety of local offices in all areas of the state.

The party trained the candidates and attached them to “coaches” experienced in running Democratic campaigns. Candidates will also be supported by a six-figure advertising campaign by DPI in the coming weeks.

“I think our voters welcome the information,” Hardin said. “They want to know, and they need to know, who the aligned candidates are.”

It’s also part of the party’s strategy to be more active year-round.

“This is how the party operates now,” Hardin said. “We are not going back to closing up shop after an even-year midterm or presidential election, lying dormant for 18 months and then coming alive again for the next even-year general election.”

Hardin acknowledged there could be some voter fatigue after November’s presidential election, but he stressed that’s why the party wants to make Democratic voters aware an election is approaching.

“These local offices, if we allow them to be uncontested, especially with the Trump administration in office, you know with our lack of control of the wheels of power in D.C., we could allow our state to start slipping to the right at the local level,” Hardin said.

For example, DPI is getting involved in the mayoral race in Aurora, Illinois’ second-largest city, where incumbent Mayor Richard Irvin and Aurora Ald. John Laesch face off. The election is the first since Irvin’s unsuccessful campaign for governor as a Republican in 2022. Hardin said that’s made Irvin an easy target for a partisan campaign.

“We’re treating Aurora like the rest of our program across the state,” Hardin said. “In Aurora, you’ve got an executive of the city who is a Republican.”

As a candidate for governor, Irvin faced numerous questions about his Republican credentials. He often avoided answering any questions about President Donald Trump or his position on abortion as he faced accusations from opponents that he wasn’t conservative enough. Irvin later co-hosted a Black Republicans event at the Republican National Convention last year.

DPI is running a direct mail program this month targeting Irvin. It also plans to reach Democratic voters in Aurora through other mail and digital outreach advertising to let voters know which candidates in the city the party supports.

Irvin’s campaign did not respond to a request for comment.

Illinois State Board of Elections records show DPI also used its resources to support Peoria Mayor Rita Ali and Calumet City Mayor Thaddeus Jones, who is also a Democratic state representative, during primary elections in February.

A full accounting of the party’s spending on municipal elections won’t be available until mid-April when reports are due to the state election authority.

**Conservative influence**

Jim Rule, chairman of the Tazewell County Republican Central Committee, said his group doesn’t normally get involved in “consolidated-type elections” like the Morton School Board, which has five candidates running for election — but this year is different.

Four of those candidates are affiliated with Republican groups despite school board elections being nonpartisan.

In Illinois, political parties and individuals can still support and endorse any candidates they wish.

Rule said his committee vetted and backs the four Republican-aligned candidates.

“It’s important to get the right people in office,” Rule said. “Look, we’ve all heard the phrase ‘all good government starts locally,’ and this is a classic example of that. School boards are so, so vitally critical to have the right people on them for our kids.”

The four GOP candidates are backed by the Citizens for Morton Schools political action committee, which did not reply to a request for comment.

Rep. Bill Hauter, R-Morton, is also involved in the race. He has donated \$1,000 to the group as of March 5, according to the State Board of Elections, while his campaign has provided \$2,000 worth of consulting.

*Continued on Page 5*

**Politics**

from page 4

“I am supportive of four great candidates for Morton School Board in my hometown,” Hauter said in a statement. “They are great candidates who each have their own unique qualifications that can help Morton students, parents, teachers and taxpayers. This will be a statement election for our community.”

Rule said one of the main goals of Tazewell Republicans this election cycle is defeating Dr. Ashley Fischer, a pediatrician running for the Morton School Board whom Hauter called “too radical for the people and schools of Morton.”

Fischer said she’s an anti-bullying advocate, which includes respecting all aspects of students’ identities like race, gender and sexuality.

“We want to send a message, not only to the residents of Morton, but to the community around us,” Rule said. “That this is something that — this woke agenda — is something that we need to rid ourselves of, and it has no place in the school system, especially with young kids.”

Fischer said Republicans are trying to scare voters.

“They’re basically stoking hot button topics to get a fear response out of parents, to try to get them to vote against me out of fear,” Fischer said. “I have never once brought up any policy to do with transgender children, except that I think no child should be bullied in the school, regardless of their race, orientation, medical conditions, anything. They are in that group. I don’t think any child should be bullied. That is my stance.”

Fischer also criticized Republicans for their online rhetoric, which she said promotes hate.

Fischer’s advocacy has also been scrutinized by Moms for Liberty, a right-wing group that advocates for conservative curricula in schools, such as by opposing LGBTQ lessons.

Virg Cihla, chair of the Tazewell County chapter of Moms for Liberty, said his group does not endorse any candidates.

The Illinois Republican Party did not reply to request for comment about their involvement in any April 1 elections.

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**Fentanyl**

from page 1

“There’s not one simple area that it affects. It’s everyone,” Sen. Sally Turner, R-Beason, said. “If you don’t know someone that’s been tainted with fentanyl, you will.”

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that can be up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says fentanyl accounts for a major portion of all fatal and nonfatal overdoses in the U.S.

It’s usually added to other types of drugs to increase potency, making the laced- drug cheaper, more powerful, addictive and dangerous.

“A packet of sugar that you get at the restaurant,

that’s about 2 milligrams,” Turner said. “If you compare that to 2 milligrams of fentanyl, that little packet could kill 500 people. So think about that. That’s how important this is.”

Turner and Sen. Sue Rezin, R-Morris, announced their sponsorship of the four fentanyl-related bills during a news conference with McLean County Coroner Kathleen Yoder in the Statehouse on Thursday.

“The vast majority of time in these deaths, fentanyl is not something someone chooses to use intentionally,” Rezin said. “It’s something they take when it’s laced in other pills or products. Families are losing loved ones, not because of addiction, because they are unknowingly being poisoned right now.”

Rezin championed Senate Bill 1283, which would change the official language of IDPH for a fentanyl-related death from an “overdose” to a “poisoning.”

“When we treat fentanyl deaths as overdoses, we minimize the impact that this drug has on the victims,” Rezin said. “As legislators, it’s our responsibility to ensure that people who die from this poison are recognized as victims, not just another overdose statistic.”

Rep. La Shawn Ford, D-Chicago, said in an interview he is supportive of Rezin’s bill and is filing and sponsoring a duplicate bill in the House.

“It’s clear that fentanyl is poisonous, and people die from it,” he said. “And many times, people that die from the fentanyl overdose, they’re not intending to die, but they get a fatal dose, just like a fatal dose of any poison, and therefore it should be registered as a poison.”

Rezin is also pushing Senate Bill 113, which would require someone charged with handling 15 grams or more of substances containing fentanyl to prove that they do not pose a threat to public safety to be granted pretrial release.

“This shifts the burden away from prosecutors and judges and makes clear that the safety of our communities come first,” she said.

Neither of Rezin’s bills have been assigned to a committee, however, Ford said he agreed with Rezin that such people are a threat to public safety and planned to talk with the senators further about the bill. His main concern is if judges can already do this under the Safe-T Act.

Will Narcan continue to be the solution?

Naloxone – often referred to as its brand name, Narcan – is an over-the-counter medication as either a nasal spray or injection, and often is used to reverse opioid overdoses.

In 2010, Illinois passed the Good Samaritan Law, which allows non-medical personnel to administer Narcan to a person experiencing an opioid or heroin overdose. The law’s enactment led to the creation of the Drug Overdose and Prevention Program, which enabled the Illinois Department

of Human Services to provide organizations with Narcan, for free, to be dispersed within communities in the state.

A CDC report from late 2024 disclosed that, like Illinois, fentanyl-related overdose deaths decreased from 2022 to 2023 – the first nation-wide decrease since 2018.

On Thursday, the Pritzker Administration released a statement that reported an 8.3% decrease in total drug overdose deaths in Illinois in 2023. Synthetic opioid-related deaths also dropped by 9.5%.

The statement noted that “several factors likely contributed to this decline, including sustained efforts to increase naloxone distribution throughout the state.”

“What this tells me is that Narcan works and that it saves lives,” Ford said. “That’s why we have to make sure that we do everything we can to get Narcan out there.”


But Turner and Rezin weren’t so optimistic.

“I mean, great, we’ve had a decrease in fentanyl deaths,” Rezin said. “But considering where we want to, where we need to be, we’re nowhere near being able to take a victory lap.”

Yoder, the McLean County coroner, reported that fentanyl has recently been mixed with new substances, like benzodiazepine and xylazine, often called tranq. These are substances that Narcan can’t reverse.

“This sad reality means that Naloxone alone cannot solve this problem,” Yoder said. “We need a holistic approach that includes keeping these dangerous drugs off the street and holding those trafficking these drugs accountable in order to safeguard their unwitting victims.” Turner agreed.

“Yoder mentioned that now there’s different forms of fentanyl that are coming out,” she said. “I think we’re going to see more death because of Narcan doesn’t work on everything. I think she’s told us that maybe we’re going to see that in the future.”



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# ASSUMED NAMES

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Certificate of Assumed Name

The filing of an assumed name does not provide a user with exclusive rights to that name. The filing is required for consumer protection in order to enable customer to be able to identify the true owner of a business.

ASSUMED NAME: BRIAN PAUL KERN  
PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS: in care of : 274 nelson parkway,  
cherry valley illinois 00000 The United States of America  
APPLICANT(S): Name: brian paul, Authorized Representative  
Address: in care of: 274 nelson parkway  
cherry valley illinois 00000  
The United States of America

Signed by: brian paul, Authorized Representative  
Published in Boone County Journal 3/13, 3/20, 3/27/2025 - P

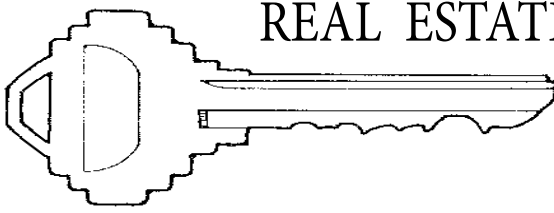
STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE COUNTY  
ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION

No. DBA4222 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a SALON business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of UPTOWN SALON that its location is or will be 126 W. LINCOLN AVENUE in BELVIDERE, in the County of Boone County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.

Phone Number: 815-547-8881  
CLARISSA JEAN KLINFELTER 2822 MALTA RD  
KIRKLAND, ILLINOIS 60146

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: March 10, 2025  
Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder  
Published in Boone County Journal 3/13, 3/20, 3/27 - P

# REAL ESTATE



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

**NEWREZ LLC, D/B/A SHELLPOINT MORTGAGE SERVICING**  
Plaintiff,  
-v- **23 FC 81**  
**BRANDON WALKER, CANDLEWICK LAKE ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
Defendant

### NOTICE OF SALE

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on February 4, 2025, an agent for The Judicial Sales Corporation, will at 1:00 PM on April 15, 2025, at the Advocus National Title Insurance, 530 S. State, Suite 201 (Logan Avenue entrance), Belvidere, IL, 61008, sell at a public in-person sale to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate:

Commonly known as 405 PEMBROKE ROAD SOUTH WEST,  
POPLAR GROVE, IL 61065

Property Index No. 03-27-305-018

The real estate is improved with a single family residence.

The judgment amount was \$71,680.77.

Sale terms: 25% down of the highest bid by certified funds at the close of the sale payable to The Judicial Sales Corporation. No third party checks will be accepted. The balance, in certified funds/or wire transfer, is due within twenty-four (24) hours. The subject property is subject to general real estate taxes, special assessments, or special taxes levied against said real estate and is offered for sale without any representation as to quality or quantity of title and without recourse to Plaintiff and in "AS IS" condition. The sale is further subject to confirmation by the court.

Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser will receive a Certificate of Sale that will entitle the purchaser to a deed to the real estate after confirmation of the sale.

The property will NOT be open for inspection and plaintiff makes no representation as to the condition of the property. Prospective bidders are admonished to check the court file to verify all information.

If this property is a condominium unit, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and the legal fees required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/9(g)(1) and (g)(4). If this property is a condominium unit which is part of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1).

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You will need a photo identification issued by a government agency (driver's license, passport, etc.) in order to gain entry into our building and the foreclosure sale room in Cook County and the same identification for sales held at other county venues where The Judicial Sales Corporation conducts foreclosure sales.

For information, contact The sales clerk, LOGS Legal Group LLP Plaintiff's Attorneys, 2801 LAKESIDE DRIVE, SUITE 207, Bannockburn, IL, 60015 (847) 291-1717 For information call between the hours of 1pm - 3pm. Please refer to file number 23-099985.

THE JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION  
One South Wacker Drive, 24th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606-4650 (312) 236-SALE

You can also visit The Judicial Sales Corporation at [www.tjse.com](http://www.tjse.com) for a 7 day status report of pending sales.

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Bannockburn IL, 60015  
847-291-1717  
E-Mail: [ILNotices@logs.com](mailto:ILNotices@logs.com)  
Attorney File No. 23-099985  
Case Number: 23 FC 81  
TJSC#: 45-434

NOTE: Pursuant to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, you are advised that Plaintiff's attorney is deemed to be a debt collector attempting to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose.

Case # 23 FC 81  
6088-951115

Published in The Boone County Journal March 6, 13, 20, and 27th, 2025

# Transportation from page 1

But Biagi took over IDOT at the same time President Donald Trump's hectic policy changes started to raise questions about the future of transportation funding.

The state Senate has yet to confirm Biagi, but lawmakers have rarely opposed nominations from Pritzker.

Biagi is likely an unknown figure to most Illinoisans, having spent her career in Chicago city government and urban planning. But within those circles, Biagi stands out.

After starting her career in the office of Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, Biagi eventually moved to the city's park district, where she oversaw planning for several award-winning projects: Maggie Daley Park in the Loop, the redevelopment of Northerly Island to include park space, and the 606 – a 2.7-mile-long park and trail built along a former rail line.

When she left the Chicago Park District in 2015, she joined Studio Gang, a legendary architecture and design firm known for designing skyscrapers and public parks. There, Biagi oversaw the planning stages for the redevelopment of Tom Lee Park, an award-winning initiative to transform Memphis' largest park.

"Our goal was really centering community in the design conversation," Biagi said in an interview.

Biagi also led the Chicago Department of Transportation for just under four years. During her time at CDOT, the department added 100 miles of bike lanes to the city's streets, expanded the Divvy bike rental program and oversaw a \$3 billion capital plan.

Biagi replaces Osman, who had led the department since the beginning of Pritzker's first term in 2019. Unlike Biagi – an outside hire with no previous state government experience – Os-

man was a 29-year veteran of the department when he took the secretary job, having started at IDOT as a civil engineer out of college before working his way up.

Biagi's focus on different types of transportation mirrored Osman's mandate at IDOT. His tenure coincided with the Rebuild Illinois bipartisan infrastructure plan established in 2019, which outlined \$44.8 billion of spending, including \$33.2 billion in transportation spending. The department, Osman said in 2021 interview, "truly went multimodal" as a result of that plan and began focusing more on ports, aviation, transit, railroads, walking and cycling.

"I am extremely proud of our accomplishments, including keeping projects on track during a global pandemic," Osman said in December. "I look forward to seeing new, exciting ideas and projects under the new secretary and the top-notch IDOT staff."

### OSMAN PHOTO 'More disruption'

In June, IDOT published its latest multi-year plan, an outline of how it will spend \$41.4 billion on improvements to highways, railroads, transit and more between fiscal years 2025 and 2030.

That plan includes \$23 billion for state road maintenance,

*continued on page 8*

### Consolidated Election Notice

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT ON TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2025, at the usual polling places in the various precincts in the County of Boone and State of Illinois, a Consolidated Election will be held for the purpose of electing candidates for the following offices:

CITIES OF BELVIDERE & LOVES PARK

Mayor  
City Clerk  
City Treasurer  
Alderspersons

VILLAGE OF CALEDONIA

President  
Clerk

Treasurer  
Trustees

VILLAGE OF CAPRON & CHERRY VALLEY

President  
Trustees

VILLAGES OF POPLAR GROVE & TIMBERLANE

President  
Clerk

Trustees  
TOWNSHIPS OF BELVIDERE, BONUS, BOONE, CALEDONIA, FLORA, LEROY, MANCHESTER,

POPLAR GROVE & SPRING

Supervisor  
Clerk

Assessor or Multi-Township Assessor

Highway Commissioner

Trustees  
BELVIDERE AND ROCKFORD PARK DISTRICTS

Park Commissioners

CHERRY VALLEY AND NORTH SUBURBAN LIBRARY DISTRICTS

Trustees

Board Members for the following School Districts:

HARVARD COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 50  
BELVIDERE COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 100  
KINNICKINICK COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 131  
NORTH BOONE COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 200  
ROCKFORD COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 205  
HONONEGAH COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 207  
HIAWATHA COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 426

Trustees for the following Community College Districts

COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NO. 511 (ROCK VALLEY COLLEGE)  
KISHWAUKEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NO. 523  
McHENRY COUNTY COLLEGE DISTRICT NO. 528

Members of the Regional Board of School Trustee for the following:

BOONE AND WINNEBAGO COUNTIES, DeKALB COUNTY & McHENRY COUNTY  
COUNTY FIRE DISTRICTS #2, #3, #4, #5- Trustees

AT THE FOLLOWING PRECINCTS AND POLLING PLACES:

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BELVIDERE 2	COMMUNITY BUILDING – 111 W First St, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 3	COMMUNITY BUILDING – 111 W First St, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 4	COMMUNITY BUILDING – 111 W First St, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 5	COMMUNITY BUILDING – 111 W First St, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 6	FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH – 1255 W Jackson St, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 7	BOONE CO CONSERVATION DISTRICT – 603 N Appleton Rd, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 8	COMMUNITY BUILDING – 111 W First St, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 9	BOONE CO ADMINISTRATION CAMPUS/Board Room- 1212 Logan Ave, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 10	FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH- 221 N Main St, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 11	BOONE CO ADMINISTRATION CAMPUS/Board Room- 1212 Logan Ave, Belvidere- TEMPORARY LOCATION

BELVIDERE 12	KEEN AGE CENTER- 2141 Henry Luckow Ln, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 13	POPLAR GROVE AIRPORT (EAA HANGAR)- 5151 Orth Rd, Poplar Grove
BELVIDERE 14	VFW POST 1461- 1310 W Lincoln Ave, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 15	KEEN AGE CENTER- 2141 Henry Luckow Ln, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 16	SWAN HILLS GOLF COURSE- 2600 Gustafson Rd, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 17	HAMBLOCK FORD/LINCOLN- 1800 N State St, Belvidere
BELVIDERE 18	CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH- 425 Riverside, Belvidere

FLORA 1	AMERICAN LEGION BOONE POST 77- 900 W Chrysler Dr, Belvidere
FLORA 2	FLORA TOWN HALL- 3100 Townhall Rd, Belvidere
FLORA 3	AMERICAN LEGION BOONE POST 77- 900 W Chrysler Dr, Belvidere

CALEDONIA 1	TIMBERLANE VILLAGE HALL- 2940 Charleston Ct, Caledonia
CALEDONIA 2	CANDLEWICK RECREATION CENTER- 1812 Candlewick Dr SW, Poplar Grove
CALEDONIA 3	CANDLEWICK RECREATION CENTER- 1812 Candlewick Dr SW, Poplar Grove
CALEDONIA 4	TIMBERLANE VILLAGE HALL- 2940 Charleston Ct, Caledonia
CALEDONIA 5	PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH- 502 Orth Rd, Loves Park
MANCHESTER	MANCHESTER TOWN HALL- 20904 Grade School Rd, Caledonia
SPRING	SPRING TOWN HALL- 3150 Shattuck Rd, Belvidere

BONUS 1	BONUS TOWN HALL- 9015 Marengo Rd, Garden Prairie
BONUS 2	CROWN POINT BUILDING- 925 Belvidere Rd, Belvidere
BOONE 1	CAPRON LIONS COMMUNITY BLDG- 305 E North St, Capron

LEROY	LEROY TOWN HALL- 9743 Blaine Rd, Capron
POPLAR GROVE 1	POPLAR GROVE FIRE STATION- Route 173, Poplar Grove
POPLAR GROVE 2	POPLAR GROVE VILLAGE HALL- 200 Hill St, Poplar Grove
POPLAR GROVE 3	POPLAR GROVE VILLAGE HALL- 200 Hill St, Poplar Grove
POPLAR GROVE 4	POPLAR GROVE FIRE STATION- Route 173, Poplar Grove
POPLAR GROVE 5	POPLAR GROVE FIRE STATION- Route 173, Poplar Grove

The polls of said Consolidated Election will be open continuously from 6:00AM to 7:00PM on April 1, 2025, at which the Unisyn Voting System, including OVO Optical Scan and Freedom Vote Tablet (FVT) will be in use.

Dated this 5th day of March, 2025 LAURA BETTIS, CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK

Published in The Boone County Journal March 13, 2025

## The Journal

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**Transportation**

from page 7

modernization and expansion, and \$6.7 billion for local highway projects. About \$11.8 billion is set to go to rail, air, marine and transit projects.

Biagi indicated she wants to increase the speed – and day-to-day impacts – of the thousands of projects her department will approve.

“It’s our job, not only to get that money spent, to get shovels in the ground, get hands on those shovels, get people into jobs, get the work done and get it done as fast as possible,” Biagi said. “One of my goals is to really think as creatively as possible about how we can deliver faster and more. That does mean more disruption, but it’s maybe a good kind of disruption.”

Part of that approach, she said, is to find projects that will improve local communities, both by reducing the “friction” of travel and by creating jobs.

“If people have what they need and we can get shovels in the ground on projects, that’s people in jobs. That’s economic impact. That’s better quality of life for people on the ground all across the state,” Biagi said.

While Biagi said her primary job in her first few months is to listen and better understand the workings of IDOT, she noted that she eventually wants to bring some of the skills she developed over her career as an urban planner to the state agency.

“Part of what we can do is to develop longer-term relationships with communities,” Biagi said. “So it’s not just project based when the big highway project is coming, but that we really try to nurture those so we can get at some of the smaller things that improve the quality of life at a more granular level.”

**‘A legacy project’**

In Chicago, few infrastructure projects have drawn as much attention – and controversy – as the planned redevelopment of Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable Lake Shore Drive, known simply as Lake Shore Drive.

For more than a decade, transportation officials – including those at IDOT and CDOT – have been considering options to rebuild the northern portion of the iconic ribbon of highway. The department and other agencies involved are expected to announce a finalized plan for the first phase of the project this year.

“I’m in the rare position of being on one side of it for a while, then being on the other side of it. We recognize this is a significant project for the next 100 years for Chicago. It’s a legacy project; it’s at the level of Daniel Burnham,” Biagi said, referencing the famous architect and urban planner who originally proposed the Chicago street grid pattern in 1909.

State lawmakers have even chimed in on the issue. Last May, the House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution urging IDOT to transform the highway into a “true boulevard” which meets the needs of “pedestrians, cyclists, public transit users, and drivers.” The state Senate adopted an identical resolution the next day.

But in July, IDOT officials selected their preferred option for a Lake Shore Drive redesign, which included no dedicated lanes for buses or public transit.

“That’s kind of, like, an insult to our intelligence,” Sen. Mike Simmons, D-Chicago, said at a rally shortly after that plan was unveiled. “It feels really incremental and is certainly not going to help ensure we have a sustainable option in terms of doubling the number of people that use buses and trains in the city, which is a goal of the city of Chicago itself. That’s not, like, a radical aspiration.”

Biagi hasn’t said much about her personal vision for Lake Shore, but did say IDOT was “open” to continuing the conversation about the project’s scope of work.

“Sometimes you just get one shot,” Biagi said.

“I’ve met a lot of folks who care so much about the lakefront and have strong opinions about the lakefront,” she later added. “It’s our job to listen really well and collaborate with the city.”

Federal funding uncertainty

Of the \$29.7 billion in revenue dedicated to fund IDOT road projects under its current multi-year plan, about half comes from federal government reimbursements. For multimodal projects, about 40% of projected funds are set to come from the feds.

But the early days of the new Trump administration have already upended at least one major transportation program – casting doubt on what other funding might disappear.

On Feb. 6, the U.S. Department of Transportation sent a memo to state transportation directors — including Biagi — suspending all funding for the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure, or NEVI, program.

The program, which was set to distribute \$5 billion to states by 2030, was laid out in the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, sometimes called the “bipartisan infrastructure law.”

More than \$25 million of grants had already been announced by the state, with more than \$100 million of grants expected in the future.

But future funding, which was previously thought to be all-but-guaranteed under the program’s funding formula, is now in question after the Trump administration said the program would be put under review. The memo from federal officials barred all “new obligations” until federal guidance is updated and states file new EV infrastructure plans.

Prior to that announcement, the governor’s office said it would pursue legal action if any federal payments that were already under contract were withheld.

So far, the state hasn’t taken any action on the program, but it has engaged the Trump administration in at least four other lawsuits, including two cases involving other federal funding changes.

But Biagi, staying diplomatic, said she’s going to let the new administration “get their sea legs.”

“We’re going to be patient and look for opportunities to collaborate,” Biagi said in late January. “Everyone has an interest in infrastructure, no matter what party you’re in.”

*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.*

**Flag**

from page 1

silhouette and the state of Illinois on a dark blue background.

A flag designed for the state’s sesquicentennial celebration in 1968 finished in last place, with about 5,100 votes.

The vote will be used by the Illinois Flag commission to advise the General Assembly on how they should vote regarding a flag change. So, legislators will have the final say on any future flag changes.

Sen. Doris Turner, D-Springfield, introduced the bill that created the Illinois State Flag Commission, the group that conducted the flag vote. She’s also a member of the commission.

Turner said she doesn’t have any preconceived notions about what’s going to happen.

“I don’t want to talk too much about the results because I think that the commission has to – still has work to do,” Turner said. “And we have to look at, you know, look at those results and do a deep-dive into them and complete our report and submit it to the General Assembly as we said we would do in the legislation.”

The flag commission is expected to issue its report to the legislature later this spring.

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