

To be notified of new issues online, register at [www.boonecountyjournal.com](http://www.boonecountyjournal.com)

## Hoover Makes Campaign Stop in 1932

By David Larson

In a last-ditch effort to save his campaign for reelection, President Hoover made a whistle-stop here on November 5, 1932. It was a Saturday just days before polling day, Tuesday November 8, 1932. In November of 1932, the depression was at its deepest point. No safety net existed. Safety nets like we saw during COVID-19, unemployment insurance, welfare, and social security did not exist. The country was exasperated, and was ready to support charting a new direction for the country.

In the Election of 1932, a nearly 3 to 1 majority of Democrats had won election in the House, and in the Senate, the Democratic majority was more than 2 to 1. Just twelve years earlier, the Republicans held nearly the same magnitude of majorities at the federal level. In Belvidere, the voting looked radically different than nationally. Hoover prevailed with 5243 votes over Roosevelt's 2236. Historians have reflected on this election as a turning point in American political

history and cite the presidency of Ronald Regan as the next turning point: Turning away from reform and returning to the days of Republican dominance of the 1920s.

The 1932 election is noted for ending the prohibition of alcohol and temporarily closing the country's banks for 8 days to stop the continuing bank failures. 40% of the nations banks had failed. Most significantly, the election ushered in Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, putting people back to work, created social security, and many other programs that still compose the structure of government.

In reality, the country was close to revolution, with military intervention being used to keep the lid on. It was reported in the *Belvidere Daily Republican*, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Democratic party have been given a mandate in the conduct of national affairs for the next four years such as has been given but rarely, if ever, in the political history of the nation....Roosevelt in the

Continued on Page 4



President and First Lady Hoover November 5th, 1932 waving to the Belvidere crowd during a whistle-stop three days before the vote.

## Objectors Say Trump is Disqualified Under 14th Amendment

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

Illinois is now among the growing list of states in which former President Donald Trump will have to fight to have his name appear on the 2024 election ballots.

A group of five voters filed a joint objection to Trump's candidacy Thursday, arguing that Trump should be disqualified under the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits anyone who took part in an insurrection against the United States from holding federal office.

The objection alleges that Trump's attempts to overturn the results of the 2020 elections, including his involvement in events leading up to the Jan. 6, 2021, storming of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, amounted to an insurrection.

"Consequently, Donald J. Trump is disqualified from, and ineligible to hold, the office of President of the United States," the objection states. "Accordingly, his nomination papers are invalid under Illinois law because when Trump swore he was 'qualified' for the presidential office, as required by (state statute), he did so falsely."

Thursday was the first day for presidential candidates to file petitions for the March 19 primary ballot. According to the Illinois State Board of Elections' website, the Trump campaign filed its petitions at 8 a.m., along with fellow Republican candidates Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, and Texas businessman Ryan L. Binkley.

Continued on Page 5



Reported as 10,000 people, the crowd in the photograph have gathered to get a glimpse of President Hoover: Boone County's choice in the 1932 presidential election. In the upper left one can see where the President and First Lady were located at the end of the train.

## Madigan Trial Delayed Until October For SCOTUS Review Of Bribery Statute

At court hearing, former Democratic powerhouse makes first appearance in court

By Hannah Meisel Capitol News Illinois

Former Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan won't be spending his 82nd birthday

in a federal courtroom this spring after a judge on Wednesday granted his request to delay his bribery and racketeering trial originally set to begin April 1.

Madigan claimed the small victory while appearing in court for the first time since he was indicted nearly two years ago, opting to show up in person to a hearing at the Dirksen Federal Courthouse Wednesday afternoon despite having been granted permission to appear via videoconference. Sporting a black suit and royal blue tie, the former speaker spoke only once

Continued on page 2

## Madigan

from page 1

during the hearing.

“Yes I do, your honor,” Madigan said in reply to U.S. District Judge Robert Blakey’s question as to whether he consented to the trial’s rescheduling to Oct. 8.

The trial is now scheduled for several months after the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to weigh in on the case of a northwest Indiana mayor convicted under the same federal bribery statutes at play in Madigan’s case. Attorneys for the former speaker and his codefendant argued the high court’s ruling could affect the outcome of Madigan’s case.

Blakey agreed during the hourlong hearing, likening the risk of going to trial prior to the Supreme Court’s expected June ruling to stepping on a Lego brick.

“I’d go, ‘George! I thought I told you to pick up the Legos!’” Blakey said, recounting telling his then-young son to clean up his toys. “And he’d say, ‘Eh, I picked up most of them.’”

Blakey acknowledged that while only a third of the 23 charges Madigan is facing could be affected by the high court’s ruling and posited that no parties involved want to “walk into a dark room with no shoes on” and be thrown a Lego by the Supreme Court.



Bill Bristol Jr., 87, Poplar Grove, January 4  
 Phillip Lambert, 77, Harvard, December 31  
 Victor Mortensen, 93, Marengo, January 1  
 Charles “Chucky” Mosher, 58, Belvidere, Dec. 26  
 Helen O’Brien, 85, Harvard, January 6  
 Francesco Salamone, 94, Cherry Valley, Jan. 2  
 Harriet Stoxen, 96, Harvard, January 3  
 David Swanson, 76, Belvidere, December 11  
 Bonnie Takamoto, 84, Cherry Valley, January 4  
 Scott Whitfield, 65, Belvidere, January 1

David Soul, 80, London, Jan 4

Most critically, Blakey said, delaying the trial until after the Supreme Court’s ruling would avoid the possibility of having to redo the entire trial, which he said would be a waste of everyone’s resources. Government prosecutors opposed the delay, but in a filing Tuesday evening offered that they’d be willing to reevaluate jury instructions if the high court had not ruled by the time the case was nearing a close in late spring.

But Blakey rejected that solution, saying the “critical juncture” for clarity on what the federal bribery statute says does not occur during jury instructions. Rather, he said, it occurs even before opening statements begin, as attorneys on both sides prepare for trial.

“You’re absolutely right: there’s a bunch of the case that won’t be affected,” he said. “But there’s enough of the case that’s going to be affected that it might require retrial.”

The case at issue on the Supreme Court’s docket is a review of a 2021 conviction of a northwest Indiana mayor who accepted \$13,000 from a company that had recently won contracts to sell garbage trucks to the city. The high court accepted the case last month and is expected to clarify whether “gratuities” are the same as bribes, even if there’s no quid pro quo agreement in place.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Amarjeet Bhachu pointed out that prosecutors in the Northern District of Illinois are overseeing that case, which stems from Portage, Indiana, about 20 miles east of the Illinois border.

“When you corruptly solicit a payment... an actual quid pro quo isn’t required,” Bhachu maintained during Wednesday’s hearing.

But Federal appeals courts have split on the issue, and Madigan has already attempted to have the case dismissed on similar grounds, though Blakey has yet to rule on that motion from last year.

Madigan was forced out of his 36-year reign as House Speaker in early 2021 as pressure grew from his own Democratic caucus after he was cited as “Public Official A” in federal charging documents against electric utility Commonwealth Edison and former top lobbyists and executives at the company.

Prosecutors alleged ComEd bribed Madigan with jobs and contracts for his political allies in exchange for favorable legislation in Springfield. ComEd agreed to pay a \$200 million fine as part of its resolution of the legal action against it, while the company’s former CEO and three ex-lobbyists fought the charges in a seven-week trial last spring. All were ultimately convicted by a jury.

Read more: ‘ComEd Four’ found guilty on all counts in bribery trial tied to ex-Speaker Madigan

The four are still awaiting sentencing, which was originally scheduled for January before being delayed due to court scheduling conflicts. Also awaiting sentencing is the former ComEd executive who wore a wire against his colleagues and became the government’s star witness in last year’s trial.

Madigan wasn’t indicted until March 2022, more than a year after he’d stepped down from

nearly every public office he’d held, including as head of the state’s Democratic Party and the legislative seat he’d kept for 50 years representing Chicago’s southwest side.

The indictment was largely a repackaging of allegations from the ComEd cases, claiming Madigan and his codefendant – ComEd’s longtime top outside lobbyist Mike McClain – ran a “criminal enterprise” via the power Madigan had accumulated from his positions as both a political power broker and name partner in a Chicago-based property tax law firm.

In October 2022, the feds added an additional count alleging telecommunications giant AT&T Illinois had been part of a bribery scheme similar to ComEd’s, wherein the company allegedly gave jobs and contracts to Madigan allies in exchange for favorable treatment in Springfield.

*Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government. It is distributed to hundreds of print and broadcast outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, along with major contributions from the Illinois Broadcasters Foundation and Southern Illinois Editorial Association.*

## Boone County is Recruiting Election Judges


Press Release

Boone County Board Chairman, Rodney Riley, encourages individuals from both major political parties to apply to serve as Election Judges in the March 19, 2024 General Primary Election and the November 5, 2024 Presidential Election. “Election Judges play an important role in helping to guarantee that the rights of voters are protected on Election Day” Chairman Riley said.

Next week the Boone County Clerk’s Office will begin the process of training an estimated 100 Election Judges. The County hopes to recruit and train as many as 50 additional Election Judges to help ensure that the elections are fully staffed and run smoothly. Local college students as well as juniors and seniors in high school are encouraged to apply.

Election Judges are paid \$145.00 for serving on Election Day. In addition, the judge will receive an extra \$25.00 for attending the required classroom training session- but only if the judge serves on Election Day.

Interested individuals can download an application to be an Election Judge by visiting [www.boonecountyil.gov](http://www.boonecountyil.gov) and clicking on the Clerk and Recorder page, or visiting the County Clerk and Records Office at 1212 Logan Avenue in Belvidere. Please call (815) 544-3103 with any questions about being an Election Judge.



**REAL JOURNALISM FOR A REAL DEMOCRACY**

Publisher/Editor	David C. Larson
Senior Writer/Editorial	Charles Herbst
Photography	Susan Moran

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

---

**THE BOONE COUNTY JOURNAL**  
 419 S. STATE ST • BELVIDERE, IL 61008  
 PHONE: (815) 544-4430 FAX: 544-4330  
 WWW.BOONECOUNTYJOURNAL.COM  
 NEWS@BOONECOUNTYJOURNAL.COM

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

Get instant cash for your **GOLD**



**WE PAY HIGHEST PRICES**

**Belvidere Collectible Coins**

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

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

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

**Be the first to**  
**Read the Journal**  
 The Boone County Journal is available  
 Online at no cost  
 at [boonecountyjournal.com](http://boonecountyjournal.com)

Leave your email and you  
 will receive a notice whenever  
 a new issue is posted on the website.

# Time Traveling With Soil: Researching Illinois' Centennial Soil Archive

By Erin M. Henkel  
Farmweek

A soil sample from 1861 in Perry County was collected as part of the Illinois Geological Survey and provided researchers with information about Illinois geology, landscape and mineral resources. In 1899, researchers started mapping soil types to 3-foot depth and characterizing the distinct soil layers.

The archive of the soil samples was kept in a dark pole-barn near the Morrow plots on the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus until Andrew Margenot and his team of about 40 research personnel discovered the barn's soils and started recovering and curating the soil archives.

Margenot is an Illinois Extension specialist and associate professor in the Department of Crop Sciences and has been working in conjunction with the Illinois Farm Bureau and Illinois Nutrient Research and Education Council, to resample the locations to identify how soils have changed over time in Illinois.

"We can learn a lot about what has changed over time and that can go as far back as 120 years or so," Margenot said. "That's important because we don't really know how soils changed more than a couple of decades ago, in general, and over a small area like typically one field trial. To do this over a state and going back over 100 years is a huge deal."

Margenot said the project builds on the lifetimes of researchers and soil scientists who have gone into the effort of collecting soil samples. He said because the soil samples were kept with details such as location, year and day of collection, researchers today can resample the soils and see how the soils have changed over a longer period than most soil archives that span only a few decades.

He also said while there might be "simplicity" in terms of crop rotation in the state, biochemistry and how water, soils and air interact are complex.

"Soils change at a rate that we cannot see as individual humans and it is called generational blindness," Margenot said. "But if you took your great-grandfather and showed him soil now, he would be able to see things that you think are normal. To be able to measure these changes, you have to be able to go back in time."

He said until scientists invent a time machine, the best way to "go back in time" is by using the archive built by previous researchers. He also said due to the size of Illinois, the collection of samples is especially unique.

"The state of Illinois is the size of some entire countries in Europe and to understand soil changes you have to look at it on a large spatial scale," he said. "This archive is one of the oldest in the world, but it's also unlike the other ones in the world

— it's the largest by orders of magnitude. That's really important."

Margenot asked farmers and landowners to look at the map of locations needing to be resampled and see if they know the landowner. They would need access to the land to collect six to 12 cores, 1.5 inches in diameter, to 3-foot depth and would provide the farmer with a read-out of soil information at the field level. Any information at field level is protected and anonymized.

"There's very basic questions we can answer on fertility that have direct implications for economic use of fertilizer inputs," Margenot said. "Can we improve the recommendations and how to apply depending on your soil type? I think we can."

He said understanding the changes in the soil over time could also help farmers understand micronutrient needs such as zinc or boron.

Another benefit for farmers is understanding their soil's potential for carbon sequestration as they navigate the carbon credit markets and determine whether they should enter into a carbon agreement.

Margenot said IFB "has been a great partner," helping the team to work with landowners and farmers.

"They've been supportive of putting us out in front of farmer crowds and they have also been supporting policy communication that I think is essential for this project," he said.

Margenot said IFB is helping connect the research team with policymakers at the state and federal level to explain the importance of soil changes and phosphorus losses.

*This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.*

# Dolly Parton Imagination Library Officially Launches Statewide in Illinois

*Pritzker says goal is to send free books to all children, ages 0-5*

By Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

Illinois families with infants and toddlers now have access to free children's books that can be sent directly to their home, regardless of their income.

Gov. JB Pritzker on Tuesday announced the official launch of the state's partnership with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, a program founded by the country music legend in 1995 in her home county in east Tennessee. It now sends free books every month to nearly 3 million children in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and Ireland.

"Today, I couldn't be prouder to announce that the Imagination Library is working with the state of Illinois to begin our journey to provide every child under the age of five an opportunity to receive a free book delivered to them every single month," Pritzker said at an event at the Bloomington Public Library.

Pritzker first announced in June that the state had formed a partnership with the Dollywood Foundation, Parton's philanthropic organization, after Illinois lawmakers included \$1.6 million in this year's budget to fund the state's share of the program. Other funding comes from the Dollywood Foundation and local, county-based organizations.

Since then, about 44 local programs have

*Continued on Page 4*

## Boone County License & Title Stickers - Titles - Plates We Are OPEN

M-F 9-5  
Sat 9-1

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

Bring:  
Postcard Bill from the Secretary of State  
Or  
Old Registration Card  
Or  
Vin# + Plate # + Expiration Date



My clients have questions.  
I provide answers.

They know that their taxes are prepared professionally, and they don't have to fear a letter from the IRS.

**When was the last time you had a legal question?** Or had some large organization try to intimidate you, and you really weren't sure of your rights. Did you know someone you could ask? Or did you just "wing it" and hope for the best? My clients know they can call me anytime for some quick advice.

**Historically, lawyers have prepared tax returns.** Using a tax attorney gives you a unique advantage: At least once a year, you can talk to an attorney and discuss what is important to you. We can discuss your will or trust, assist with an upcoming real estate transaction, or even put your business into an LLC to protect your assets. Or maybe just answer a question that's been bugging you for years.

**My rates are reasonable** because my overhead is low, and things are done privately. There's no fishbowl atmosphere or flimsy partitions. Hours are by appointment.

**Owe the IRS money?** Haven't filed? Afraid to file? Gotten a letter from them? I can help. With 35 years of experience as a tax attorney, I've helped many other people in your situation.

If your return consists of more than just a W-2, or you have a tax problem, please give me a call.



**CHARLES HERBST, J.D., LL.M.**  
LAW, PLANNING AND TAX

Belvidere and Rockford • 815 484 9482 • taxviking.com

**1932**

*from page 1*

White House by a record-smashing popular and electoral vote, that made President Hoover the worst beaten candidate in history in a two party contest, that gave the Democrats a greater degree of control of Congress than any party has ever had, and installed Democrats in most of the state governments.”

The New Deal was a series of programs, public work projects, financial reforms, and regulations enacted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the United States between 1933 and 1938. Major federal programs and agencies; including the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration, the Civil Works Administration, the Farm Security Administration, the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, and the Social Security Administration, which provided support for farmers, the unemployed, youth, and the elderly. The New Deal included new constraints and safeguards on the banking industry, most notable was Glass-Steagall, and efforts to end deflation.

The first unemployment insurance program began in Wisconsin in 1932, and was shortly thereafter expanded nationwide through the Social Security Act of 1935. Labor also benefited from the Roosevelt New Deal in the Wagner Act, a foundational statute of labor law that guarantees the right of private sector employees to organize into trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and take collective action such as strikes.

Roosevelt was supportive of the idea of creating a progressive Democratic Party that could work with progressives from the Republican Party. Indeed, Roosevelt had appealed to progressive Republicans for support for New Deal programs. Reluctant to alienate the conservative wing of the Democratic Party, Roosevelt at least made a political concession to party loyalty: He was willing to manage the tensions between ideology and party as long as progressives dominated in Congress and some Southern conservative Democrats were willing to trade their support for New Deal economic programs in return for federal tolerance of racial discrimination in the South. A prudent balancing of the conflicting demands of party and ideology of the time served the purpose of furthering his reform agenda.

The New Deal produced a political realignment, making the Democratic Party the majority party (as well as the party that held the White House for seven out of the nine presidential terms from 1933 to 1969) with its base in progressive voters, the South, big city machines, the newly-empowered labor unions, and various ethnic groups. There was a split in the Republican party, with progressive Republicans in support, but conservatives opposing the entire New Deal, claiming it hostile to business and economic growth. This realignment crystallized into the New Deal Coalition that dominated presidential elections into the 1960s.

In the 1960s Johnson’s progressivism called the Great Society expanded civil rights and created health insurance for the elderly and disadvantaged as Medicare and Medicaid. The Apollo space program Johnson made a priority, putting a man on the moon July 20, 1969.



**Library**

*from page 3*

been operating in the state, serving roughly 4 percent of eligible children. But Dollywood Foundation executive director Nora Briggs said the goal is to reach all of the estimated 755,000 children under age 5 in Illinois.

“We know that nothing is more basic, more essential, more foundational to a child’s success in life than the ability to read,” Briggs said. “The research is clear. We cannot wait until kindergarten for children to have access or exposure to books. It must happen early. It must start in the home environment. And reading at home requires books.”

People who are interested in enrolling their child in the program can find their local provider on the “check availability” tab located at [imaginationlibrary.com](http://imaginationlibrary.com). From there, applicants submit basic information including their address, their child’s name and date of birth, and the parents’ information.

Once a child’s eligibility is approved, they will start receiving one book each month, addressed to them. Each child within an age group receives the same monthly book. Books on the distribution list are chosen by a panel of early childhood literacy experts who review potential titles for inclusion in the distribution list.

In addition to funding the Imagination Library program this year, lawmakers also approved Pritzker’s “Smart Start Illinois” initiative that will provide \$250 million this year for early childhood programs, including expanded access to preschool, wage support for child care workers, early intervention programs, and home visiting programs.

“We’re making our mark on every aspect of early childhood, and working with Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library literacy efforts will begin now at the earliest ages,” Pritzker said. “Illinois is well on its way to solidifying our status as the number one state in the nation to raise young children.”

*Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government. It is distributed to hundreds of newspapers, radio and TV stations statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, along with major contributions from the Illinois Broadcasters Foundation and Southern Illinois Editorial Association.*

**ROOM FOR RENT: Belvidere:** Nice furnished room w/ fridge, near downtown, bus stop, Aldi, Drug & Dollar Stores. No Sec. Deposit. \$102/wk. or \$430/mo.  
Call (815) 544-4466

**Governor Names New DCFS Director**

*Former director Marc Smith will stay on until Feb. 1*

*By Beth Hundsdorfer Capitol News Illinois*

The troubled state agency charged with the protection of abused and neglected children will have new leadership in the new year.

Gov. JB Pritzker announced Wednesday that Department of Juvenile Justice Director Heidi Mueller will take over the embattled Department of Children and Family Services starting Feb. 1.

“The work Director Mueller has done at the Department of Juvenile Justice over the last several years has been transformative for the juvenile justice system in Illinois, and I am thrilled that she will bring her unique experience and talents to DCFS,” Pritzker stated in a news release on Wednesday.

Mueller will be the 15th director to head DCFS in the past two decades.

“As someone who has devoted my career to supporting children and families, I am honored and humbled to be entrusted by Governor Pritzker with the responsibility of leading DCFS,” Mueller stated in a news release.

Mueller has served as IDJJ Director since 2016, overseeing youth adjudicated as juvenile offenders. Mueller developed a close-to-home model for youth offenders and built a system of community care, according to the release.

“The DCFS director has arguably the hardest, and most important, job in state government,” said Cook County Public Guardian Charles Golbert, who has been one of agency’s critics. “Heidi Mueller has an outstanding reputation as a reform-minded manager and brings substantial child welfare experience to the task.”

Heidi Dahlenberg, legal director of the ACLU of Illinois and the lead attorney in a lawsuit against DCFS that has been ongoing since 1988, said Mueller takes over at a “crucial moment” marked by a need for placing youth in proper settings.

“DCFS also must provide services to meet children’s individual needs and turn away from the use of large impersonal, institutional settings. This is a challenging job that requires a leader with vision and a commitment to transformational change,” Dahlenberg said.

ACLU’s lawsuit, known as B.H. v. Smith, resulted in a consent decree that mandates reductions in caseloads, protection of agency funding, implementation of better training for caseworkers and private agency staff, and a reorganization of DCFS systems of supervision and accountability. Three decades after the consent decree, many problems, including understaffing, persist.

*continued on page 5*

**Boone County License & Title  
Stickers - Titles - Plates  
We Are OPEN**

M-F 9-5  
Sat 9-1

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

Bring:  
Postcard Bill from the Secretary of State  
Or  
Old Registration Card  
Or  
Vin# + Plate # + Expiration Date



**DCFS***from page 4*

The news of Smith's replacement came within hours of an email sent to DCFS employees on Tuesday afternoon, letting them know that Director Marc Smith would stick around past his stated Dec. 31 resignation date. He announced in October that he would step down at the end of 2023, but he will now stay on until the end of January "to provide ongoing continuity" to the agency, according to a statement from the agency.

Smith has headed the agency since 2019. For years, critics had called for Smith's ouster, amid legislative hearings, contempt citations, a murdered child protection investigator and the highest number of children who died after contact with the agency in 20 years.

Last month, DCFS and its watchdog released two reports detailing failures of the agency to properly place children in appropriate settings and how failures to follow the law and the department's own policies compromised child safety.

DCFS released its annual "Youth in Care Awaiting Placement Report" to the General Assembly on Friday. The report showed 1,009 state wards were in emergency placements for more than 30 days, housed in psychiatric units beyond medical necessity, stayed in hospital emergency rooms for more than 24 hours, held in juvenile detention facilities after their schedule release dates, or placed in out-of-state treatment facilities.

In 330 cases, involving 296 children, DCFS forced children in state care, some as young as four years old, to remain in a locked psychiatric hospital after they were cleared for discharge. The report stated that more than 40 percent of these children were held in locked psychiatric hospitals for more than three months.

Last year, a Cook County judge cited Smith personally a dozen times for contempt of court for failing to put abused children in appropriate placements.

An appellate court vacated the contempt citations because Smith was not willfully disobeying the order but could not comply with the court order because DCFS did not have enough beds in group homes, shelters, or specialized foster placements. Some of the contempt citations were purged when the agency found the children appropriate placements.

The Office of the Inspector General, the agency's internal watchdog, also released its annual report for fiscal year 2024 last month. The report detailed the deaths of 160 children who had been under the care of DCFS within a year of their deaths. The OIG investigated the deaths of 171 children in fiscal year 2023 – the highest number of deaths in two decades.

The report outlined new details in the death of 8-year-old Navin Jones, of Peoria. Though the reports are anonymous, the children are identifiable by the dates and circumstances outlined by the OIG.

Navin was unresponsive and weighed just 38 pounds when an ambulance was called to his Peoria home on March 29, 2022. Despite a history that included domestic violence, drug use, child abuse and neglect, that went back to Navin's birth, the agency allowed Navin to remain in the custody of his parents, even though his grandmother had legal guardianship of the boy.

Six weeks before Navin's death, a DCFS investigator interviewed him after receiving a hotline call reporting the child had black eyes and bruises, according to the annual report. The family put investigators off for eight days, dodging knocks at the door and skipping appointments.

During the interview eight days after the call,

the report stated Navin denied anyone hurt him, but the worker acknowledged the parents were present for parts of the interview. The investigator also did not ask about the black eyes or bruises because Navin reported that he felt safe. She also failed to examine Navin for injuries. The entire interview was conducted with Navin in bed, wearing a hoodie and covered in a blanket.

The investigator told the OIG that Navin was clean, but "sickly and thin."

The worker documented concerns about Navin's weight, but Stephanie Jones, Navin's mother, said Navin "ate all the time but did not gain weight."

Brandon Walker, Navin's father, and Jones told the investigator they could not take the child to the doctor because the paternal grandmother still had guardianship, so the worker focused on getting the guardianship transferred from the grandmother back to the parents. The grandmother told workers that she did not think returning guardianship was a good idea. The worker did not follow up on the reasons for the grandmother's concerns.

When emergency responders were called to the home, Navin was unresponsive. A pile of urine-soaked sheets was found near his bed. His door was tied with rope. An exam revealed the 8-year-old weighed 38 pounds. He had ligature marks, a sign of restraint. He had bedsores on his back.

He later died at a Peoria hospital.

The coroner said it was the worst case of child abuse he had ever seen.

Walker was convicted of first-degree murder last month. Jones pleaded guilty to murder charges. Both are expected to be sentenced later this winter.

The report found that the supervisor failed to direct intervention to save Navin. The supervisor will face discipline for failing to ensure an adequate investigation and allowing a delay in seeing the child.

The worker who interviewed him in the weeks before his death was disciplined for failing to conduct an adequate investigation and seeking medical attention for Navin. The worker received an oral reprimand.

*Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government. It is distributed to hundreds of newspapers, radio and TV stations statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, along with major contributions from the Illinois Broadcasters Foundation and Southern Illinois Editorial Association.*

**Trump***from page 1*

On the Democratic side, President Joe Biden's campaign filed petitions, along with Minnesota Congressman Dean Phillips and author Marianne Williamson.

As of Thursday evening, Trump was the only candidate facing an objection. The deadline for filing objections is Friday, Jan. 12.

Similar objections have been filed in multiple other states. So far, however, they have only been upheld in Colorado and Maine. The Trump campaign has filed appeals in both of those cases, including a direct appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court in the Colorado case.

Matthew Piers, a Chicago-based attorney who filed the Illinois objection, said in an interview that the cases highlight the differences in election laws among the various states.

In some states, he said, primary elections are

considered operations of political parties, not the states themselves, and therefore are not subject to rules set by the state. But in Illinois, he said, state law specifically requires candidates to state on their nominating petitions that they are qualified for the office they are seeking.

Article II of the U.S. Constitution requires presidents to be "natural born citizens" who are at least 35 years of age and who have been residents of the United States for at least 14 years.

But the 14th amendment – enacted in the aftermath of the Civil War – adds more conditions, barring any former public officials who previously took an oath to support the Constitution from holding certain public offices in the future if they ever engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the United States or gave aid or comfort to its enemies.

The objection cites numerous other government agencies and officials who have concluded that the events of Jan. 6, 2021, were an insurrection, including decisions of the Colorado Supreme Court and the Maine secretary of state to keep Trump's name off the ballot in those states.

The objection also cites several recent court rulings, including some involving people convicted of crimes stemming from the Jan. 6 attacks on the Capitol.

In an email, Illinois Republican Party Chairman Don Tracy said the state party is neutral in the GOP primary but that the issue of Trump's candidacy should be decided by voters.

"This attempt to remove President Trump from the ballot without due process is an anti-democracy attempt to limit the voting rights of Illinois citizens and should be dismissed outright," Tracy said.

Legal challenges to a candidate's qualifications for office are not uncommon in Illinois. Dozens of them are currently pending at the Illinois State Board of Elections against candidates for the General Assembly and various judicial positions, mostly based on claims that petition signatures were invalid or insufficient.

In 2016, a challenge was filed against Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton based on her petition signatures. And in 2012, Democratic President Barack Obama faced three nearly identical challenges to his candidacy based on false allegations about his citizenship.

State Board of Elections spokesman Matt Dietrich said in an email the objection to Trump's candidacy will be investigated by a hearing officer who will make a recommendation to the board's general counsel. The full, eight-member bipartisan board will consider the challenge at a meeting Tuesday, Jan. 30.

*Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government. It is distributed to hundreds of newspapers, radio and TV stations statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, along with major contributions from the Illinois Broadcasters Foundation and Southern Illinois Editorial Association.*



**Milos Dental Care**  
Dr. Jamie Lynn Milos

129 S. Phelps Ave. Suite 307, Rockford, IL 61108

(815) 315-4200

*Call now for an appointment!!*

[www.milosdentalcare.com](http://www.milosdentalcare.com)



IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS – IN PROBATE  
**In the Matter of the Estate of Larry Lester, Deceased.**  
No. 2023-PR-38

**Claim Notice**

Notice is given of the death of Larry Lester of Capron, Illinois. Letters of office were issued on July 12, 2023, to: Representative Linda Lewis, of 2104 Oaklawn Av., Rockford, IL 61107, whose attorney is The Waggoner Law Firm, P.C., Four North Walkup Avenue, Crystal Lake, IL 60014.  
Claims against the estate may be filed within six months from the date of the first publication. Any claim not filed within six months from the date of first publication or claims not filed within three months from the date of mailing or delivery of Notice to Creditor, whichever is later, shall be barred.  
Claims may be filed in the office of the Clerk of Circuit Court at the Boone County Court House, 601 N. Main Street, Belvidere, IL 61008, or with the representative or both.  
Copies of claims filed with the clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to his attorney within ten days after it has been filed.  
/s/ Patricia Coduto  
Clerk of the Circuit Court  
Published in *The Boone County Journal* Jan. 11, 18, and 25, 2024

**Notice to Creditors**

**Estate of Dale Meidinger Date of Birth July 02, 1940**  
**To All Creditors:**  
Notice To Creditors: The decedent, Dale Meidinger, who lived at 1340 Caswell Street, Belvidere, Illinois 61008 died January 23, 2022. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Jeffrey Hammerlund, named personal representative or proposed personal representative, at 946 Hackett Street, Beloit, Wisconsin 53511, 18473414923 or to both the probate court and the named/proposed personal representative within 8/12/2024 after the date of publication of this notice.  
January 08, 2024  
Jeffrey Hammerlund, Attorney for the Estate  
946 Hackett Street  
Beloit, Wisconsin 53511  
18473414923  
Jeffrey Hammerlund, Personal Representative for the Estate  
946 Hackett Street  
Beloit, Wisconsin 53511  
18473414923  
Published in *The Boone County Journal* Jan. 11, 18, and 25, 2024

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

**In the Matter of: ALICE E. McCOY, Deceased 2024-PR-2**  
**CLAIM NOTICE**

NOTICE is given of the death of ALICE E. McCOY, who died on October 9, 2023. Letters of Office were issued on January 4, 2024 to ROBERT CUMMINS, 5695 Country Ct, Roscoe, Illinois 61072, who is the legal representative of the estate. The attorney for the estate is Douglas R. Henry, of Barrick, Switzer, Long, Balsley & Van Evera, LLP, 6833 Stalter Drive, Rockford, Illinois 61108.  
Claims against the Estate may be filed on or before July 11, 2024, that date being at least six (6) months from the date of first publication, or within three (3) months from the date of mailing or delivery of Notice to creditors, if mailing or delivery is required by Section 18-3 of the Illinois Probate Act, 1975 as amended, whichever date is later. Any claim not filed by the requisite date stated above shall be barred.  
Claims against the Estate may be filed in the Office of the Boone County Circuit Clerk, Probate Division at the Boone County Courthouse, 601 N. Main Street, Belvidere, Illinois, or with the Estate legal representative, or both.  
Copies of claims filed with the Circuit Clerk's Office, Probate Division, must be mailed or delivered to the Estate legal representative and to her attorney within ten (10) days after it has been filed.  
Dated: January 11, 2024  
DOUGLAS R. HENRY - #6229426  
BARRICK, SWITZER, LONG, BALSLEY & VAN EVERA, LLP  
6833 Stalter Drive; Rockford, IL 61108  
(815) 962-6611  
dhenry@bslv.com  
Published in *The Boone County Journal* Jan. 11, 18, and 25, 2024

**2024**

**NOTICE OF RESCHEDULED ELECTION OF DIRECTORS**

To All Owners And Occupiers Of Lands Lying Within The Boundaries Of The Boone County Soil And Water Conservation District:  
Notice is hereby given that a rescheduled Election will be held on the fourteenth day of February, 2024 at 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 211 North Appleton Road, Belvidere IL 61008. Three Directors will be elected to serve the Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District of the State of Illinois.  
All persons, firms or corporations who hold legal title or are in legal possession of any land lying within the boundaries of the said district are eligible to vote at said election, whether as lessee, renter, tenant or otherwise. Only such persons, firms or corporations are eligible to vote.  
William Hall  
Chairman  
Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Published in *The Boone County Journal* Jan. 11, and 25, 2024

**Unions Look to State For Solutions After Year of Higher Ed Labor Action**

**Report finds public university employees paid 21% less than state agency workers in similar jobs**

**By Andrew Adams Capitol News Illinois**

At public universities across the state, staff and faculty unions have faced a contentious year of nego-

tiations and, in some cases, strikes.

Pay has been a major issue on several campuses and the unions are now looking to Springfield for potential reforms to the state's higher education funding.

At Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, negotiations are ongoing between campus leadership and the union that represents clerical workers.

Amy Bodenstab, who works as an office manager in the Department of Teaching and Learning, also picks up weekend shifts at a local domestic violence shelter and contract work in data analytics to make ends meet.

She is on the bargaining team of AFSCME Local 2887, which has been without a contract since June 2022. She said the low pay and perceived lack of respect has resulted in high turnover rates, hampering university staff's ability to do their jobs. She said it's especially troubling because of the complexity of the positions her union represents, which can involve financial management, purchasing, scheduling and more.

"If you're staff, you're treated as 'less than,'" Bodenstab told Capitol News Illinois.

Nicole Franklin, a spokesperson for the university, declined to comment specifically on the ongoing negotiations but said the university "continues to bargain in good faith" with the union.

But Bodenstab's experience is echoed on other campuses around Illinois.

In mid-November, dozens of building services, clerical and culinary staff at Eastern Illinois University held an "informational picket" as negotiations continued between the local union and administrators at the Charleston campus.

"The number one issue is pay," Kim Pope, an office manager and the head of the local union, said.

Negotiations between the building services workers at Northern Illinois University are also ongoing. The head of the union there, Patrick Sheridan, also said pay is the focus of negotiations.

Research published this fall by the Illinois Economic Policy Institute, a think tank with strong ties to organized labor, found that pay for staff at state universities is 21 percent less than the rate paid to employees at state agencies who are performing the same or similar work.

When controlling for hours worked, occupation and several demographic factors, the research found the average staff pay at state universities is 14 percent less than at state agencies.

Robert Bruno, a University of Illinois professor in the School of Labor and Employment Relations and lead author of that report, said these trends made him consider the impact on staff morale.

"You worry about turnover, about positions not being filled, about if people don't feel regarded or respected," Bruno said.

He also noted these trends could be explained by an ongoing trend in higher education.

"It starts to look like a more for-profit model," he said. "Part of that is a lack of support at the state level."

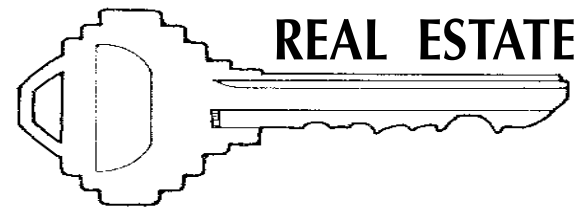
That research and recent university staff negotiations have led union organizations to begin planning a bigger request to the state in next year's budget talks – an ask that could prove challenging as early estimates from Gov. JB Pritzker's budgeting office project a revenue shortfall for the upcoming fiscal year.

"We'll be pushing for an appropriation that can be earmarked for wages," Anders Lindall, a spokesperson for the statewide AFSCME organization, said.

He specifically pointed to Bruno's research as part of the reasoning for this push.

"We're going to be talking to legislators about these systemic pay gaps," he said.

**Continued on Page 8**



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

**WELLS FARGO BANK, N.A. Plaintiff,**  
-v.- **19 CH 113**  
**LAURA J. ANDERSON A/K/A LAURA J. BARRY A/K/A LAURA JEAN ANDERSON A/K/A LAURA JEAN BARRY A/K/A LAURA WIEDL, UNKNOWN HEIRS AND/OR LEGATEES OF ROBERT G. ANDERSON, DECEASED, TARA DOYLE, KYLE R. ANDERSON, KOLIN R. MAYBORNE A/K/A KOLIN R. ANDERSON, TIM MILLER, AS SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR ROBERT G. ANDERSON, DECEASED, ONEMAIN FINANCIAL OF ILLINOIS, INC. F/K/A AMERICAN GENERAL FINANCIAL SERVICES OF ILLINOIS, INC., UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS, UNKNOWN OCCUPANTS 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 22, 2022, an agent for The Judicial Sales Corporation, will at 1:00 PM on January 26, 2024, at the NLT Title L.L.C. 530 S. State, Suite 201 (Logan Avenue entrance), Belvidere, IL, 61008, sell at a public sale to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate:  
Commonly known as 412 WEST MADISON STREET, BELVIDERE, IL 61008  
Property Index No. 05-26-406-006  
The real estate is improved with a single family residence.  
The judgment amount was \$134,010.13.  
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.  
Where a sale of real estate is made to satisfy a lien prior to that of the United States, the United States shall have one year from the date of sale within which to redeem, except that with respect to a lien arising under the internal revenue laws the period shall be 120 days or the period allowable for redemption under State law, whichever is longer, and in any case in which, under the provisions of section 505 of the Housing Act of 1950, as amended (12 U.S.C. 1701k), and subsection (d) of section 3720 of title 38 of the United States Code, the right to redeem does not arise, there shall be no right of redemption.  
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).  
IF YOU ARE THE MORTGAGOR (HOMEOWNER), YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN IN POSSESSION FOR 30 DAYS AFTER ENTRY OF AN ORDER OF POSSESSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 15-1701(C) OF THE ILLINOIS MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE LAW.  
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, 2121 WAUKEGAN RD., SUITE 301, Bannockburn, IL, 60015 (847) 291-1717 For information call between the hours of 1pm - 3pm. Please refer to file number 19-091405.  
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.tjsc.com for a 7 day status report of pending sales.  
LOGS Legal Group LLP  
2121 WAUKEGAN RD., SUITE 301  
Bannockburn IL, 60015  
847-291-1717  
E-Mail: ILNotices@logs.com  
Attorney File No. 19-091405  
Case Number: 19 CH 113  
TJSC#: 43-4591  
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 # 19 CH 113  
6088-938434  
Published In The Boone County Journal 12/28, 1/4, 1/11

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 17TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COUNTY OF BOONE - BELVIDERE, ILLINOIS

**U.S. BANK TRUST NATIONAL ASSOCIATION AS TRUSTEE FOR LB-CABANA SERIES IV, Plaintiff,**  
vs. **20 CH 40**  
**JOSEPH P. TRACEY; PHONDA A. TRACEY; LVNV FUNDING, LLC; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NORECORD CLAIMANTS, Defendants,**

**NOTICE OF SALE**

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure entered in the above entitled cause Intercounty Judicial Sales Corporation will on Thursday, February 1, 2024, at the hour of 12:15 p.m., inside the front entrance of the Boone County Courthouse, 601 North Main Street, Belvidere, Illinois 61008, sell to the highest bidder for cash, the following described mortgaged real estate:  
P.I.N. 07-23-100-008.  
Commonly known as 2793 Stone Quarry Rd, Belvidere, IL 61008.  
The improvement on the property consists of a single family residence. If the subject mortgaged real estate is a unit of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Condominium Property Act.  
Sale terms: 10% down by certified funds, balance within 24 hours, by certified funds. No refunds.  
The property will NOT be open for inspection.  
For information call Ms. Mary E. Spitz at Plaintiff's Attorney, Sottile & Barile, LLC, 7530 LUCERNE DRIVE, MIDDLEBURG HEIGHTS, OHIO 44130. 440-572-1511. ILF2112031  
INTERCOUNTY JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION  
intercountyjudicialsales.com  
13235313  
Published in *The Boone County Journal* Jan 4, 11, 18, 2024.PNN

**Unions**

from page 7

AFSCME is one of the most powerful lobbying organizations in Illinois. In the 2022 election cycle, AFSCME, through its state council and national organization, spent \$2.6 million on campaign contributions and expenditures around the state. That includes over \$300,000 each in contributions to House Speaker Emanuel “Chris” Welch, D-Hillside, and Senate President Don Harmon, D-Oak Park.

In addition to staff negotiations, the past 12 months have seen a wave of strikes led by faculty unions. In January, faculty at the University of Illinois Chicago struck for five days.

In April, faculty at Chicago State University, Governors State University and Eastern Illinois University all went on overlapping strikes, lasting between five and 13 days. Northeastern Illinois University authorized a strike, although the faculty union there never formally struck.

In private higher ed, Columbia College Chicago faculty also went on an unusually long strike which lasted all of November and ended in mid-December.

Dan Montgomery, head of the Illinois Federation of Teachers, said after the Columbia strike ended that he had “never seen anything like it in any other year.”

“We’re a strong labor state. I think those trends you’re seeing play out in Illinois are playing out around the country,” Montgomery told Capitol News Illinois. “We’re just better organized.”

Montgomery said he is “cautiously optimistic” that a new funding model being developed by the Commission on Equitable Public University Funding could help alleviate some of the problems that led to the strikes.

The commission, which was created by the General Assembly in 2021, is tasked with developing a new model for funding higher education. The legislature charged the commission with “remediating inequities” in the higher education system that have led to disparities in access for underrepresented students such as Black and Hispanic students and those who come from low-income families.

The commission’s work is ongoing but was delayed by this summer’s U.S. Supreme Court decision about affirmative action and race in higher education. While the commission’s work is likely not going to impact next year’s budget, it could create a drastic shift in the long term.

The model being developed will be similar to the funding formula used for K-12 schools in Illinois, which was rolled out in 2017. The K-12 model calls for an added \$350 million in funding each year and sets a funding adequacy target for each district. It then directs greater portions of the new funding to the schools furthest from their adequacy target.

While the commission has not finalized a formula, some draft meeting materials presented at the board’s November meeting suggest it would require as much as an overall \$14,000 per-student increase in state appropriations to fully fund higher education. With 130,000 undergraduates and 56,000 graduate students enrolled at state universities this year, these numbers suggest the needed funding increase could reach into the billions.

Lawmakers allocated about \$4.5 billion from the state’s general revenue fund to higher education in the current fiscal year.

Any recommendations from the commission, however, would need to be approved by the General Assembly, leaving room for doubt when it comes to fully implementing – and funding – the commission’s recommendations.

“The problem is always the problem: finding the funds to do it,” Montgomery said.

The state revenue landscape could further compound the challenge. The Governor’s Office of Management and Budget is projecting an \$891 million deficit for the upcoming fiscal year 2025, although

that number drops to \$721 million when accounting for the statutory contribution to the state’s “rainy day” savings fund.

“I think it’s a signal that everybody, we need to be careful in Illinois, we have to balance our budget...” Pritzker told Capitol News Illinois when asked about the projection earlier this month. “And so, if that requires us to reduce the increases that may occur in certain programs, maybe that will be necessary.”

*Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government. It is distributed to hundreds of print and broadcast outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, along with major contributions from the Illinois Broadcasters Foundation and Southern Illinois Editorial Association.*

## Illinois Judge Closes Juvenile Detention Center

*Staffing shortages made it difficult for facility to meet state standards*

*By Molly Parker Capitol News Illinois*

This article was produced for ProPublica’s Local Reporting Network in partnership with Capitol News Illinois.

The judge responsible for the administration of a troubled juvenile detention center in rural southern Illinois abruptly moved to close it as of Dec. 31, citing staffing shortages that made it difficult to meet new state standards governing the treatment of youth in custody.

The Franklin County Juvenile Detention Center had been featured in a November report by Capitol News Illinois and ProPublica that exposed the state’s lax enforcement of its own standards, despite audits that repeatedly found poor conditions at the facility.

Read more: [Inside Illinois’ youth lockups, children go without basic services and face “excessive” punishments](#)

Those standards were updated by the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice in 2021; the changes aimed to improve education and mental health services for detained youths, and to limit the use of restraints and seclusion, or locking kids alone in their cells for hours. But in an inspection the following year, the state agency described the Franklin County Juvenile Detention Center as a “facility in crisis”: It did not provide the required mental health care, schooling and recreation for the children in custody, and staff locked youth in their rooms for up to 24 hours for behavioral infractions or because of short staffing. Facilities are only allowed to use seclusion to prevent someone from harming themselves or others.

That same year, the Illinois Supreme Court, which shares oversight of the state’s juvenile detention centers, also found that the Franklin County center did not meet its standards. In the summer of 2023, the facility was sued by the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois, alleging it had violated youths’ constitutional rights by subjecting them to excessive forms of restraint and seclusion while denying them adequate education and mental health services. The facility had still not come into compliance as of the end of 2023.

In the face of these reports, in the late summer and fall of last year, the Franklin county board publicly debated the fate of the building, which is owned by the county. In hopes of keeping the juvenile detention center open, the board approved about \$200,000 for upgrades. Earlier, workers’ salaries had also increased from \$28,000 to \$43,000 annually,

according to the juvenile justice department’s January 2023 audit.

The November article by Capitol News Illinois and ProPublica found that some of the conditions noted by state auditors more than a year prior had continued at the facility in Benton, as well as in some of the other 15 juvenile detention centers where problems had been identified.

The news organizations’ reporting also revealed that the center’s staff often relied on backup from the local sheriff’s office, which sometimes used restraints in ways that are not typical or not allowed in juvenile detention centers, as law enforcement records obtained by Capitol News Illinois showed. Franklin County Sheriff Kyle Bacon defended the actions of his deputies and said that he did not believe his office was bound by the state standards for juvenile detention centers as his office was not involved in the center’s administration.

Despite these mounting concerns, the closure of the Benton detention center took some county officials, state lawmakers and employees by surprise. One longtime employee told county officials during a Tuesday night board meeting that staff were “blindsided” by the announcement four days before Christmas.

Two state lawmakers who represent the region, Rep. Dave Severin, R-Benton, and Sen. Terri Bryant, R-Murphysboro, expressed frustration that they had not been made aware of closure plans in advance and had learned of them from an employee after the decision was made.

Melissa Morgan, chief judge of the 2nd Judicial Circuit Court of Illinois, who made the closure decision, declined an interview through her administrative assistant.

Her court issued a statement about the closure late last week. It did not mention the critical audits, but it did say “workforce shortages” made it difficult to comply with the new standards and laws.

Youth detention facilities in Illinois operate like adult jails and hold youth in custody while their cases are pending in court. When the 32-bed facility closed last month, it housed only a handful of youth, though it was designated as a holding place for 26 southern Illinois counties — the lower quarter of the state. Most youth from those counties will now be sent to facilities in metro-east Illinois, bordering St. Louis, or out of state, potentially moving them further from their support systems.

The news organizations’ November reporting highlighted the fact that Illinois officials charged with inspecting the detention centers have little authority to enforce compliance. State Sen. Rachel Ventura, D-Joliet, said that she is in talks with state and court officials about how to strengthen that oversight. She said the many layers of government involved complicates the process, but she plans to propose legislation in the spring session of the Illinois General Assembly that would streamline the process for closing facilities.

Kevin Fee, a staff attorney with the ACLU of Illinois, said that his organization sued the facility in June when it found that the troubling state audits had not led to improvements.

Lawyers for the court and the county denied the allegations in court filings in November. The case is pending, though it may be rendered moot because it sought to improve conditions for youth into the future, not to win remedies for those it alleged had been previously harmed.

“I think that the closure of the facility is a good outcome, and we read it as an acknowledgement that the facility really has not been serving the youth that it houses adequately for some time, as we alleged in our lawsuit,” Fee said. “We hope that other facilities in the state that house youth will use this to measure their own conditions, and we’ll continue to monitor them.”