

# Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

ELECTION 2024

## Blue states key to House battle

Tight races for GOP-held seats in Biden-friendly parts of New York, California may decide control

By **Catie Edmondson**  
The New York Times

WASHINGTON — Control of the House is on a knife’s edge, with Democrats and Republicans from the liberal coasts to the nation’s heartland running neck-and-neck in the key races that will decide

which party will hold the majority in the next Congress. Public and private polling, as well as interviews with strategists and operatives in both parties, point to one of the tightest contests yet for the House majority, which Republicans now hold by four seats. While the vast majority of

the 435 seats in the House are not in play, the roughly two dozen that are being contested are truly up for grabs. Of the 22 races rated most competitive by the nonpartisan Cook Political Report, 20 are within the margin of error in internal Democratic polling. “We started with a narrow margin, we’re ending with a narrow margin,” said Ian Russell, a former deputy executive director of the House Democrats’ campaign

arm who this year is advising Rep. Jared Golden of Maine, one of the party’s most vulnerable incumbents. “It’s close because it’s a presidential year and it’s going to be close at the presidential level.” Democrats have run aggressively on protecting reproductive rights, and especially in more conservative districts where incumbents are at risk, have emphasized measures passed in President Joe Biden’s landmark Inflation Reduc-

tion Act, including slashing the price of insulin. Republicans’ message has focused instead on inflation, public safety and immigration. In many districts, candidates’ fate may rest on how former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris perform. Polling has shown an extremely close race between the two candi-

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CHICAGO BUDGET

## Mayor’s plan guts policing reform

Offices vital to CPD oversight would take hits under proposal

By **Alice Yin and A.D. Quig**  
Chicago Tribune

Mayor Brandon Johnson’s 2025 budget plan for Chicago police slashes several offices that are critical to the ongoing federal consent decree, sparking alarm from policing experts who say now is not the time to take the foot off the gas with reform. Johnson’s \$17.3 billion spending plan for the city carves out \$2.1 billion for the Chicago Police Department, a \$58.7 million increase from this year’s allocation. However, it also includes 456 vacant positions being cut — 98 of them sworn and 358 civilian — saving more than \$50 million in salary and other costs.

The mayor’s budget recommendation would cut staffing for the Office of Constitutional Policing and Reform by 57%, from 65 to 28. Established by interim CPD Superintendent Charlie Beck in 2020, the office was meant to combine all of the functions tied to consent decree efforts under one office, including training, professional counseling, and reform management. CPD’s training division, which trains new recruits for service and current employees for promotions, would shrink

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## ‘For all of Chicago to admire’

This year, Chicago’s official Christmas tree, above, is steeped in the history of one Logan Square family. The 53-foot Colorado blue spruce, planted a half-century ago by former homeowner Jim Mulligan, quickly became a meeting ground for his family and neighborhood children. Now, his daughter, Gerrie Mulligan, right, who grew up in the home and watched her father plant the tree, says it’s an “honor” that the evergreen will be a gathering spot for the entire city once it’s lit during a ceremony at Millennium Park later this month. **Chicagoland, Page 3**

TESS CROWLEY/  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTOS



CHICAGO SCHOOL BOARD

## Meeting yields no answer on CEO’s fate

Amid tumult, public session turns hostile

By **Nell Salzman, Ikram Mohamed and Sarah Macaraeg**  
Chicago Tribune

A newly appointed school board did not hold a closed meeting to address personnel matters Friday, a choice that in a less turbulent time for the nation’s fourth largest school district would not seem unusual. But the school board meeting Friday was hardly typical, held a day after the board president resigned because of social media posts deemed antisemitic, misogynistic and conspiratorial by critics that included Gov. JB Pritzker. The former board president, the Rev. Mitchell Ikenna Johnson, was replaced Friday



Chicago Public Schools CEO Pedro Martinez, right, speaks with temporary Chair Michilla Blaise following a monthly meeting in Chicago on Friday. **ANTONIO PEREZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

with a temporary chair: Michilla “Kyla” Blaise. The meeting culminated months of back-and-forth between the district and Mayor Brandon Johnson. It followed a stunning school board shakeup in October over pressure to oust Chicago Public School Chief Executive Officer Pedro Martinez for his refusal to take out a loan to cover a pension payment to the city and a new teachers’ contract. Politics controlled the pulse of the meeting around two main issues: the antisemitism called out in the Rev. Johnson’s social media and the closure of seven Acero charter schools.

“We need a level of transparency. The board needs a level of transparency. These are hard conversations, and we just need to be truthful and honest,” said board member Rafael Yañez, a hate crimes investigator with the Chicago Police Department. Martinez opened Friday’s meeting by mentioning his background as a CPS graduate and touting increased graduation rates, post-pandemic literacy gains and enrollment increases. He urged audience members to vote in the upcoming election, in which the board — whose seven

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## Pritzker, others seek ‘swift action’ on electric bill hikes

By **Nara Schoenberg**  
Chicago Tribune

The governors of Illinois and four other states have signed a letter calling on PJM Interconnection — a company that operates part of the electric grid — to take “swift action” to address record-setting prices for electricity used in times of very high demand. The letter comes after a recent PJM auction for such electricity resulted in a bill of \$14.7 billion for consumers in 2025-26, compared with \$2.2 billion the year before. That could mean a monthly electric bill increase of roughly \$7.50 to \$10 a month in northern Illinois, according to a preliminary estimate by the Citizens Utility Board, a nonprofit

consumer watchdog. “No one should have to worry about not being able to afford their electricity bill, especially as we approach colder months,” Gov. JB Pritzker said in a news release. “PJM’s record-high price increases showcase a complete disregard of vulnerable communities across state lines, and they must take swift action to prevent our residents from paying billions more than is necessary.” PJM has attributed the high auction prices to factors such as the retirements of aging power plants, which affects the amount of electricity available for purchase, and an expected increase in demand. “PJM has been warning for

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**TODAY’S WEATHER** High **60** Low **49**  
Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 8

\$4.00 city and suburbs and elsewhere  
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