

# Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

## Do ‘independents’ have a chance?

14 school board candidates have been taken off the ballot during objections process in historic election

By Sarah Macaraeg | Chicago Tribune

Since filing their nomination paperwork in June, 15 candidates have fallen out of the running in Chicago’s historic school board election this November.

With the exception of one candidate, each of the hopefuls either withdrew their names or were knocked off the ballot during the

objections process. Challenging the validity of the constituent signatures that every candidate running for office in Illinois is required to file, the more than 40 objections to school board candidates were filed by only a handful of nine lawyers whose ranks include high-profile political operatives and lobbyists.

It’s not uncommon for candidates in Chicago elections to hire attorneys able to

use the objections process to narrow their competition. But Board of Elections records show a pattern that stands out: Four of the attorneys — Kevin Morphey, Steven Fine, Michael Kreloff and Michael Kasper — mounted nearly half the objections, opposing only candidates the Chicago Teachers Union has not endorsed and defending the nominations of only candidates that the CTU backs.

For special interests, including the teachers union, charter schools and private school voucher program proponents, the school board elections taking place in 10 districts

across the city will determine who gets to make high-stakes decisions, on collective bargaining, charter contracts and more, come January, when a new board is seated.

In the meanwhile, the often time-consuming and expensive objections process has squeezed multiple candidates without special interest backing off the ballot — raising questions on whether the switch to a new governance model will be as inclusive of Chicago Public Schools parents and community members as advocates had hoped.

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## Magnate’s firms eyed in tax-prep scheme

Feds probing alleged fraud involving NFL players

By Jason Meisner | Chicago Tribune

A Chicago-area business magnate with a lengthy history of alleged legal and professional transgressions is being flagged again, this time in the form of a federal criminal investigation into his companies that offered tax and consulting services to a roster of current and former NFL players, federal court records obtained by the Tribune show.

A search warrant recently unsealed in U.S. District Court alleged John Burgess, 75, of North Barrington, directed a scheme to “aid and assist” dozens of National Football League clients in filing false returns that reported hundreds of thousands of dollars in phony charitable contributions and business losses, dramatically altering the players’ tax due.

The investigation began in 2017 and centers on two Burgess-owned companies: Valuation Advisory Services, a tax preparation business; and Entertainment Tax Advisors LLC, a consulting services firm that at one point counted around 50 professional athletes as clients, according

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## Dad of Georgia school shooting suspect arrested

Involuntary manslaughter, 2nd degree murder among charges

By Jeff Amy and Jeff Martin  
Associated Press

WINDER, Ga. — The father of the teenager accused of opening fire at a Georgia high school, killing four people and wounding nine, has been arrested on various charges including second-degree murder, authorities said Thursday.

Colin Gray, 54, the father of Colt Gray, was charged with four counts of involuntary manslaughter, two counts of second-degree murder and eight counts of cruelty to children, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation said in a social media post. No other details were immediately provided.

In Georgia, second-degree murder means that a person has caused the death of another person while committing second-degree cruelty to children, regardless of intent. It is punishable by 10 to 30 years in prison, while malice murder and felony murder carry a minimum sentence of life.

Authorities have charged 14-year-old

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TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## Slight drop in violence numbers

People prepare to march for peace on June 21 on West Jackson Boulevard in Chicago near the Oakley Square apartment complex where Jaï'Mani Amir Rivera was shot and killed. Chicago saw a modest improvement in violence figures over the summer as the city recorded 186 homicides between June 1 and Aug. 31, data shows, while 764 people suffered nonfatal gunshot wounds. In summer 2023, the city recorded 190 homicides while 747 others were shot and wounded. **Chicagoland, Page 3**

## Assessor tries to ease fears about downtown



Buildings along South Dearborn Street are lit by the sun Thursday in the Loop.  
EILEEN T. MESLAR/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Says commercial tenants aren’t fleeing, rents are steady

By A.D. Quig | Chicago Tribune

Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi took to the City Club of Chicago stage Thursday to quell worries about a “doom loop” and rising tax bills, telling the crowd concerns of a downtown downward spiral in property values are overblown.

“Higher-end office buildings are doing OK,” he said during his appearance at the lunchtime chat series. “Rents are holding up better, valuations are holding up better, occupancy is holding up better in trophy buildings.”

The doom loop theory is that when big commercial buildings have lower property valuations, it increases the tax burden on homeowners, fueling an exodus of residents. With fewer people to pay, those who stayed would have to pick up more

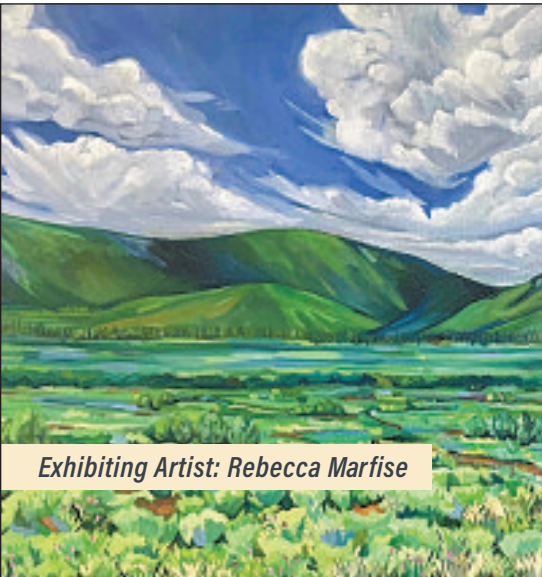
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Forecast on Page 12

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