

# Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

## CTU had hand in letter to Harmon

Mayor's note vowed to not close selective enrollment schools

By Alice Yin and Jeremy Gornor  
Chicago Tribune

Mayor Brandon Johnson's letter to Illinois Senate President Don Harmon last month vowing not to shut down selective enrollment schools was directly edited by a Chicago Teachers Union lobbyist — and was preceded by an earlier version that made no such promise, the Tribune has learned.

During the waning days of the latest Springfield session, the mayor made a last-minute plea to Harmon in a letter asking him to not call for a vote on the bill to extend a moratorium on all Chicago Public Schools closings. That capped off a weekslong power struggle between the CTU, which also opposed the legislation, and state legislators who wanted to ink the two-year extension to ensure selective enrollment schools would not be shuttered.

Harmon pointed to Johnson's promise in the late May letter as evidence of the trust between the two officials, saying the mayor's "commitment to me is even more clear and more binding than the bill would have been."

But public records provided to the Tribune reveal a CTU official helped craft the eleventh-hour letter that likely saved the teachers union and Johnson from an embarrassing defeat in the statehouse, as well as an earlier, watered-down version.

As the spring session wrapped up and Johnson was urgently trying to stop the bill from passing, he first tried to appeal to Harmon without explicitly promising to protect funding for Chicago selective enrollment schools or keep them open. Days later, he followed up with the second letter that did agree to those points. Only then did Harmon opt out of calling the bill for

Turn to Letter, Page 4

## MIGRANTS IN CHICAGO

# State adds 2 more shelters

Facilities in Hyde Park, near Midway will house up to 1,700 immigrants beginning next month

By Dan Petrella and Neil Salzman  
Chicago Tribune

Ahead of August's Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Gov. J.B. Pritzker's administration this week revealed it's opening two new shelters to house up to 1,700 migrants, though the governor's office sought to downplay

the timing.

Officials have long raised concerns that Republican Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas might try to sow discord during the DNC by sending a new wave of migrant buses from the southern border. But a Pritzker spokeswoman said the new shelters had been in the works "for some time."

"I wouldn't read into the

timing," Pritzker spokeswoman Jordan Abudayyeh wrote in an email. "It's just when the details worked out."

But a Democratic state lawmaker whose district is home to one of the new shelters said that when she raised concerns to Pritzker's Illinois Department of Human Services about the plan to bring up to 950 more migrants to her Southwest Side and southwest suburban area, agency officials specifically referenced the "unpredictability" of what Abbott

might do in the lead-up to the political convention.

"That was their reason for it," Rep. Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar of Chicago said Thursday.

Guerrero-Cuellar and state Sen. Mike Porfirio, a La Grange Democrat who also represents the area, said in a statement this week they only learned Pritzker's administration was moving forward with its plans after it sent out a news release detailing the

Turn to Shelters, Page 5



E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## Train derails in Matteson

A 25-car Canadian National freight train derailed Thursday in Matteson near the historic Matteson Main Street. No injuries were reported. The village ordered evacuation for residents in the area about 10:30 a.m., warning it might be long term. However, the order was lifted by 1:30 p.m. A white powdery substance was leaking from one of the freight cars. It was later identified as plastic pellets, according to hazmat team Chief Steve DeJong. The pellets posed no hazard, he said.

## Top court throws out opioid deal

Settlement with maker of OxyContin shielded the company's owners

By Mark Sherman  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Thursday rejected a nationwide settlement with OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma that would have shielded members of the Sackler family who own the company from civil lawsuits over the toll of opioids but also would have provided billions of dollars to combat the opioid epidemic.

The decision also could affect other major bankruptcies, including the \$2.4 billion bankruptcy plan for the Boy Scouts of America that has been approved by a federal judge, lawyers said.

After deliberating more than six months, the justices in a 5-4 vote blocked an agreement hammered out with state and



Demonstrators protest Purdue Pharma and the Sackler family Dec. 4 in Washington. JULIA NIKHINSON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

local governments and victims. The Sacklers would have contributed up to \$6 billion and given up ownership of the company but retained billions more. The agreement provided that the company would emerge from bankruptcy as a different entity, with its profits used for treatment and prevention.

Justice Neil Gorsuch, writing for the majority, said "nothing in present law authorizes the Sackler discharge."

Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Brett Kavanaugh, Elena

Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor dissented.

"Opioid victims and other future victims of mass torts will suffer greatly in the wake of today's unfortunate and destabilizing decision," Kavanaugh wrote.

The high court had put the settlement on hold last summer, in response to objections from the Biden administration.

It's unclear what happens next, though people involved in the

Turn to Opioids, Page 9

## Bronzeville microgrid a boon for clean power

Project, largest of its kind in state, has experts dreaming of future with more reliable energy

By Nara Schoenberg  
Chicago Tribune

Sri Raghavan Kothandaraman peered eagerly at the computer screens set up in a white ComEd truck parked in Bronzeville.

If all went well, the screens would show that ComEd's long-awaited microgrid could successfully "island" — or disconnect from the main electric grid — and use its own power sources to keep electricity flowing to over 1,000 customers in the historic South Side neighborhood.

Kothandaraman, an engineer who had worked on the microgrid project for seven years, watched with his co-workers as the electricity generated within the microgrid rose.

At the same time, the power coming in from the larger grid fell — all the way to zero.

"I was ecstatic," said Kothan-

daraman, manager for smart grid technology at ComEd. "I was literally jumping when I saw it go through successfully from grid-connect to island mode."

The Bronzeville Community Microgrid, which went online last month — powered in part by solar panels at a midrise housing project — is the largest neighborhood microgrid in Illinois, and part of a broader effort to build a grid that's cleaner, more reliable and more secure.

Microgrids — essentially mini-grids that deliver electricity in defined areas — were the original grids in the United States and have been used extensively in remote parts of Alaska.

But the rise of clean energy and concerns about climate change, cyberattacks and extreme weather have helped fuel inter-

Turn to Microgrid, Page 2

## Ruling rocks Madigan case

Prosecutors may have to alter their plans after a high court ruling walks back a key bribery statute contained in the ex-speaker's indictment. **Page 3**

## Startup founder sentenced

A federal judge sentences the co-founder of the once-lauded Chicago startup Outcome Health to three years of confinement for fraud. **Business**

**TODAY'S WEATHER** High 80 Low 73

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 14

\$4.00 city and suburbs and elsewhere  
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