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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Ruling imperils Madigan, ComEd Four cases

6-3 US Supreme Court decision in Indiana bribery case weakens public corruption law

By Jason Meisner,
Megan Crepeau and Ray Long
Chicago Tribune

A pivotal decision by the U.S. Supreme Court on Wednesday that a federal bribery statute does not prohibit “gratuities” to public officials could upend key corruption cases in Chicago, including the October trial of ex-House Speaker Michael Madigan and the case

of the “ComEd Four” who were convicted of a scheme to bribe him.

In the opinion, which has been highly anticipated in Chicago’s federal court, the justices sided 6-3 with the former mayor of Portage, Indiana, James Snyder, who argued to the nation’s highest court that the anti-corruption law under which he was convicted is vague and could potentially criminalize innocent, everyday conduct.

The 18-page opinion, written by Justice Brett Kavanaugh, ruled that the bribery statute commonly known as 666, which is its number in the federal criminal code, applies only to quid pro quo agreements and does not include “gratuities,” meaning rewards given to elected officials after the fact.

The most immediate reaction from the ruling came in the ComEd Four case, in which four defendants were convicted last year in an alleged scheme by the utility to bribe Madigan, the long-time Democratic speaker. Since the

case relied heavily on allegations of gratuities, sentencings have been delayed since January while the parties awaited the Snyder decision.

“This case will be retried,” predicted attorney Gabrielle Sansonetti, who represents one of the four defendants, lobbyist and former City Club of Chicago President Jay Doherty.

Scott Lassar, a former U.S. attorney who represents another ComEd Four defendant, ex-ComEd CEO Anne Pramaggiore, said that in his view, the

ComEd convictions will not stand.

“The Supreme Court has made clear that what Anne Pramaggiore was charged with was not a crime,” Lassar said.

Patrick Cotter, an attorney for Michael McClain, the longtime Madigan confidant who was convicted in the ComEd Four case and is Madigan’s co-defendant in the pending racketeering case, echoed his colleagues’ views.

“It’s been a very long war, and we won an important victory

Turn to Cases, Page 4

Death at Stateville ramps up criticism

Conditions called out after inmate perishes during heat wave

By Jeremy Gorner
and Olivia Olander
Chicago Tribune

The death of a 51-year-old man incarcerated at Stateville Correctional Center last week amplified concerns among prison rights advocates over the living conditions at the nearly century-old prison, which Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s administration plans to tear down and rebuild because it has been deemed decrepit beyond repair.

The Will County coroner’s office did not yet have a cause of death for Michael Broadway, who had earned a college degree while serving a 75-year sentence for a 2005 murder, and a spokesperson for the Illinois Department of Corrections would only say the agency is investigating.

But his death during a severe heat wave has led inmates and prison advocates to put the blame at least partly on the squalid environment inside Stateville, where accounts from people incarcerated there and others in legislative hearings and elsewhere describe poor ventilation, visible mold, rodent infestations and unsanitary drinking water. The prison’s housing units also lack air conditioning, according to the John Howard Association, a prison watchdog group.

No timeline has been set for tearing down and rebuilding the prison, a process that could begin as soon as September but is expected to take three to five years, and state officials have also not laid out a plan for how those housed in the prison will be handled during the transition.

Jennifer Vollen-Katz, John Howard’s executive director,

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Leah Sundheim, daughter of Highland Park shooting victim Jacki Sundheim, speaks outside the Lake County Courthouse in Waukegan on Wednesday. Standing next to her are her father, Bruce Sundheim, left, and attorney Antonio Romanucci, right. **STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Alleged Highland Park shooter rejects plea deal

Lawyer calls surprise reversal made in front of victims ‘absolute unadulterated evil’

By Robert McCoppin
and Clifford Ward
Chicago Tribune

The accused killer in the Highland Park 4th of July mass shooting made a surprise reversal Wednesday and refused to go along with the guilty plea his attorneys had worked out, disappointing victims and families who hope to see him locked away for life.

Prosecutors said Robert Crimo III had agreed to plead guilty to

seven counts of murder, one for each fatality, and 48 counts of aggravated battery, one for each victim who was injured but survived the 2022 shooting.

Under the plea deal, Crimo would have received a sentence of life in prison, plus 30 years concurrently for each aggravated battery count.

But when Lake County Judge Victoria Rossetti asked the defendant if he agreed with the deal, he turned his head to the side, apparently looking at the crowd in court

behind him, and said nothing.

His attorneys, assistant public defenders Gregory Ticsay and Anton Trizna, asked for a recess to speak with their client. When they came back to court and the judge asked if Crimo agreed to the plea, he said “no.”

Crimo appeared in court for the first time in a wheelchair. The Lake County sheriff’s office supplied the wheelchair, spokesman Christopher Covelli said, because Crimo “informed our correctional staff that he was

nervous and was unsure if he would be uneasy on his feet.”

Deputies used a wheelchair, Covelli said. “to ensure he was present for his hearing.”

Crimo is accused of climbing to the top of a store in downtown Highland Park during the parade, and opening fire with a high-powered rifle on the crowd. He wore a disguise to escape in the crowd and drove away, but was arrested while driving about eight hours

Turn to Crimo, Page 2

Big county property tax hikes to hit south suburbs

Report reveals more than 372K homeowners there to see increases

By A.D. Quig
and Olivia Stevens
Chicago Tribune

Historic property tax increases will hit south suburban homeowners’ mailboxes in the coming weeks, according to a new analysis from the Cook County treasurer’s office that found median tax bills there are rising by 19.9% compared with last year, the largest jump in the last 29 years.

According to the report, more than 327,500 suburban homeowners who live south of North Avenue will see higher bills this year. About 107,000 south suburban home-

owners will see lower bills.

In Park Forest, where the median bill is up by \$2,567 to \$7,152, Mayor Joseph Woods called the increases a “catastrophe” for homeowners and said the village is working to influence policy changes at the county and state levels while seeking out grant funding to avoid having to levy more taxes at the village level.

“We know that there seems to be an unfairness or inequity in regards to the way, you know, properties are assessed,” Woods said in an interview Wednesday. “So we’re looking at every option and trying to lobby everyone.”

The village is split between Cook County and Will County. Woods said the difference in taxes is stark

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Patricia Harris stands behind her home Wednesday in south suburban Phoenix. **ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Deal reached with protest organizers

City officials reached a deal with protest organizers that will allow demonstrators to march along Michigan Avenue, adjacent to Grant Park, before the kickoff of the Democratic National Convention in August. **Chicagoland, Page 3**

Former star of tech scene sentenced

The former CEO and co-founder of Outcome Health — once a star of Chicago’s tech scene — was sentenced to 7½ years in prison, more than a year after he was found guilty of fraud. Rishi Shah plans to appeal his sentence. **Business**

