

# Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

## Biden rolls out citizenship pathway

Chicago-area immigrants hopeful over president's move

By Laura Rodríguez Presa  
Chicago Tribune

Before Michael Whitley met Giselle Rodriguez, he didn't know much about the country's immigration system, much less about the lives of millions of people living in the country illegally.

But his life, Whitley said, completely changed after falling in love with Rodriguez during their teenage years and finding out she was in the U.S. without legal permission.

When they got married in 2019, he vowed to support

his wife through it all, even if that meant living in fear of family separation because the mother of their two children could be deported any day. Though Whitley attempted to fix his wife's status, current federal policies require that Rodriguez leave the country for Mexico for at least 10 years as a penalty before deciding on her case.

So the couple opted to wait, hopeful that one day federal policies would change in their favor and fight to keep their family

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Giselle Rodriguez hands her daughter, Nya, 1, to her husband, Michael Whitley, on Tuesday in Bolingbrook. Rodriguez, who emigrated from Mexico without documentation as a child, married Whitley, a U.S. citizen, in 2019. JOHN J. KIM/TRIBUNE

*"The Statue of Liberty is not some relic of American history. It still stands for who we are."* — President Joe Biden

Marital status, time in US can help to gain legal status

By Seung Min Kim and Stephen Groves  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden ordered an expansive election-year step Tuesday to offer potential citizenship to hundreds of thousands of immigrants without legal status in the U.S., aiming to balance his recent aggressive crack-down on the southern border that enraged advocates and many Democratic lawmakers.

The president announced that his administration will, in the coming months,

allow certain U.S. citizens' spouses without legal status to apply for permanent residency and eventually citizenship without having to first depart the country. The move could affect upwards of half a million immigrants, according to senior administration officials.

"The Statue of Liberty is not some relic of American history. It still stands for who we are," Biden said from a crowded East Room at the White House, filled with advocates, congressional Democrats and immi-

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ANTONIO PEREZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## Koalas make Brookfield Zoo debut

Brumby, one of two male koalas (the other is named Willum), slowly climbed trees and snacked on eucalyptus leaves Tuesday at his new home at Brookfield Zoo Chicago, as hundreds excitedly waited in line for the chance to see the marsupials during their public debut. The two koalas are on loan for at least two years and are the first to live at the zoo in its 90-year history. **Chicagoland, Page 2**

## Ill. GOP leadership teetering with RNC a month away

Removing vice chair may signal big changes

By Rick Pearson and Jeremy Gerner  
Chicago Tribune

The decision by top Illinois Republican officials to dethrone the party's vice chair could portend even bigger changes for the moribund organization, including renewed efforts to replace its Illinois GOP Chairman Don Tracy.

Mark Shaw, the former chairman of the GOP in Lake County, lost the title of state party vice chair and also was removed from the party's fundraising committee during a

special meeting Monday of the Illinois Republican State Central Committee following controversies last month at the state GOP convention in Collinsville.

State GOP sources familiar with the inner workings of the state party said the events leading up to Shaw's sanctioning also underscored long-standing concerns about the leadership of Tracy, a Springfield attorney who has headed up the party since February 2021. Tracy took no public position on whether Shaw should continue as state GOP vice chair and said he was powerless to force him to step down — a stance critics cited as weak. They

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Chairman of the Illinois Republican Party Don Tracy at Republican Day at the DuQuoin State Fair on Aug. 29, 2023. E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## Madigan team previews a defense

Cites 'no agreement to commit a crime' in corruption case

By Jason Meisner and Ray Long  
Chicago Tribune

Defense attorneys in the federal racketeering case against former Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan and his longtime confidant said in new filings Monday that prosecutors' apparent plan to immunize former state Rep. Eddie Acevedo and compel him to testify is dubious due to "competency issues."

The filings also previewed what likely will be a key element of Madigan's defense: that while others may have schemed behind the scenes to try to influence the powerful House speaker, there is no evidence Madigan was in on it or that he took any official action to assist them.

Acevedo, a Madigan acolyte who left the General Assembly in 2017 to become a lobbyist, was allegedly paid by AT&T Illinois through a do-nothing consulting contract as part of an alleged scheme by the telephone giant to illegally influence Madigan as they worked to pass legislation in Springfield.

Prosecutors said in a filing earlier this year that they plan to call Acevedo to testify about the payments, which were allegedly arranged by Madigan's friend and co-defendant, Michael McClain. Acevedo, who pleaded guilty in 2022 to tax-related offenses related to the same overarching investigation and served six months in prison.

In their response Monday, however, McClain's attorneys wrote it was "extremely unlikely" that Acevedo would actually testify, even if granted immunity from further prosecution, due to "competency issues" disclosed in privately shared discovery materials.

"And even if Mr. Acevedo does testify, his mental and physical capacity to provide admissible evidence consistent with the government's proffer is highly uncertain,"

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### A legacy nearly lost

St. Rest #2 Country Kitchen in the Chatham neighborhood, one of the oldest Black-owned soul food restaurants in Chicago, has been saved. **Food & Health**

### 'Wolf of Rush Street' pleads guilty

A Chicago entrepreneur with business ties to Joseph Berrios pleaded guilty Tuesday to charges alleging he arranged sexual trysts. **Chicagoland, Page 3**

### Testing faith of the fans

An angry fan base, an imploding bullpen, an embattled manager and an overall feeling of ennui. That's Chicago baseball right now. **Paul Sullivan in Chicago Sports**

TODAY'S WEATHER



High 95 Low 70

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 14

\$4.00 city and suburbs and elsewhere  
177th year No. 171 © Chicago Tribune

