

Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

ELECTION 2024

Amid fears, Biden hosts governors

WON'T DROP OUT: A defiant President Joe Biden vowed Wednesday to keep running for reelection, rejecting growing pressure from Democrats to withdraw after his debate performance raised questions about his readiness. **Nation & World**

Pritzker among those meeting president at White House as unease grows in party

By Rick Pearson
Chicago Tribune

Even before Joe Biden entered a critical meeting with the nation's Democratic governors Wednesday, among them a loyal surrogate and potential

replacement in Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker, the besieged Democratic president declared to supporters he was in the presidential race to stay. Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz sought the meeting with Biden on behalf of

the concerned Democratic state chief executives after the president's stumbling debate performance against former President Donald Trump last week. He said afterward of Biden that the governors "have his back." "A path to victory in November is the No. 1 priority — and that's the No. 1 priority of the president. So that's what we're trying to

get done," Walz, the head of the Democratic Governors Association, told reporters outside the White House. "The feedback was good, the conversation was honest and open, and the action that will come out of that will make sure that we're getting that message out." Despite Biden's outreach attempt to the governors, some Democrats said

privately it was too little, too late as questions continued to swirl as to whether the president's reelection campaign would survive. There was no immediate indication that the more than 20 other Democratic chief executives who attended the White House meeting with Biden

Turn to Biden, Page 5



Chicago pension debt hits \$37.2B

Liability bump due to rising costs and changes in outlook

By A.D. Quig and Jake Sheridan
Chicago Tribune

Chicago's pension debt climbed to just over \$37 billion last year, but city leaders of the special working group Mayor Brandon Johnson convened more than a year ago to confront the issue will have a limited scope: how to ensure benefits for certain pensioners are at least as robust as Social Security. The rising debt revealed in the city's latest comprehensive financial report came despite former Mayor Lori Lightfoot dedicating a total of \$2.6 billion in her final budget to meeting rising required pension payments, including an advance payment to help the city's four funds continue to tread water. While making good on his own \$2.8 billion pension payment in this year's budget, Johnson has simultaneously made taming the debt more difficult, tying his own hands with a pledge not to raise property taxes, one of the chief revenue sources the city relies on to pay down the obligations. And Johnson supported a pension fix benefiting police pensioners that Lightfoot fought tooth and nail because of its hefty price tag. The latest issue the working group intends to tackle will add to the funds' overall liability too. The \$37.2 billion liability for 2023 represents the difference between the

Turn to Pension, Page 5

Indiana's boomtown

Many in Chicagoland flock across the border to grab their firecrackers and sparklers ahead of the Fourth of July holiday, and some of them wonder if all that money being spent in the Hoosier State amounts to a blown opportunity for Illinois' economy

ASHORT FUSE ON ILLEGAL FIREWORKS: To prepare for illegal fireworks use during Independence Day and beyond, some south and southwest suburban police departments posted signs warning of up to \$750 fines for those breaking the law as part of an information campaign to increase understanding of the consequences. **Page 2**

By Alexandra Kukulka | Post-Tribune

Timothy Kostka of Chicago walked the tightly packed but organized aisles of Krazy Kaplans in Hammond with his two children and one of their friends. His son, Brody, closely examined the colorful fireworks and would periodically hand one to his father for final approval. "They're going to pick out what they want, and I get to spend money," Kostka said with a laugh. Kostka said the drive in from Midway to Hammond wasn't bad, just 35 minutes. Given the easy commute, and the fact that Kostka was off work for the Fourth of July holiday, he decided to take his kids to Indiana to pick out some fireworks. "To put a smile on their face, it's worth it," Kostka said. Krazy Kaplans, at 7440 Calumet Ave., is one stoplight away from the first I-94

Turn to Fireworks, Page 2

Above: Timothy Kostka and son Brody, 12, of Chicago, shop Tuesday for fireworks at Krazy Kaplans in Hammond, Indiana. The family spent more than \$500 on fireworks. Timothy Kostka said legalizing fireworks could lighten the burden for police officers who respond to noise complaint calls on the Fourth of July. **ANTONIO PEREZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

On a July day, pause to remember the lemonade stands of our youths



Rick Kogan

It was a fine summer day when the past came rushing back, arriving at a street corner in the heart of Old Town. It came in the form of a lemonade stand and I could not remember how long it had been since I had seen one of these sidewalk businesses. It had been quite a while, for sure, but seeing smiles crossing the faces

of people who also noticed the stand, I realized that for generations of children now gone gray, the lemonade stand is a wonderful touchstone, a very pleasant memory. And memory has the ability to offer a series of pretty pictures that can effectively erase for a time the pains and problems of the moment. What Democratic Convention? What election? We can all, given the chance, drift back to a time when we were kids and the world was trouble free and we could stand on a corner without fear or worry. OK, then, let's go back

to what most consider the birth of the lemonade stand in New York City in the 1870s. That was when an enterprising business owner, name unknown, decided to sell cold water mixed with lemon juice on a hot Manhattan day, charging only pennies instead of whatever cold "refreshments" were available at nearby taverns for triple the price. If you need a historical hero, I give you around the same time a 10-year-old Dutch immigrant named Edward Bok.

Turn to Lemonade, Page 9



Twins Amy, left, and Laura Drabant, 8, sell lemonade in Wheaton in 2001. The sisters made the lemonade while their neighbor, Charlie DeWitt, 7, joined in the enterprise by providing the cups. **STEPHANIE SINCLAIR/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

