

# Chicago Tribune



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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2024

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

## Gaetz drops out for AG job

President-elect says new nominee will be Florida's Pam Bondi

By Eric Tucker and Alanna Durkin Richer  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Matt Gaetz on Thursday withdrew as President-elect Donald Trump's pick for attorney general amid continued fallout over a federal sex trafficking investigation that cast doubt on his ability to be confirmed as the nation's chief federal law enforcement officer.

Hours later, Trump nominated Pam Bondi, the former attorney general of Florida, to be the U.S. attorney general.

Bondi is a longtime Trump ally and was one of his lawyers during his first impeachment trial, when he was accused — but not convicted — of abusing his power as he tried to condition U.S. military assistance to Ukraine on that country investigating then-former Vice President Joe Biden.

“For too long, the partisan Department of Justice has been weaponized against me and other Republicans - Not anymore,” Trump said in a social media post. “Pam will refocus the DOJ to its intended purpose of fighting Crime, and Making America Safe Again.”

The earlier announcement by Gaetz averts what was shaping up to be a pitched confirmation fight that would have tested how far Senate Republicans were willing to go to support Trump's Cabinet picks. It represents a setback in Trump's efforts to install fierce loyalists in his administration and is the first indication of the resistance the incoming

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■ Police report details assault allegations against Secretary of Defense nominee Pete Hegseth.  
**Nation & World**

## Smollett verdict tossed

Ill. high court overturns actor's convictions in allegedly staged hate crime

By Madeline Buckley  
Chicago Tribune

In a stunning move, the Illinois Supreme Court on Thursday overturned the convictions of former “Empire” actor Jussie Smollett, finding that a special prosecutor's decision to retry him for allegedly staging a hate crime against himself violated his rights after the Cook County state's attorney's office previously dropped all charges.

The high court's decision, which found that the prosecutor's office entered into an agreement with Smollett when it dismissed the case, closes a chapter in perhaps the most controversial and closely-watched low-level felony case in Illinois in recent years.

“We are aware that this case has generated significant public interest and that many people



Smollett

were dissatisfied with the resolution of the original case and believed it to be unjust,” the opinion said. “Nevertheless, what would be more unjust than the resolution of any one criminal case would be a holding from this court that the State was not bound to honor agreements upon which people have detrimentally relied.”

The court sent the case back to

the trial court and ordered that it enter a dismissal.

In January 2019, Smollett told police that two men attacked him in the city's Streeterville neighborhood, hitting him, yelling homophobic slurs and placing a noose around his neck. His story quickly unraveled, though, according to police, and Cook County prosecutors charged Smollett with disorderly conduct

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TESS CROWLEY/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## STREETS OF SLUSH

A person walks down Jackson Boulevard in downtown Chicago during a burst of accumulating snowfall Thursday. The season's first snow stopped across much of the city by mid-afternoon as the temperatures climbed above freezing. According to the National Weather Service, Chicago clocked just under 3 inches of snow at O'Hare International Airport by Thursday evening. In some North Side neighborhoods, such as Edgewater and West Ridge, the snowfall reportedly reached 4 inches.

### CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Hearings slated in contract impasse

District tells CTU there's not revenue to meet all demands

By Sarah Macaraeg and Nell Salzman  
Chicago Tribune

Leaders from the Chicago Teachers Union and Chicago Public Schools announced differing perspectives Thursday in what has become a very public teachers contract negotiation dispute, with the fate of the district's leader on the line.

Facing mounting demands from CTU to finalize a new collective bargaining agreement, CPS told reporters they don't have the revenue to meet many of the union's asks.

In a last-minute media briefing Thursday morning, CPS laid out the district's financial priorities



Chicago Teachers Union President Stacy Davis Gates, center, applauds after a student spoke during a rally on Thursday at Chicago Temple.

JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

and sticking points in negotiations with the union. CPS officials claim that meeting all of CTU's proposals would cost them \$10 billion in new spending over the course of the four-year contract, and \$2.2 billion for the first year alone.

In contrast, CPS' proposal calls for maintaining staffing levels at nearly over 7,800 positions, which have increased significantly over the past five years due to federal pandemic funding relief — and have been allocated based on needs.

“The headwinds that we're facing financially are really

significant, and we're going to have to be both creative and forceful in our advocacy just to make up this gap before we even consider adding anything additional beyond that,” said Michael Sitkowski, CPS chief budget officer.

Meanwhile, later in the day, CTU leaders were unwavering, saying their contract proposals are even more important following President-elect Donald Trump's victory this month. Union members held a rally at Chicago Temple in the Loop

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### MICHAEL MADIGAN TRIAL

## Solis, who became mole for FBI, takes the stand

By Jason Meisner and Megan Crepeau  
Chicago Tribune

Nearly eight and a half years after being confronted by federal authorities about his own wrongdoing, former Chicago Ald. Daniel Solis took the witness stand Thursday in the corruption trial of ex-House Speaker Michael Madigan to testify about his unprecedented turn as an FBI mole.

Solis is the 34th prosecution witness — and arguably the most important — to be called in Madigan's trial, and his long-awaited testimony is expected to last well into December.

Solis, 75, worked undercover for more than two years, making a series of video and audio recordings that prosecutors allege captured Madigan, his powerful Democratic counterpart, scheming to use his official duties to squeeze developers for tax appeal business for his private law firm.

Dressed in a dark gray suit and blue-gray tie and looking thinner than he had in his last court

appearance a year ago, Solis entered U.S. District Judge John Robert Blakey's 12th Floor courtroom shortly past 4 p.m., taking the longer path to the witness stand closest to the jury box, away from Madigan's seat at the defense table.

While Madigan appeared to watch Solis intently, the former alderman did not look in his direction as he took his seat and adjusted the microphone.

Solis began his testimony in a slightly hoarse, subdued voice, describing the bribery charge he's facing, his decision to cooperate, and his deal with prosecutors that will see the case against him dropped as long as he testifies truthfully.

Asked what he was accused of, Solis said in a rehearsed tone: “Trying to solicit campaign contributions from a developer that had a pending application in my Zoning Committee.”

Solis, who represented the city's 25th Ward and was the head of the City Council's influential Zoning Committee, also

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### TODAY'S WEATHER



High 45 Low 37

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 12

### City taking a quantum leap

A quantum computing research park planned for the former U.S. Steel South Works site wins key OK from the Chicago Plan Commission. **Business**

### Less than 'Wicked' good

The magic is mostly unmagical, but Cynthia Erivo soars in the first part of a film adaptation of the musical “Wicked” hitting theaters Friday. **A+E**

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