

CHICAGO SPORTS

CALL FROM THE HALL?

A trio of Bears — Devin Hester, right, Steve McMichael and Julius Peppers — could be welcomed to Canton with a phone call tonight. Tribune's Brad Biggs looks back at how the three legends of the sport ended up in Chicago.



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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2024

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

GOP scuttles deal on border

Schumer to try to revive wartime aid for Ukraine, Israel

By Stephen Groves and Mary Clare Jalonick Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans blocked a bipartisan border package Wednesday, scuttling months of negotiations with Democrats on legislation intended to cut back record numbers of illegal border crossings. Many Republicans said the election-year compromise wasn't enough, even as supporters of the bill insisted it was the best possible in divided government.

The 49-50 vote, far short of the 60 ayes needed to take up the bill, came after most Republicans said they would vote against the legislation, which also includes \$60 billion in wartime aid to Ukraine and \$14 billion for Israel and was backed by President Joe Biden. GOP lawmakers had insisted that the money for conflicts abroad be paired with help for the U.S. border.

Forcing the showdown with Republicans, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said earlier that he would try to salvage the wartime funding, and would next push ahead on a crucial test vote for tens of billions of dollars for Kyiv, Israel and other U.S. allies — a modified package with the border portion stripped out.

The bipartisan group of senators who negotiated the compromise for the last four months said it was a missed opportunity to try and make some progress toward one of the most intractable issues in American politics.

In a speech on the Senate floor just before the vote, Republican Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma said that it was a chance for the Senate to decide "if we're going to do nothing, or something."

"It's an issue that's bedeviled, quite frankly, this body for decades," Lankford said. "It's been three decades since we've passed anything into law to be able to change border security."

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With tax credit scholarships expiring soon, parents scramble to fund students' tuition, and at least six private schools in the state dependent on the program are set to close



Chicago Hope Academy Principal Ike Muzikowski, right, fist-bumps students on Jan. 30. TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

'YOU ARE RIPPING A FAMILY APART'

By Alysa Guffey Chicago Tribune

When Cristina Moreno enrolled her daughter, Camila, in kindergarten last year at St. Frances of Rome in Cicero, she felt certain the school would provide a well-rounded education and social environment for years to come.

Moreno, a single mother of two from Cicero, sends Camila to St. Frances with support from the Invest in Kids tax credit scholarship program, which she called a "great help" financially.

In the fall, the expiration of the Invest in Kids program left Moreno scrambling to search for other scholarships and financial aid options to ensure that Camila, 7, and her son, Carmelo, 5, could attend St. Frances of Rome next year.

Two months later, the second punch hit when the Archdiocese of Chicago said it would be closing the school, citing a "financial cliff" following the sunset



Second-grader Julissa Deavila holds a sign as families protest the potential closing of a school outside St. Frances of Rome in Cicero on Jan. 21. BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

How it worked

Signed into law in 2017, Invest in Kids provided what are effectively public subsidies in which donors could receive a 75% tax credit, capped at \$1 million, on donations to private school scholarships. A handful of nonprofits process applications and distribute the aid, awarded in lump sums so students can finish out the school year.

of Invest in Kids, which covered tuition for around 5,000 students across the archdiocese. Now, she's left to search for financial help while looking at other, pricier Catholic school options.

"I'm just worried that I can't keep them in Catholic school because I know that St. Frances was very affordable," Moreno said. "It's right around the block for me as well, and I'm kind of at a standstill at the moment."

Moreno is one of many parents whose children's educational future is in limbo following the expiration of the Invest in Kids program, and among the families, both tax credit recipients and full-tuition payers, searching for education options as at least six Catholic schools are set to close across the state.

In the fall, school choice advocates warned that privately-run religious and independent schools could be at risk of shuttering without the millions of

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Red crossbills like the one above, native to Canada and the Rockies, might have come to Illinois in search of food. BUDDY MAYS/GETTY

These birds are spreading their wings

Red crossbills, bald eagles and other unexpected species have been spotted in Chicago this winter

By Adriana Pérez Chicago Tribune

After walking the grounds of the Morton Arboretum for hours on a December morning, John Leonard and fellow birders were preparing to go to lunch when they encountered a rare sight: a flock of 17 red crossbills flying overhead and landing on some pine trees.

"We said, 'What the heck! You got to be kidding!'" he recalled. The retired neuroscience professor has been an active birder since

he was 12 and has participated for almost four decades in the arboretum's annual Christmastime bird count. "It's always kind of like a treasure hunt"

Leonard said red crossbills are known for their irregular migratory tendencies: "They come in in waves and then they're gone, and you don't know if you're going to get a chance. They're not a common bird at all."

These bird "irruptions" — sudden, sweeping visits from northern species — often occur

because of a fluctuating food supply.

But experts agree that recent sightings of birds not often found in the Chicago area, from dozens of red crossbills spotted in big groups in city parks to a pair of long-eared owls and a lone bald eagle, can be caused by distinct factors.

"When we do have these years, they're — generally speaking — pretty unexpected," said Edward Warden, president of the Chicago Ornithological Society. "And oftentimes the answers for why even every one of these bird species irrupts is different and unique to

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TODAY'S WEATHER



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Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 16

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