

Chicago Tribune



QUESTIONS? CALL 1-800-TRIBUNE

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2024

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT

Raw pot smell grounds for search

Ruling expands police powers during traffic stops, but the odor of burnt cannabis remains protected

By Robert McCoppin
Chicago Tribune

The smell of raw cannabis is grounds for police to search a vehicle, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled Thursday.

The decision runs counter to the court's previous ruling that the

smell of burnt cannabis by itself is not sufficient reason for a vehicle search.

The two rulings create a situation in which, though it is illegal to smoke pot in a vehicle, drivers are protected from a search based only on the smell of burnt cannabis, but are not protected from a

search based on the smell of raw marijuana.

The ruling came in the case of Vincent Molina of Moline, who was a passenger in a vehicle that was stopped by a state trooper for speeding on Interstate 88 in Whiteside County, near the Iowa border, in December 2020.

After the trooper said he smelled raw cannabis coming from the open window of the car, he searched it and found several mari-

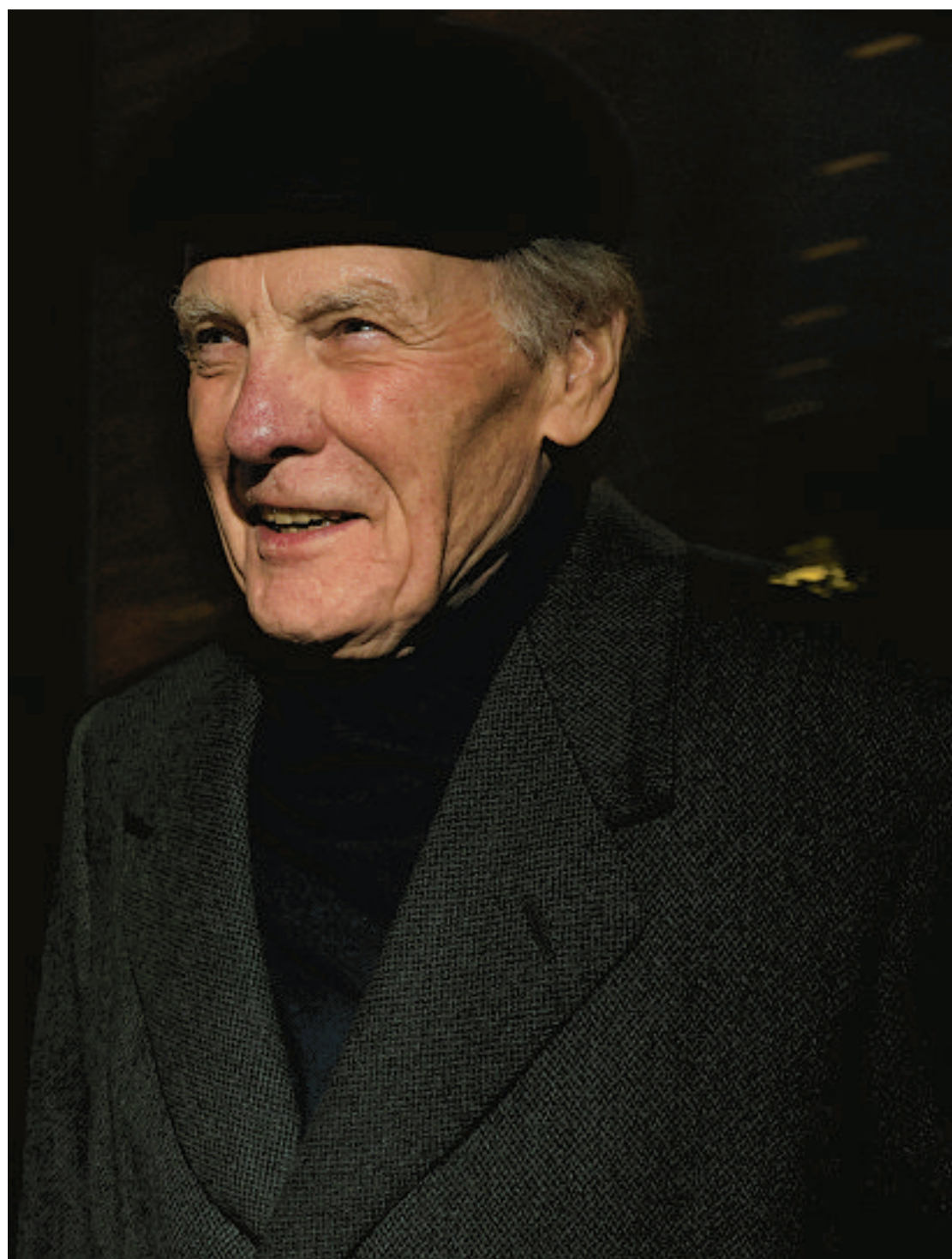
juana joints in the center console, and cannabis in a sealed box in the glove compartment.

Molina was charged with misdemeanor possession because he wasn't transporting the cannabis in the proper container. The trial court ruled the search was not justified because possession of small amounts of marijuana has been legal in Illinois since the beginning of 2020. The appeals court reversed the ruling.

The case was combined at a high court hearing with the case of Ryan Redmond, in which the court ruled that the smell of burnt cannabis by itself was not grounds for a search. While it's illegal to smoke pot in a private vehicle, the court suggested that the smell of burnt cannabis could come from smoking before getting into the car.

Turn to Search, Page 4

MICHAEL MADIGAN TRIAL



Former House Speaker Michael Madigan exits after attending his and former lobbyist Michael McClain's corruption trial on Thursday at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse in Chicago. JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

A 'RANGE WAR'

Testimony reveals big political fight over tiny piece of land

By Jason Meisner
and Megan Crepeau
Chicago Tribune

There is a parking lot in Chinatown tucked under the Red Line tracks, flat, narrow and nondescript except for a big sign advertising cheap rates.

To look at it, you'd never know the tiny, state-owned parcel would become ground zero in a petty but bitter political war — and a key factor in one of the biggest corruption cases in Illinois history.

But wiretapped phone calls played Thursday in the ongoing trial of former Democratic House Speaker Michael Madigan gave jurors a detailed picture of the

behind-the-scenes machinations, power plays and bruised egos in the battle over the 2½-acre lot, which a group of deep-pocketed developers wanted to turn into a mixed-use high-rise.

The dispute was fueled by many classic Illinois factors, including the icy rivalry between Madigan and then-Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner, a falling out between then-state Sen. Martin Sandoval and Chicago Ald. Daniel Solis over Solis' political backing of an opponent of Sandoval's daughter, and a renegade freshman legislator irritated by developments being pushed in her district, according to testimony.

It all led to some of the more memorable lines in the Madi-

gan case so far, many uttered by Madigan's confidant, Michael McClain, and lobbyist Nancy Kimme, as they tried to pass a bill that would get the Chinatown lot transferred from the state to the city.

"That's what we got going on here," an exasperated-sounding Kimme told McClain in one April 2018 call the jury heard. "We're in the middle of some kind of range war."

Asked on the witness stand Thursday what she meant by that remark, Kimme smiled and said, "That they were all shootin' at each other for different reasons."

You mean for political reasons?

Turn to Madigan, Page 2

MEDICAL MISCONDUCT

State action lags for health care workers who face charges

In some instances, those under investigation left free to engage with patients for months

By Emily Hoerner
and Lisa Schencker
Chicago Tribune

After investigating complaints that Crystal Lake endocrinologist Dr. Hiralal Maheshwari had touched patients inappropriately in his exam rooms, McHenry County prosecutors approved a felony charge of criminal sexual abuse in December 2021.

Under state law, the prosecutors should have immediately notified the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, the state agency with oversight over medical professionals. The department — which also had been investigating Maheshwari — then should have issued an order within five days requiring a medical chaperone at his appointments while the criminal case played out.

That did not occur. Instead, nearly five months passed before the state issued the chaperone order, allowing Maheshwari to continue to see patients unsupervised.

This wasn't the only time criminally charged health care workers were left free to engage

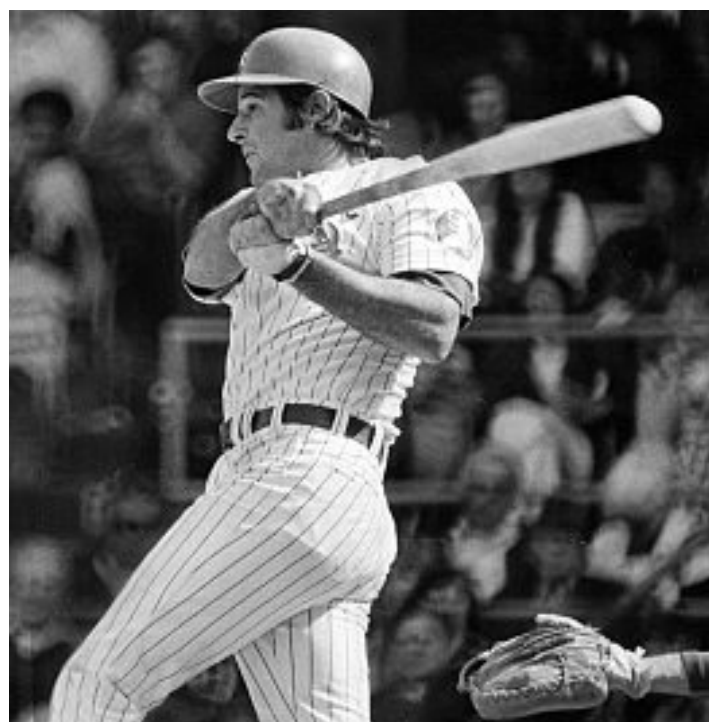
with patients without required oversight. Although a decade-old state law mandates quick action when a licensed doctor, nurse or other health professional is charged with a sex offense or a violent felony, or with misdemeanor battery against a patient, a Tribune investigation found it often took weeks or months for state regulators to require a chaperone or take more drastic action.

Of 35 health care workers who were charged with eligible offenses since Jan. 1, 2019, the Tribune found roughly half remained in good standing with the licensing agency for more than a month after criminal charges were brought in court. The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, or IDFP, did not take any action against the licenses of at least eight health care workers for more than six months after they faced qualifying charges.

In instances where health care workers were detained before trial or were swiftly terminated by their employers,

Turn to Charges, Page 5

BILL MELTON 1945-2024



BOB FILA/CHICAGO TODAY

Remembering a home run king

Bill Melton, the first Chicago White Sox player to hit 30 home runs in a season and the first to lead the American League in homers, died Thursday at age 79, following a brief illness. **Chicago Sports**

HAWKS FIRE COACH: The Blackhawks fired coach Luke Richardson on Thursday after two-plus losing seasons at the helm and a failure to boost the play of 2023's No. 1 pick Connor Bedard. **Chicago Sports**

Acting director 're-imagining' Secret Service

By Rebecca Santana
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The acting director of the Secret Service said Thursday that the agency is "reorganizing and re-imagining" its culture and how it operates since an assassination attempt on Donald Trump on the campaign trail.

Members of a bipartisan House task force pushed Ronald Rowe on how the agency's staffers could have missed such blatant security vulnerabilities leading up to the July 13 shooting at a rally in Pennsylvania.

Rowe promised accountability for what he called the agency's "abject failure" to secure the rally in Butler, where a gunman

opened fire from a nearby building. Trump was wounded in the ear, one rallygoer was killed and two others were wounded.

Another assassination attempt two months later contributed to the agency's troubles. That gunman waited for hours for Trump to appear at his golf course

Turn to Director, Page 9

TODAY'S WEATHER High 30 Low 23

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 14

\$4.00 city and suburbs and elsewhere
177th year No. 341 © Chicago Tribune

