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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2024

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Report critiques new court concept

Reforms recommended before an expansion of neighborhood program

By Madeline Buckley
Chicago Tribune

Last June, a Cook County defendant ate a bagel with cream cheese in a Lawndale community center that doubles as a nontraditional courtroom.

“What have you been doing?” the judge asked.

“Playing basketball,” the defendant replied to laughs around the room, amending that he has also participated in programming through community services organizations in the hopes of completing the court program that would allow his charges to be dismissed.

The experimental court is one of three restorative justice courts in Cook County which divert defendants from the traditional justice system in the hopes of reducing crime and creating a more equitable system. Now, a new study is advising the county to take on a series of reforms before expanding such neighborhood courts, raising concerns about structural problems that it said diminish the overall impact of the program.

The report by the Chicago Applesseed Center for Fair Courts and the Chicago Council of Lawyers is the first external study of Cook County’s restorative justice courts, which have generated excitement for their potential but have thus far largely been unstudied outside of the court system’s own evaluations.

The appraisal indicates that the county has work ahead to create a system that fully reaches its goal of better outcomes for defendants, victims and the community than they would find in the traditional criminal justice system.

The chief judge’s office in a statement said it is “open to collabora-

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Gov. J.B. Pritzker greets state Rep. Anthony DeLuca as he arrives to deliver his State of the State and budget address before the General Assembly at the Illinois Capitol building on Wednesday. **BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Pritzker’s budget has \$893M in tax increases

\$52.7B budget includes funds for migrant crisis, provides break on groceries

By Dan Petrella,
Jeremy Gorner
and Olivia Olander
Chicago Tribune

SPRINGFIELD — Gov. J.B. Pritzker on Wednesday unveiled a \$52.7 billion election-year budget the second-term Democrat said required making “some hard choices” despite proposed additional spending in several areas, from early childhood education to Chicago’s ongoing migrant crisis.

Facing a tighter budget outlook after years of strong revenue performance and multiple credit upgrades, Pritzker is relying on more than \$800 million in tax increases that would largely fall on businesses to bring his spending plan into balance. But he also proposes raising taxes on individuals by reducing the standard exemption for state personal income taxes, which would raise an estimated \$93 million by increasing tax bills for Illinois residents.

At the same time, the governor is attempting to position himself on the side of everyday taxpayers with plans to eliminate the 1% sales tax on groceries and create a state child tax credit for low- and moderate-income families, ideas that could potentially garner bipartisan support.

Separate from the budget, he threw down the gauntlet against the health insurance industry with a sweeping plan to prevent companies from dictating coverage decisions, among other

consumer protections. He promised to expend political capital to fight practices including prior authorization, in which patients must get permission from insurers before receiving certain types of care.

“There should never be an instance where an insurance company employee can deny coverage for something as serious as open heart surgery,” Pritzker said.

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Moises Sanchez, 24, picks up his daughter Antonella, 2, both from Venezuela, before leaving a Lower West Side shelter on Feb. 13. The family had been in Chicago for four months and was leaving to meet relatives in El Paso, Texas. **ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Illinois picks up travel tab for migrants

More than \$620,000 spent on ‘outmigration’ to other states, cities

By Nell Salzman
Chicago Tribune

On a recent Tuesday morning, a family of three packed up their duffel bags outside a migrant shelter on the Lower West Side en route to El Paso, Texas, where they said they had relatives wait-

ing. They had been in Chicago for four months.

Moises Sanchez, 24, had been a barber in his home state of La Guaira, Venezuela. He had the word “family” tattooed on the back of his head behind his ear. He came to the U.S. through Laredo, Texas, with his wife and 2-year-old daughter for economic opportunity. The family was given bus tickets by Texas state officials to go to Chicago, but he struggled to find work the entire time he was

here, he said.

“From the minute I arrived here, I wanted to leave. I didn’t want to stay in Chicago. It’s freezing,” Sanchez said Feb. 13. “I can’t stand the cold.”

At least 3,194 individuals have received financial support from the state of Illinois to reunite with friends and family in other states and U.S. cities since mid-November, according to state data

Turn to Migrants, Page 5

Biden considering asylum restrictions

Proposal shows how far border stance has shifted for president

By Hamed Aleaziz,
Charlie Savage,
Maggie Haberman
and Zolan Kanno-Youngs
The New York Times



Migrants board a Border Patrol vehicle Feb. 13 in Boulevard, Calif. President Joe Biden is reportedly considering executive action that could bar those crossing illegally into the U.S. from making asylum claims. **GUILLERMO ARIAS/ THE NEW YORK TIMES**

President Joe Biden is considering executive action that could prevent people who cross illegally into the United States from claiming asylum, several people with knowledge of the proposal said Wednesday. The move would suspend longtime guarantees that give anyone who steps onto U.S. soil the right to ask for safe haven.

The order would put into effect a key policy in a bipartisan bill that Republicans thwarted earlier this month, even though it had some of the most significant border security restrictions Congress has contemplated in years.

The bill would have essentially shut down the border to new entrants if more than an average of 5,000 migrants per day tried to cross unlawfully in the course of a week, or more than 8,500 tried to cross in a given day.

The action under consideration by the White House would have a similar trigger for block-

ing asylum to new entrants, the people with knowledge of the proposal say. They spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

The move, if enacted, would echo a 2018 effort by President Donald Trump to block migration, which was assailed by Democrats and blocked by federal courts.

Although such an action would undoubtedly face legal challenges, the fact that Biden is considering it shows just how far he has shifted on immigration

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Biden’s brother talks to GOP

Says president was never involved in business dealings of other members of his family. **Nation & World**

Looking for redemption

A healthier Andrew Benintendi has his sights on more production for upcoming Sox season. **Chicago Sports**

Ex-McCook police chief sentenced

Mario DePasquale gets 27 months in prison for helping shake down local businesses. **Chicagoland, Page 3**

TODAY’S
WEATHER



High 55 Low 35

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 20

\$4.00 city and suburbs and elsewhere
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