

# Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

## Pardon frustrates some Democrats

Critics call action unwise, say it puts Biden's interests above duty

By Bill Barrow  
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Already reeling from their November defeats, Democrats now are grappling with President Joe Biden's pardoning of his son for federal crimes, with some calling the move misguided and unwise after the party spent years slamming Donald Trump as

a threat to democracy who disregarded the law.

The president pardoned Hunter Biden on Sunday evening, reversing his previous pledges with a grant of clemency that covers more than a decade of any federal crimes his son might have committed. The 82-year-old president said in a statement that his son's prosecution on charges of tax evasion

and falsifying a federal weapons purchase form were politically motivated.

"He believes in the justice system, but he also believes that politics infected the process and led to a miscarriage of justice," said White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, who along with Biden and other White House officials insisted for months

that Hunter Biden would not get a pardon.

That explanation did not satisfy some Democrats, angry that Biden's reversal could make it harder to take on Trump, who has argued that multiple indictments and one conviction against him were a matter of Biden and Democrats turning the justice system against him.

Rep. Greg Stanton, D-Ariz., said on X: "This wasn't a politically

motivated prosecution. Hunter committed felonies and was convicted by a jury of his peers."

Colorado Sen. Michael Bennet said Biden "put personal interest ahead of duty" with a decision that "further erodes Americans' faith that the justice system is fair and equal for all."

Sen. Peter Welch, D-Vt., called the pardon "understandable" if

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BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## O'Neill Burke sworn in

Eileen O'Neill Burke greets people after being sworn in as the new Cook County state's attorney on Monday at the Ivy Room in Chicago's River North neighborhood. O'Neill Burke pledged to get "seismic things done" as she took her oath of office in front of a bipartisan crowd. **Page 5**

## Johnson says he didn't know about allegations

Ex-press office chief accused of harassment

By Alice Yin  
and Jake Sheridan  
Chicago Tribune

Mayor Brandon Johnson on Monday blamed his office's handling of harassment complaints against his former communications director on

what he described as a flawed disciplinary process he inherited at City Hall.

In his first remarks to reporters since the Tribune reported on Ronnie Reese's alleged behavior last week, the mayor said he did not know about the allegations against Reese until his office received a Freedom of Information Act request for a copy of Reese's City Hall personnel file.

And Johnson said his admin-

istration has no tolerance for the kind of harassment, sexism, racism or other abusive behavior several employees in his administration allege Reese engaged in while running the mayor's press office. He deflected questions on how the documents also show frustration over how his chief of staff, Cristina Pacione-Zayas, suggested "peace circles" in response to concerns over Reese's behavior, and did not say how

often such remedies are considered.

"The information that was disclosed as it relates to the FOIA request was the first that we're hearing of those allegations," Johnson said when asked about Pacione-Zayas's response to the complaints. "There is a process that has been established long before I got here, that we inher-

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## SEIU threatens to sue schools

Union says teachers' contract proposal would cost it CPS jobs

By Nell Salzman,  
Talia Soglin and  
Gregory Royal Pratt  
Chicago Tribune

Service Employees International Union 73, the union that represents special education classroom assistants in Chicago Public Schools, is threatening to sue the district over a Chicago Teachers Union proposal that it says would effectively take jobs from SEIU and give them to CTU.

SEIU 73 Vice President Stacia Scott emailed CPS CEO Pedro Martinez on Nov. 14 to object to negotiations between the school district and the teachers union that would "(reassign) to CTU work and positions that are, and have been, exclusively represented by (SEIU)." The Chicago Teachers Union and CPS are negotiating a 4-year contract. Their most recent contract expired in June.

The teachers union has proposed contract language to CPS that SEIU fears would allow classroom assistants, who are represented by CTU, to take over some of the special education classroom aides' jobs.

Labor union contracts often include language that sets rules to protect jobs from being outsourced away to non-union sources. However, In this case, SEIU 73 is concerned about the teachers union taking work from SEIU members.

In the letter, Scott said the special education classroom assistants have been designated to work exclusively with chil-

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### MICHAEL MADIGAN TRIAL

## FBI mole on hot seat in cross-examination

Solis faces questions on prostitutes, pot — and former speaker

By Jason Meisner  
and Megan Crepeau  
Chicago Tribune

Former Chicago Ald. Daniel Solis was asked on a federal witness stand Monday about prostitutes and pot smoking during a Puerto Rican excursion with other elected officials, using campaign funds to make purchases at high-end department stores and pay for his son's school tuition, and potential tax fraud involving more than a half a million dollars he received from his sister.

But the focus of Solis' cross-examination in the corruption trial of former House Speaker Michael Madigan was ultimately

about a less salacious but much more crucial issue: Did Madigan ever explicitly agree to help Solis in exchange for the alderman bringing him potential law firm clients?

Solis, former head of the powerful Zoning Committee who went undercover for the FBI, is the star prosecution witness in Madigan's blockbuster trial, where the former speaker and head of the state Democratic Party is accused of running his political operation as a criminal enterprise.

Solis' direct examination, which in total lasted about 16 hours over four days, included dozens of wiretapped conversations and video recordings Solis secretly made of Madigan as the speaker vied for business from big-time developers in Solis' 25th

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STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## Bears brass meet the media

Bears general manager Ryan Poles, left, listens Monday in Lake Forest as President and CEO Kevin Warren answers questions from the media after the firing of head coach Matt Eberflus. The Bears named offensive coordinator Thomas Brown the interim head coach. **Chicago Sports**

