

Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Air quality in Chicago remains poor

Report: City ranked second for worst pollution among major US cities in '23

By **Adriana Pérez**
Chicago Tribune

Chicago ranked second among major U.S. cities with the worst air pollution in 2023, its average annual concentration of dangerous fine particulate matter almost three times global guidelines,

according to a recent report. Even as national standards have tightened, pollution levels in the city still surpassed old regulations.

At one point last summer, Chicago had the poorest air quality recorded among 95 cities in the world. Experts say a major recurring issue and leading cause was

pollutants carried by winds across borders and contaminating air elsewhere — such as smoke from forest fires in the Canadian province of Quebec, which blew into Chicago and other U.S. cities.

“Wildfires in Canada devastated air quality, not only in Canada itself,” said Frank Hammes, global CEO of the Swiss air quality technology company IQAir. “But (they) caused a hazardous level of air quality in the United States, where multiple cities in the Midwest

and Northeast saw significantly increased levels of polluted air.”

According to the U.S. EPA’s Region 5 office — which includes Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota and 35 tribal nations — the wildfire smoke that this portion of the country experienced in 2023 was unprecedented.

“Historically, we have never seen anything like this in our region,” said Krista Thomason, a physical scientist with Region 5’s Air and Radiation Division, who

participated in a panel Wednesday on Midwestern air quality. “The western portions of the United States do deal with this more frequently, but for us, it’s a pretty rare phenomenon.”

Sooty smoke from the wildfires reached as far south as Virginia, prompting state and local agencies to issue alerts and caution residents to reduce time outdoors. According to a new IQAir report

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A school bus stands at Chappell Elementary School in Chicago’s Lincoln Square neighborhood Thursday. **CHRIS SWEDA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

CPS says it cannot promise busing for every student

Deadline to accept selective enrollment schools extended in lieu of problem

By **Alysa Guffey**
Chicago Tribune

For months, students attending some of the city’s most selective schools have traversed Chicago, taking buses, trains and carpools sometimes as early as 5 a.m., to show up on time for school — and the district is telling parents they may have to continue to find their own transportation into next school year.

Faced with continuous pleas from parents upset with the

district’s lack of busing for students, Chicago Public Schools is giving families an additional week to decide whether to enroll in magnet and selective enrollment schools for next school year.

But families don’t have time to wait to see if the district will provide much-needed and previously promised busing said Laura Leon, who has a grandchild attending Inter-American Magnet School in Lakeview.

“We need to know what we’re going to do for next year,” Leon

said. “We can’t wait until a week before school starts.”

Leon’s grandchild is one of thousands of district students in general education classrooms who lost busing in August and had to find alternative methods to get to school from their home neighborhoods, often miles away.

CPS CEO Pedro Martinez warned Thursday that busing “may not be possible” for students next year.

This means that after a rigorous application process, some

students might have to pass on attending some of the top-performing public schools because of where they live.

“We cannot afford to live in Lincoln Park or Lakeview,” Leon told the board.

Martinez said CPS is extending the deadline for students to accept magnet or selective enrollment school placements for the 2024-25 academic year by one week to be upfront to families

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Judge rules CPD officers may choose arbitration

But such hearings in serious misconduct cases to remain public

By **Sam Charles**
Chicago Tribune

A Cook County judge on Thursday ruled that Chicago police officers accused of serious misconduct will have the right to have their cases decided by a third-party arbitrator, but those hearings must remain publicly accessible.

The ruling from Judge Michael Mullen marks the latest entry in

a protracted legal fight over the future of police discipline.

“The restriction of public access to arbitrations for serious police discipline is a direct contravention of the well-defined and dominant public policy of accountability and transparency of the government services in general and the Chicago Police Department specifically,” Mullen wrote. “The Neutral Chair’s decision that the arbitration of any cases where discipline could result in dismissal or suspension in excess of 365 days must

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James Franczek, left, the city’s chief labor negotiator, departs after a court hearing in a Fraternal Order of Police lawsuit about how misconduct cases are handled in their contract on Wednesday at the Daley Center. **BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Congress unveils \$1.2 trillion budget plan

Top leaders press to pass bill to avert partial shutdown

By **Kevin Freking**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers introduced a \$1.2 trillion spending package Thursday that sets the stage for avoiding a partial government shutdown this weekend for several key federal agencies and allows Congress, nearly six months into the budget year, to complete its work in funding the government through September.

Democrats were largely able to swat back scores of policy mandates and some of the steeper budget cuts that House Republicans were seeking to impose on nondefense programs, although House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., highlighted some policy wins, including a nearly 24% increase in detention beds for migrants awaiting their immigration proceedings or removal from the country.

This year’s spending bills were

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INSIDE

Illini rout Morehead State to advance

Illinois rides Dain Dainja’s huge second half to an 85-69 win over Morehead State in their NCAA Tournament opener. Plus, Boo Buie looks to extend his Northwestern career, returning to his home state for the Wildcats’ tourney opener. **Chicago Sports**

Burke’s lead slips as more ballots tallied

Eileen O’Neill Burke leads Clayton Harris III 50.8% to 49.2% in race for state’s attorney as mail-in ballots begin to be tallied. **Chicagoland**

TODAY’S WEATHER

High **40**
Low **30**



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