



FOOD & HEALTH

# BITES THAT DELIGHT

New takes on classic cookie recipes win the 2024 Holiday Cookie Contest.



BRIAN CASSELLA AND PETER TSAI/CHICAGO TRIBUNE. FOOD STYLING BY SHANNON KINSELLA

WINNER OF 28 PULITZER PRIZES FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM

# Chicago Tribune



QUESTIONS? CALL 1-800-TRIBUNE

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2024

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

## EPA's lead pipe funding scrutinized

Florida leads in money for removal, but watchdog says Illinois has greater need

By Michael Hawthorne  
Chicago Tribune

Florida is on track to collect nearly \$1 billion in federal funds it doesn't deserve to replace toxic lead pipes, according to a government watchdog report that concludes Illinois and a handful of other states should get the money instead.

By most accounts, Illinois leads the nation in the number of lead service lines connecting homes and two-flats to municipal water systems, largely because Chicago required pipes made of the brain-damaging metal until Congress banned them in 1986. Thousands of lead pipes also remain underground in Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and

Wisconsin. But during the past two years the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency gave Florida the largest share of funding set aside by Congress to replace lead service lines. The Sunshine State got \$483 million, compared with \$471 million sent to Illinois, even though several of Florida's big water utilities told the agency's inspector general the toxic pipes don't exist in their service areas. Florida will double its take

during the next two years if the EPA fails to fix the problem, the inspector general concluded. "This money should be going to states that actually need it," said Tom Neltner, director of the nonprofit group Unleaded Kids and former assistant commissioner of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. In a 2016 study, the American Water Works Association estimated Florida had 200,000 lead service lines. Asked five years later if it had followed up with its

own survey, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection told another nonprofit, the Natural Resources Defense Council, it "does not track lead service line (sic)." But after President Joe Biden brokered a deal with Congress to earmark \$15 billion to replace the toxic pipes, Florida officials declared the state has 1.1 million lead service lines, a dramatically inflated number the EPA inspector

Turn to Pipes, Page 7



BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## A goal to reduce homicides

Mayor Brandon Johnson appears at the City Club of Chicago on Tuesday. Johnson revealed his goal for the city to have fewer than 500 homicides next year. "Yes, we have work to do, but in 2025 we have the opportunity for the first time in over a decade to have less than 500 homicides," Johnson said. Chicagoland, Page 3

## Biden in Angola: US 'all in' on Africa

President touting projects to counter China's influence

By Will Weissert  
Associated Press

LUANDA, Angola — Speaking of "our nation's original sin," President Joe Biden on Tuesday toured a slavery museum in Angola and inspected shackles and a whip but also addressed Africa's future, saying Africans will make up 1 in 4 people by 2050 and the world's fate rests in their hands. Biden's visit, the first to Angola by a U.S. president, is meant to promote billions of dollars of commitments to the sub-Saharan African nation for

what he called the largest U.S. rail investment overseas to date. "The United States is all in on Africa," Biden earlier Tuesday told Angolan President João Lourenço, who called Biden's visit a key turning point in U.S.-Angola relations dating back to the Cold War. But even as the trip was meant to counter China's influence on the African continent of over 1.4 billion people by showcasing a U.S. commitment of \$3 billion for the Lobito Corridor railway redevelopment linking Zambia, Congo and Angola, China announced its own move. The corridor across southern Africa is meant to make it easier to ship raw materials for

Turn to Angola, Page 6



Former Ald. Daniel Solis leaves the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse after another day of testimony in the corruption trial of former Speaker Michael Madigan in Chicago on Tuesday. TESS CROWLEY/TRIBUNE

### MICHAEL MADIGAN TRIAL

## Solis, historic FBI mole, exits stage alone after testimony

By Jason Meisner and Megan Crepeau  
Chicago Tribune

Daniel Solis, the once-prominent Chicago alderman whose turn as an FBI mole took down the state's two longest-serving Democratic power brokers, walked out of a federal courtroom on Tuesday with his gaze fixed on the floor. In the lobby of the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse, Solis slung a backpack over his shoulder, hugged his attorney and stepped through the revolving

door, bundled in a blue parka to shield him from the December cold. No one met him outside. No shiny black SUV or taxi came to pick him up. Instead, the 75-year-old former lawmaker crossed the street, hands in his pockets, and walked west down Jackson Boulevard, disappearing into the foot traffic. After six days of testimony against ex-House Speaker Michael Madigan, Solis was off the witness stand and out of the

Turn to Trial, Page 7

## Officials demand change to policies

Aldermen blast Johnson's handling of staff abuse allegations

By Jake Sheridan and Alice Yin  
Chicago Tribune

Aldermen blasted Mayor Brandon Johnson's handling of staff abuse allegations Tuesday and demanded he change the rules governing the city's "do not hire" list. Johnson claimed Monday he had been unaware of allegations leveled against his now-fired communications director, Ronnie Reese, until formal complaints made against Reese were publicly released and reported by the Tribune last week. But "practically speaking," the mayor should have known about the troubling allegations sooner, Ald. Scott Waguespack said.

"I don't see how the mayor could not know about this," Waguespack, a frequent mayoral critic, said at a news conference outside City Hall. "It's pretty clear to me that the mayor knew about it, or should have known about it, and should have done something immediately." Texts between Johnson and Chicago Teachers Union President Stacy Davis Gates obtained by the Tribune via a public records request show the mayor making an apparent reference to Reese just four days before Reese was given notice of his termination. "Ronnie!" he wrote to Davis Gates. "Call me. Message from the Elders." Davis Gates responded to the apparent reference to Reese, who previously worked with her and Johnson at the teachers union, with only an exclamation reaction, according to a copy of the text exchange. The CTU president said in a phone call Monday that she did not know about the accusations surrounding Reese until the Tribune reported on them. Her spokesperson, B. Loewe, followed up in a statement: "As Pres Davis Gates said, There isn't

Turn to Aldermen, Page 5

### TODAY'S WEATHER

High 37  
Low 12



Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 15

\$4.00 city and suburbs and elsewhere  
177th year No. 339  
© Chicago Tribune



### INSIDE

#### Yuengling is coming to Chicago

The Pennsylvania-based brewery, the oldest in America, is bringing its beer to Chicago late next month. Business

#### Manfred's short-sighted vision

Latest idea from MLB commissioner — the Golden At-Bat — proves he cares little for baseball fans. Paul Sullivan in Chicago Sports