

Chicago Tribune



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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

LA SCHIAZZA TRIAL

Jury deliberates after fast-paced case

Panel weighing whether former AT&T exec played politics or committed crime

By Jason Meisner
Chicago Tribune

In the end, after all the sweating and hand-wringing over Michael Madigan’s power to make or break their legislation, AT&T Illinois President Paul La Schiazza’s scheme to bribe the Democratic leader was “pretty successful,” a federal prosecutor told a jury Tues-

day.

AT&T got its bill to end mandated landline service, a national priority that stood to save the phone giant hundreds of millions of dollars. The now-former company leader La Schiazza got the “white whale” he’d spent years chasing, back slaps from superiors and a nice little \$85,000 bonus. Even former state Rep.

Eddie Acevedo, a Madigan ally, got a \$22,500 payday in the form of a do-nothing consulting contract, the prosecutor said.

But all the wheeling and dealing left just one constituency in the lurch, Assistant U.S. Attorney Sushma Raju said Tuesday in her closing argument in La Schiazza’s bribery trial.

“It shorted the people of Illinois, who deserved a fair, transparent and honest legislative process,” Raju said. “What we got instead was a legislative process that was tainted by this defendant, who paid

for the result he wanted. It was not lobbying ... it was a crime and Paul La Schiazza knew it.”

But the defense argument that followed painted a far different picture, one of common and completely legal dealings between the corporate and political worlds, where companies routinely seek to curry favor with politicians in order to get them to consider their agenda.

The legislation AT&T wanted passed, known by the acronym COLR, “took years of legitimate, tireless hard work,” and not just

by La Schiazza, defense attorney Tinos Diamantatos told the jury in his closing remarks.

“It was a team effort by AT&T to get something done lawfully and appropriately as the law allows them to do,” Diamantatos said. “This was no bribe. ... The government failed to meet its burden. It wasn’t even close.”

The jury of four men and eight women was sent back at 2:40 p.m. and elected to go home after deliberating for about an hour and a half

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‘LIFE CHANGING’

After stumbling for years, a federal program designed to address homelessness among veterans is getting back on track — especially in Chicago

By Lizzie Kane | Chicago Tribune

Chris Murray was homeless, living on Lower Wacker Drive, after his mother died from COVID-19 in 2020. Her death, he said, caused him to go “off the deep end.” His heroin addiction grew worse, and he lost his job.

Nonprofit and social service groups would come around to offer housing support, but Murray, now 37, said he was skeptical of their offers. It “sounded too good to be true,” Murray said. And for him, the street wasn’t so different from his time in the U.S. Army.

“The military kind of conditions your standard of living to be lower,” Murray said.

Eventually, after three years of being homeless, Murray was tired of living on the street and took a leap of faith. He allowed a nonprofit worker to help connect him to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Above: Nicole Bowden watches her daughter, Zariah, 7, ride a scooter after eating dinner at their home in Calumet City on Sept. 3. Bowden had a HUD-VASH voucher through the Chicago Housing Authority for nine years and relinquished it when she was able to buy a two-flat in Calumet City in April. **TESS CROWLEY/TRIBUNE**

Now, Murray is living in an Uptown studio thanks to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program, a rental aid program that is the federal government’s primary tool for ending veterans’ homelessness. The rental aid comes in the form of a housing voucher, known as the HUD-VASH voucher, where the tenant allocates 30% of their income to rent costs and the federal government picks up the rest of the tab. The veteran voucher program is a special

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CO2 leak draws scrutiny from EPA

ADM facility may have violated storage, water regulations and permit

By Nara Schoenberg
Chicago Tribune

Agribusiness giant Archer Daniels Midland’s massive underground CO2 storage facility — a showcase for a growing but controversial industry — has experienced a leak that is drawing scrutiny by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In an Aug. 14 notice of violation, the EPA said that “the information currently available” suggests the ADM facility in Decatur violated the Safe Drinking Water Act as well as carbon storage regulations and an EPA permit.

The EPA alleges that CO2, which ADM injects deep underground to prevent global warming, was allowed to move into “unauthorized zones,” that ADM failed to monitor a CO2 well in the required manner, and that ADM failed to follow the proper emergency response and remediation plan.

The EPA said in a written statement that the agency is working with ADM to gather more information and “ensure that issues identified in the notice are addressed as quickly as possible.”

“At present, EPA doesn’t have any information to suggest there is a threat to drinking water in nearby communities,” the agency said.

In a written statement, Archer Daniels Midland said that the company detected some corrosion in a section of a deep monitoring well; the corrosion was located about 5,000 feet underground and lower.

Corrosion in the well created holes large enough for fluid to pass through, according to an EPA inspection report quoted in a document ADM shared with the

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EILEEN T. MESLAR/TRIBUNE

NIU coach: ‘I want to build a legacy’

By doing things “the hard way,” Northern Illinois coach Thomas Hammock instills belief in the No. 23 Huskies. **Chicago Sports**

Hezbollah hit by exploding pagers

The blasts kill at least nine people and wound several thousand in Lebanon and Syria, officials said. **Nation & World**

Family seeks release of woman held in China

Chicagoan detained for 10 years on drug charges

By Karina Atkins
Chicago Tribune

Growing up, Tim Hunt looked forward to making his little sister laugh every night before bed in their South Side home. But when he visited her at a Chinese prison in July, he couldn’t get Dawn Michelle Hunt to crack a smile.

Glass separated them. Armed guards hovered over them. And a woman with headphones diligently took notes in a corner.

“Everything is different. Everything about her is different. She’s lost weight. Her hair is all gray,” said her brother, a retired Chicago police officer. His 53-year-old sister also has



Dawn Michelle Hunt

tumors on her uterus and ovaries, a possible symptom of cancer.

Dawn Michelle Hunt, a Chicago native, is serving a life sentence in Guangdong Women’s Prison. She’s the victim of an elaborate drug trafficking scheme, according to her family, who’ve been trying

to bring her home since she was arrested a decade ago. Tim Hunt has written letters to his elected officials. Her younger brother, Chris, a truck driver, has tried to provide her with emotional support over the phone. Their father, Gene, also a retired police officer, hired an attorney in

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Gene Hunt and his sons have been fighting to bring home his daughter, Dawn Michelle, who has been detained in China for the last decade. The family says she’s the victim of an elaborate drug trafficking scheme.

E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

