

Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Tensions rising in budget situation

Aldermen: Process has been ‘dysfunctional,’ Johnson’s lobbying office ‘a rudderless ship’

By Alice Yin and Jake Sheridan
Chicago Tribune

A tense budget season for Mayor Brandon Johnson seems to be getting worse, with persistent staffing issues in the office tasked with lobbying the City Council emboldening many aldermen to try to seize control of the process from the self-styled “collaborator-in-chief.”

Johnson’s second spending

plan already has faced a series of hurdles that mark this as one of the most contentious fall budget negotiations in recent years. On Thursday, aldermen who have felt ignored throughout the process — among them some close council allies of the mayor — are striking back with an extraordinary special meeting where they aim to vote down his requested \$300 million tax increase.

That step comes after a final vote

on the budget has already been pushed back twice to mid-December at the earliest, raising the possibility, however remote, that the city might blow past the Dec. 31 deadline to reach a deal for 2025.

Some City Council members who spoke with the Tribune about the budget cycle so far said those issues are in part symptomatic of a troubling vacuum at Johnson’s intergovernmental affairs office, which is tasked with whipping up support in the council. Shepherd-ing the annual budget is usually the IGA’s biggest responsibility, but recent shakeups there have threat-

ened aldermanic relations during a crucial time for Johnson and his progressive agenda.

The IGA office had six vacancies as of the end of October, compared with two in August 2023, requested public records show. There is also no permanent head of the office after Johnson’s last two deputy mayors for intergovernmental affairs quit.

Southwest Side Ald. Matt O’Shea said intergovernmental affairs is now “like a rudderless ship.”

“The whole entire process has been dysfunctional,” he said Wednesday. “I don’t care what

neighborhood you’re in or what member of City Council you’re talking to, everybody — I mean, everybody — is angry and frustrated with the situation we’re in. ... And to hear yesterday that there’s been great collaboration is insulting.”

O’Shea, 19th, was referring to Johnson’s news conference Tuesday in which the mayor said he wasn’t wedded to the now-imperiled \$300 million property tax increase and insisted that reporters refer to him as the

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President Joe Biden meets with President-elect Donald Trump in the Oval Office on Wednesday in Washington. **EVAN VUCCI/AP**

Tradition on display in Oval Office

Trump makes vow to follow protocols he rejected in 2020

By Will Weissert, Lisa Mascaro and Zeke Miller
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump made a victor’s return to Washington on Wednesday, visiting the White House for a nearly two-hour meeting with President Joe Biden and committing to a straightforward transition of power despite actively working to disrupt the same process four years ago.

Sitting in the Oval Office, in

front of a strong fire in the fireplace, the former rivals shook hands before Biden called Trump “Mr. President-elect and former president” and then settled simply on “Donald.”

“Congratulations,” the Democrat told the Republican. “I look forward to having, like they said, a smooth transition. Welcome. Welcome back.”

Trump replied, “Thank you very much,” saying that “politics is tough. And it’s, in many cases, not a very nice world. But it is a nice world today, and I appreciate it very much.”

Except for the opening moments, the meeting was private, with Biden and Trump joined by their chiefs of staff. Trump said the transition

INSIDE: Republicans elected South Dakota Sen. John Thune as the next Senate majority leader.

- President-elect Donald Trump selected Rep. Matt Gaetz to be attorney general and Sen. Marco Rubio to be secretary of state.
- Trump’s pick for secretary of defense, Fox News host Pete Hegseth, surprises the Pentagon.

Stories in Nation & World

between the outgoing and incoming administrations “will be as smooth as it can get and I very much appreciate that, Joe.”

Trump, the winner this time, says he’s ready to ensure that there is a seamless move between administrations. But when he lost

four years ago, it was a very different story: Trump filed scores of lawsuits falsely claiming widespread voter fraud, refused to actively participate in transition work, denied the election results and helped incite a mob that attacked the U.S. Capitol, trying to stop the certification of Biden’s victory.

He also didn’t invite Biden to the White House, and he refused to attend the inauguration — the first time that had happened since Andrew Johnson skipped Ulysses S. Grant’s swearing-in 155 years ago.

The new, all-smiles scene at the White House — despite what occurred four years ago — put in

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How will CPS be affected by Trump?

Some say there could be less protection for students in Chicago

By Nell Salzman
Chicago Tribune

Bobby Reyes fears what a wholesale elimination of the U.S. Department of Education might mean for his two daughters — ages 10 and 12.

They attend William J. Onahan Elementary School in the 41st Ward, the only ward in which President-elect Donald J. Trump carried a majority of votes in a very blue-leaning Chicago. Just several blocks from their school, in a neighborhood where Reyes said many police officers and firefighters live, a group recently sold Trump merchandise on the street corner.

“And it was welcomed,” Reyes said.

Trump repeatedly made promises on the campaign trail to dismantle the Department of Education and change funding priorities toward private schools and other educational expenses, which worries Reyes. Like other parents and educational advocates in Chicago, he said he would do whatever it takes to “ensure (his) kids get the proper education they need from all realms and all voices.”

Education policy experts say the 47th incoming president’s plans to expand education savings accounts (where families get taxpayer money to help pay tuition for private schools), limit and reshape American history curriculums and shift budget priorities from programs that benefit low-income students have the potential to create a tumultuous transition for Chicago students.

While some groups in Illinois are

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INSIDE



STACEY WESCOTT/TRIBUNE

Fresh approach may benefit QB and Bears

Can new Bears Offensive Coordinator Thomas Brown save the season? He will have to work quickly to get QB Caleb Williams unlocked. **Chicago Sports**

Defense pushes away from co-defendant

Michael Madigan’s attorneys on Wednesday made their most aggressive attempts yet to distance Madigan from his co-defendant. **Chicagoland, Page 3**

Lawmakers confront costly pension choices

Thousands of workers rally at State Capitol for better benefits

By Jeremy Gornor and Rick Pearson
Chicago Tribune

SPRINGFIELD — As a nurse in her 30s, Kristen Perez cringes at the prospect of working until she’s almost 70.

But because of changes made to the state’s massively underfunded pension system 13 years ago, employees like Perez, who were hired by the state after the changes took effect, don’t qualify for the same retirement benefits as her longer-tenured colleagues with the Illinois Nurses Association.

“This creates a second class of state workers that sows division,” Perez said Wednesday during a rally at the Illinois State Capitol of thousands of unionized

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Illinois public employees rally for reform of the Tier 2 level for the pension system at the state Capitol in Springfield on Wednesday. **E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

