

# Chicago Tribune



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THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 2024

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Illinois Lottery celebrates 50 years of rich history, from pingpong balls and nightly televised drawings to freshly minted folk-hero millionaires



## A STREAK OF GOOD LUCK

By Robert Channick | Chicago Tribune

**T**he Illinois Lottery is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its first drawing on Thursday, a pioneering gamble that has become an enduring cash cow for the state, and a shared fantasy for millions of players. Plunk down a couple of bucks, stick a ticket in your wallet and, for the better part of a week, there's a chance you might become a millionaire. Just ask Michael Wittkowsksi, a blue-collar guy from the Northwest Side whose life changed as a 28-year-old in 1984 when he won \$40 million playing Lotto — then the largest lottery prize in U.S. history — becoming a Chicago folk hero and star of the state's nascent numbers game.



**Above:** Daniel, from left, Eileen and Michael Wittkowsksi celebrate their first lottery check from the state in 1984. Wittkowsksi won \$40 million playing Lotto, then the largest prize in U.S. history. **CHICAGO TRIBUNE**  
**Top:** Lottery worker Jose Garcia, left, takes a photo of James Barginear as he celebrates his \$1,620 winnings at the Illinois Lottery Claim Center in the Loop on Tuesday in Chicago. **STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Wittkowsksi, a printer by trade, parlayed his newfound riches into a surprisingly normal if well-funded life, getting married and raising three sons far from the limelight in northwest suburban Inverness.

"I'm glad it happened to me," said Wittkowsksi, 68, long retired and living quietly in the same house for 30 years. "It's made a huge difference in all of our lives."

While the world has changed a lot in the last half-century, the dream has lost none of its luster. The lottery is coming off a record \$3.6 billion in sales in fiscal year 2023, still the most of any wagering segment in Illinois despite the advent of casinos, sports betting and thousands of video gaming terminals across the state.

The Illinois Lottery has grown exponentially since its inception in 1974, minting thousands of millionaires, generating billions in revenue and dramatically

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### ELECTION 2024

## Camps cross paths in Wis.

Harris, Walz, Vance make Midwest push as sides look to secure key battleground

By Darlene Superville, Joey Cappelletti and Meg Kinnard  
Associated Press

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. — Vice President Kamala Harris declared herself and her new running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, "joyful warriors" against former President Donald Trump on Wednesday as they spent their first full day campaigning together across the Midwest. They got an unusual glimpse of how hotly contested the region will be when they overlapped on a Wisconsin tarmac with Republican vice presidential nominee JD Vance.

The Democrats visited Wisconsin and Michigan, hoping to shore up support among the younger, diverse, labor-friendly voters who were instrumental in helping President Joe Biden win the 2020 election.

Harris told the day's first rally in Eau Claire, "As Tim Walz likes to point out, we are joyful warriors." Contributing to that feeling, the Harris campaign said it had raised \$36 million in the first 24 hours after she announced Walz as her running mate.

The vice president said the pair look on the future with optimism, unlike Trump whom she accused of being stuck in the past and preferring a confrontational style of politics — even as she criticized her opponent herself.

"Someone who suggests we should terminate the Constitution of the United States should never again have the chance to sit behind the seal of the United States," Harris said, her voice rising amid applause from a crowd her campaign said numbered more than 12,000.

Wednesday's campaign swing was especially important for her and Walz

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### INSIDE

## Trump floats wide range of tax cuts

Repeatedly during his campaign, former President Donald Trump and Republicans have embraced new, sometimes novel tax cuts in an attempt to shore up support with major constituencies. In a series of social media posts, at political rallies and without formal policy proposals, Trump has casually suggested reducing federal revenue by trillions. **Nation & World**

## For figure skating champs, gold things come to those who wait

Addison's Knierim, teammates finally receive Beijing medals

By Stacy St. Clair  
Chicago Tribune

PARIS — Addison native Alexa Knierim and the 2022 U.S. figure skating team made Olympic history Wednesday, becoming the first Winter athletes to be awarded a gold medal at a Summer Games.

The 20-minute ceremony, conducted in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, came more than 900 days after the American squad competed in Beijing. No medals were awarded for the team figure skating event in China while officials tried to sort out a doping scandal involving a Russian skater.

Knierim — who competed there in pairs skating with partner Brandon Frazier — initially had been skeptical about the Paris presentation, doubting whether it could re-create the joy Olympians feel in the moments following a gold medal performance. In the end, the ceremony didn't make up for everything they lost, Knierim said, but it gave the team something truly special.

"This is such a historic moment," she said. "I was just looking around and thinking how nothing like this has ever happened. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be in front of the Eiffel Tower, in the sunshine and just be acknowledged with my teammates."

As a winter athlete, Knierim, 33, could not remember ever receiving a medal under a

**Turn to Gold, Page 2**



Team USA's Alexa Knierim, center, and her figure skating teammates Madison Chock, Brandon Frazier, Nathan Chen and Karen Chen, receive their gold medals from the Beijing Olympics on Wednesday in Paris. The presentation was delayed more than two years after a Russian skater tested positive for a banned substance. **BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

**'ALL I CAN ASK FOR':** Aurora's Lauren Carlini — the last player cut from the 2020 Olympic team — is battling back from an injury to live her volleyball dream. **Chicago Sports**

TODAY'S WEATHER



High 83 Low 59

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 14

\$4.00 city and suburbs and elsewhere  
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