

Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Report: Property tax breaks carry risks

Homeowner exemptions raise rates, undercut savings in some towns

By A.D. Quig
Chicago Tribune

A new report from Cook County leaders comes with a warning about expanding property tax breaks for homeowners: What seems good for one taxpayer can backfire on a whole town.

Countywide, those exemptions remove \$1.6 billion in annual tax revenue by lowering taxes for specific categories of homeowners. But the report found that in some municipalities, they don't provide as much relief as people think.

And in some cases, they contribute to soaring property tax rates across the board. The higher rates can scare away prospective homebuyers or businesses that could help lower the overall tax burden.

Palatable solutions are in short supply. Doing away with a popular and straightforward way to knock down homeowners' bills is a political third rail, especially with older residents who qualify for them, who are more likely to take out their aggravation during elections. And city, county and state officials have often been at odds about the causes of rising property tax bills and the best ways to grant relief.

Those unintended consequences also aren't the case everywhere. The effects of homestead exemptions are negligible in cities

Turn to Taxes, Page 2

Book tells of skipped generation households

Author takes deep dive on Black grandmothers who are raising children

By Darcel Rockett
Chicago Tribune

LaShawnDa Pittman's book begins with a table of women's names — 74, to be exact — listing their first name, age, marital or dating status, and the number of children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren they have.

The common denominators among the women are that they are Black grandmothers who are raising any number of their children's offspring, creating what is known as skipped generation households, those consisting of only grandparents and grandchildren.

In her book "Grandmothering While Black: A Twenty-First Century Story of Love, Coercion and Survival," Pittman, associate professor of American ethnic studies at the University of Washington in Seattle, plumbs the nuances of the role of contemporary Black grandmothers in today's landscape.

Turn to Book, Page 4

International Puppet Theater Fest is back

The largest puppetry festival in North America, with local artists joining others from five continents, returns this week. **Arts & Living**

Israel-Hamas war enters its 100th day

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu marked 100 days of war by pledging to continue to "total victory." **Nation & World**

"A lot of folks, when they think about billion-dollar disasters, they think that California, Texas and Florida have the most, when they don't. It's actually the Midwest, the Plains and the Southeast."

— Illinois State Climatologist Trent Ford



Ice forms Sunday on North Avenue Beach as steam rises off Lake Michigan as a result of subzero temperatures. **BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Billion-dollar disasters hit Midwest hard in '23

Drought was most expensive, but extreme cold can be costly in other ways



Rachael Smedberg stands in her hemp field at Tulip Tree Gardens in Beecher on Oct. 3. Smedberg said the June drought was "awful" for her crops. **E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

■ After wind chills reached minus 40 on Sunday, weather advisory for region is likely to continue into Wednesday. **Chicagoland, Page 5**

■ Millions of Americans face dangerous cold weather as subfreezing temperatures reach across much of the U.S. **Nation & World**

By Adriana Pérez
Chicago Tribune

The United States experienced 28 billion-dollar weather and climate disasters in 2023, surpassing the previous record of 22 in 2020. Nine of these events affected Illinois, with the most expensive in the nation being a drought and heat wave across the South and Midwest that cost \$14.5 billion.

The total amount incurred nationwide was a staggering \$92.9 billion, according to the latest update to an annual report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Centers for Environmental Information.

Illinois State Climatologist Trent Ford said last year tied with 2011 for the most billion-dollar disasters in Illinois. But he cautioned against only paying attention to those disasters that cause this much monetary damage: Weather events that

cost less can still have a tremendous human impact, such as the below-freezing wind chills blowing through the area.

"These are billion-dollar disasters, but that's just how much economic damage they've caused; it's not the lives they've uprooted," Ford said. "So in the situation where the cold may not be as big of an impact on infrastructure and things like that, we see hundreds of people die across the Chicago area — and I'm just throwing out a number."

Beyond concerns for the local unhoused population, the city is for the second year in a row contending with finding winter-time shelter for thousands of migrants. Because of the cold, Mayor Brandon Johnson postponed evictions until at least Jan. 22 for migrants staying in shelters who are due to leave the system. But with shelters at capacity, some migrants have had to find warmth

Turn to Disasters, Page 5

Trump paints a dark view for Iowa voters

Ex-president targets enemies as GOP field rallies for caucuses

By Thomas Beaumont,
Hannah Fingerhut
and Jonathan J. Cooper
Associated Press

INDIANOLA, Iowa — Former President Donald Trump implored his supporters Sunday to brave frigid temperatures and deliver him a decisive victory in Monday's Iowa caucuses, saying their vote would help bring to Washington the retribution he has repeatedly promised if he returns to the White House.

The former president has set sky-high expectations for his own performance in the first contest of the race for the Republican

Turn to Iowa, Page 4

■ Gov. J.B. Pritzker dismisses new national polling showing low job approval for President Biden. **Chicagoland, Page 3**



Jon Hathaway, of Boone, Iowa, attends a campaign event for Republican presidential candidate and former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley at Jethro's BBQ in Ames, Iowa, on Sunday. Hathaway is wearing a hat with political signatures he began gathering in 2020. **CAROLYN KASTER/AP**