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Slate of new state laws take effect

Measures include gas tax freeze and changes for driving tests, tuition

By **Jeremy Gorner and Dan Petrella**
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

More than a dozen new laws take effect in Illinois on Wednesday, touching everything from transportation and education to prisons and liquor licenses.

Chief among them is the state's new \$55.9 billion spending plan, which covers the budget year running through June 30, 2027. While the new budget won't raise the state's sales or income tax rates, it relies on a series of new taxes and tweaks to be balanced, including a six-month pause on an inflation-based increase of a per-gallon gasoline tax that would otherwise jump by 1.3 cents, to 49.6 cents, on Wednesday.

The spending plan also shifts \$12.5 million per month for one year from the state's separate 6.25% sales tax on gasoline — money that normally funds public transit — to the state's general operating budget. The \$150 million windfall is the result of higher gas prices caused by President Donald Trump's war in Iran.

The budget covers the final six months of Democratic Gov. JB

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Mayor: Mental health teams to get police terminals back

By **Alice Yin**
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

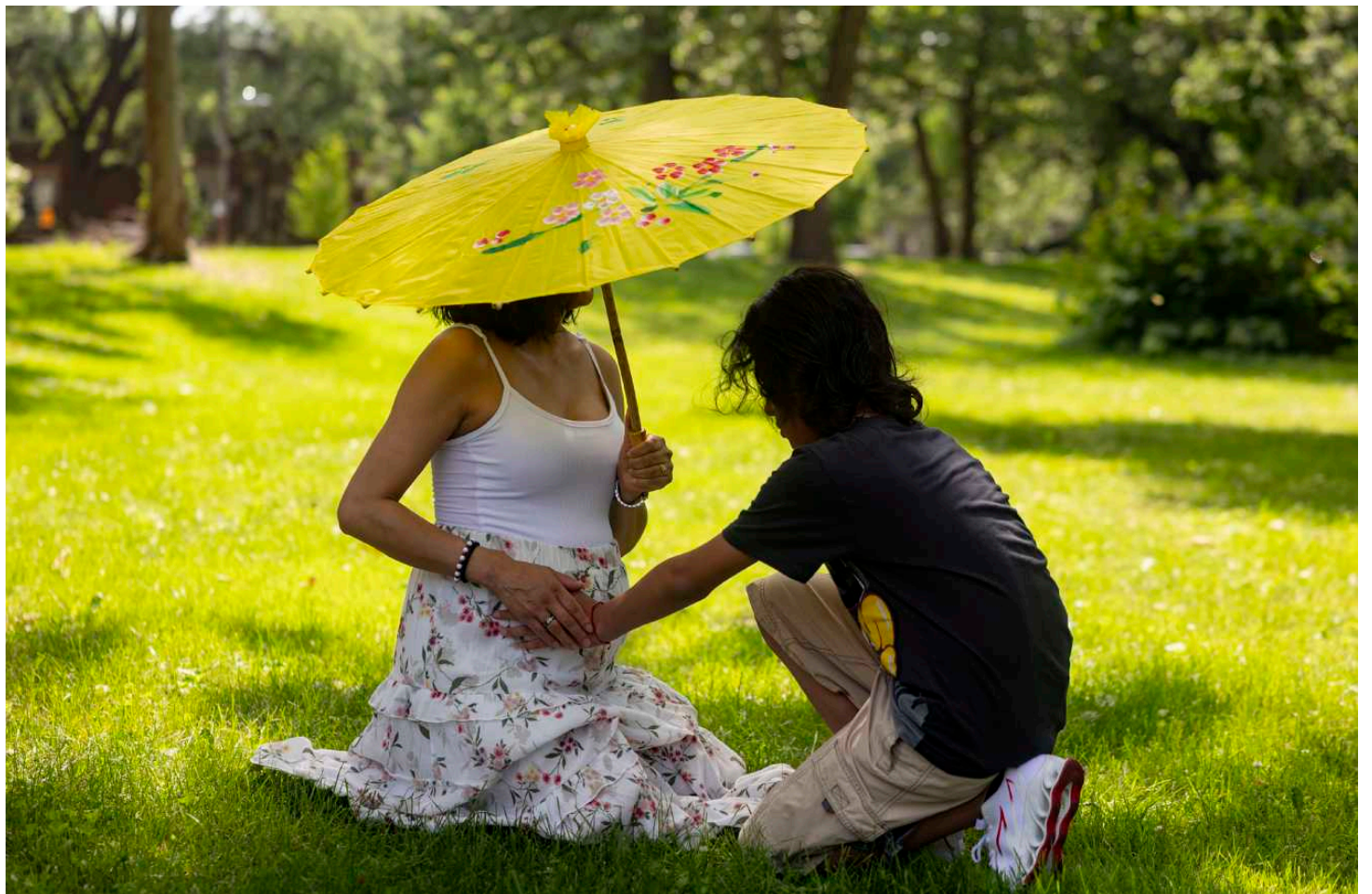
Mayor Brandon Johnson said Tuesday he's working to get Chicago Police Department terminals back to the city's mental health crisis teams, which have struggled to find psychiatric emergencies they can help defuse since police took the equipment away.

Speaking at a City Hall news conference, Johnson confirmed the update following this week's Tribune story that found the Police Department took out those portable data terminals last July, leading to a major drop in responses for the Crisis Assistance Response and Engagement team that had relied heavily on the machines to learn about incidents in real time.

Johnson did not provide a deadline for the teams to again have the terminals.

"Yeah, so we're working to have those PDTs restored," Johnson told reporters. "As I said, this is a brand-new program, it's unprecedented,

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An expectant mother sits with her 11-year-old son on Tuesday for a portrait for the Chicago Tribune. The mother has feared the possibility her new child could be born here without the typical rights and protections of an American citizen. **BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Supreme Court affirms birthright citizenship

Illinois immigrants and leaders rejoice as justices reject Trump's executive order

By **Laura Rodríguez Presa, Angie Leventis Lourgos and Jeremy Gorner**
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

For months, the expectant mother in Chicago has feared the possibility her daughter could be born here without the typical rights and protections of an American citizen.

The pregnant mother of four — who is due in a few weeks — described intense anxiety as the matter of birthright citizenship loomed before the Supreme Court.

Yet the 42-year-old undocumented woman expressed relief and gratitude Tuesday when the high court affirmed the nation's long-standing practice of birthright citizenship, rejecting President Donald Trump's executive order that declared children born to parents who are in the United States illegally or temporarily are not citizens.

"It's like a weight lifted off my shoulders," said the woman, who was brought here from Mexico as a baby and asked to remain anonymous due to the tenuous nature

MORE COVERAGE: Justices upheld state laws barring transgender girls and women from playing on school athletic teams in another setback for transgender people. **Nation & World, Page B4**

of her immigration status. "I'm excited that (my baby) won't be stripped of her rights."

Many Illinois immigrants and local leaders celebrated the 6-3 Supreme Court decision preserving birthright citizenship protections, which dealt a major blow to

Trump's anti-immigration agenda.

In the case *Trump v. Barbara*, the high court confirmed that the Constitution's 14th Amendment broadly guarantees citizenship to those born on U.S. soil regardless of parental immigration status, with narrow exceptions for children of a foreign occupying force or international diplomats.

On the first day of Trump's second term, he signed an executive order ending automatic birthright citizenship, which upended

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Justices to hear Cook County assault weapons ban case



An employee holds a Colt Match Target 9 mm AR semiautomatic rifle at Suburban Sporting Goods in Melrose Park on Tuesday. **ANTONIO PEREZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Arguments could be precursor to sweeping ruling on gun rights

By **Rebecca Johnson and Jeremy Gorner**
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

The U.S. Supreme Court indicated Tuesday it would hear arguments possibly later this year over Cook County's ban on so-called assault weapons and a similar law in Connecticut, a precursor to what could be a sweeping ruling on the constitutional right to own such firearms.

The Cook County case stems from a lawsuit by three county residents and two gun rights organizations against county officials,

alleging the county's assault weapons ban — which includes prohibitions on the AR-15 and similar semiautomatic rifles — violates the Second and Fourteenth amendments.

Cook County State's Attorney Eileen O'Neill Burke vowed to "not back down" from defending the ordinance, saying assault weapons "have no place in our communities."

"Countless victims have already endured the devastating impact of gun violence," she said in a statement after the court declared it would hear arguments in the case. "We will defend this lawful ordinance before this nation's highest court to continue protecting the

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BUSINESS

Video gambling tussle

As the battle between Bally's and the city heats up over the advent of video gambling terminals, the casino company has enlisted former Mayor Lori Lightfoot's law firm to navigate the dispute.

FOOD & HEALTH

Cafe is pretty in pink

The world's largest Hello Kitty Cafe has opened in Chicago's Loop with a speakeasy-inspired Bow Room that offers afternoon tea featuring an Italian beef croissant with mild giardiniera.

SPORTS

Young Hawks back on ice

As the Blackhawks development camp continues, prospects took to the ice to complete drills under coaches. Skaters gained reps and eased themselves into the Hawks' system.

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Salsa 15.5 oz., Jack Link's Beef Jerky 2.85-4 oz.

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Top aide to former alderman gets probation in corruption case

By Caroline Kubzansky
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

A federal judge Tuesday sentenced a top aide to former Ald. Carrie Austin to three years of probation, including three months of home confinement and a fine of more than \$20,000 for his role in a public corruption case that first came to light during an FBI raid of Austin's Far South Side office seven years ago.

The sentence imposed on 60-year-old Chester Wilson, who worked as Austin's chief of staff, marks the likely end of a yearslong legal saga for Wilson and his boss, who was the second-longest serving member of Chicago's City Council when she retired amid mounting health concerns and beneath the cloud of a 2021 indictment for



Chester Wilson, right, former chief of staff to Ald. Carrie Austin, leaves the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse with attorney Thomas Breen after pleading guilty to corruption charges on Oct. 29, 2025. **E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

charges of bribery and lying to FBI officials.

In the indictment, officials alleged a developer work-

ing on a 91-unit project in Austin's Far South Side ward provided improvements at Austin's home and an

investment property Wilson owned in return for help getting the project through the City Council starting in 2016. Between them, Austin and Wilson allegedly got new kitchen cabinets, granite countertops, bathroom tiling, sump pumps and an HVAC system for free or at a discount.

Wilson was charged in the indictment with bribery and one count of theft of government funds for illegally obtaining "SNAP" state food subsidies by paying the intended recipient less than the face value.

Wilson originally said he would plead not guilty to the charges, but ended up changing his plea last September, about two months after U.S. District Judge John Kness found that Austin was medically unfit for trial. The former

alderman's health had been declining for years, and she collapsed on the floor of the Chicago City Council shortly before her retirement in 2022.

On Tuesday, addressing Wilson and his attorneys, Kness said there was "an element of unfairness" in that Austin is likely never to get a day in court to answer the charges. Wilson's role in the situation, he said, was "the thornier aspect" in making a sentencing decision.

"I'm sure it's debatable whether you were driving this scheme," he said. "I don't know what you thought in doing it. What I do know is, it's bad."

Although federal prosecutors had argued Wilson should serve a six-month prison term, Kness said he didn't think incarceration was necessary for what

turned out to be a misdemeanor conviction. However, the judge also said he did not want "anything about this sentence to suggest you're getting a slap on the wrist."

"I don't want you going outside and enjoying your retirement and the fresh air and all of that," he said.

Instead, Kness said, he hoped the three months of home confinement would give Wilson time to "contemplate what led you to this position."

Wilson will also be fined \$20,000, plus an additional \$372 in restitution to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and a \$25 special assessment, Kness said.

When invited to address Kness, Wilson kept it brief. He only apologized "for the situation" and thanked the judge for his consideration.

CITIZENS

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more than a century of legal understanding of the 14th Amendment's Citizenship Clause.

However the measure, which would have applied to births on or after Feb. 19, 2025, had been blocked nationwide by lower courts. Immigration experts have estimated that Trump's order could have impacted more than a quarter of a million babies born in the United States each year.

Gov. JB Pritzker, an ardent Trump critic, called Tuesday's ruling an "important victory," adding that "today the Supreme Court sided with the Constitution."

Yet the governor warned that the president "keeps trying to circumvent the rule of law through illegal executive actions" and will continue to do so if Americans don't remain vigilant.

"Trump's racism made him unable to understand that birthright citizenship helps make America great," Pritzker said in a statement. "He went after the 14th Amendment because making our country smaller was the only way he could make himself feel bigger."

Challenging birthright citizenship was a central campaign pledge of Trump's, who has disparaged the practice as "a magnet for illegal immigration."

The executive order was among a litany of restrictions on immigrants and other new arrivals during Trump's second term, from a record cap on refugee resettlements to a mass deportation campaign that has targeted the Chicago area and other major cities nationwide, spurring widespread terror among immigrant communities.

Preserving birthright citizenship was a highly personal and emotional matter for some Illinois politicians.

State Rep. Barbara Hernandez, a Democrat from Aurora, wept when she learned the Supreme Court rebuffed Trump's executive order.

Her mother came to the United States from Mexico while six months pregnant with Hernandez, who was born here as a de facto citizen.

"Hate lost today because this executive order was done by hate," said Hernandez, who has served in the Illinois House since 2019. "It was done because the president unfortunately hates certain populations, is scared of the unknown ... and the power that community members and immigrant families have."

U.S. Rep. Delia Ramirez



State Rep. Barbara Hernandez, D-Aurora, stands in front of her parents' home in Aurora on Tuesday. Her mother came to the United States from Mexico while six months pregnant with Hernandez, who was born here as a de facto citizen. **JOSH BOLAND/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**



Wong Kim Ark was denied reentry to the United States in 1895 due to the Chinese Exclusion Act. **NATIONAL ARCHIVES**

invoked the immigration journey of her mother, who came to the United States from Guatemala while pregnant with her.

"And regardless of what some of my colleagues might call me, I am a citizen by birthright and an AMERICAN!" the Illinois Democrat said in a written statement.

Joining roughly 20 other states, Attorney General Kwame Raoul had sued to block the Trump administration's order in January 2025.

"As a birthright citizen myself, born to an immigrant mother not yet naturalized at the time, the fight to preserve birthright citizenship is a personal one," Raoul said in a statement earlier this year. But not all Illinois leaders rejoiced at the news.

Illinois Republican U.S. Rep. Mary Miller, of central Illinois, lamented on the social media site X that the high court "made the disappointing decision to leave one of the greatest abuses

of our immigration system untouched."

Trump said the decision was "too bad for our Country" and wrongly suggested that Congress could "easily" address it with legislation. The majority decision rests on constitutional grounds; it would take an amendment to overcome the decision.

Reaction to the decision on social media was mixed.

"The bogus argument is that the 14th Amendment was ratified for the purpose of giving anchor babies automatic citizenship," one Facebook user posted.

Another argued that the Supreme Court ruling provided "more reason for a strong border and mass deportation."

But others called the ruling "common sense," with one Facebook user celebrating "another loss not just for Trump" but also for the president's broader Make America Great Again movement and its followers.

Local immigration advocates championed the ruling and perseverance of birthright citizenship.

During a news conference Tuesday, Fred Tsao, senior policy counsel with the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, called the decision "a resounding reaffirmation of the long-standing principle that people born in the USA

are U.S. citizens."

He noted that the Supreme Court cited extensive legal precedent in its ruling, including the landmark 1898 Supreme Court decision *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*.

In that case, the plaintiff Wong had been born in San Francisco to Chinese immigrant parents.

After a visit to China, Wong had been denied reentry to the United States under the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which heavily restricted immigration from China and barred Chinese immigrants from becoming U.S. citizens.

But citing the 14th Amendment, a majority of justices sided with Wong and affirmed that everyone born in the United States — regardless of the citizenship or nationality of their parents — are automatic citizens, with rare and narrow exemptions. Tsao felt a close connection to that historic case.

"Wong Kim Ark, like me, is the son of two Chinese immigrants," Tsao said.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois called Tuesday's decision a reaffirmation of the Constitution while cautioning that legal challenges over birthright citizenship are far from over.

"This is not a moment to relax," said ACLU of Illinois spokesperson Ed Yohnka. "This is a moment to engage.

... We cannot give in to the idea that a president can tell us what our Constitution means and what it does not."

He was also deeply critical of the Supreme Court justices who dissented.

"It is remarkable that somehow three justices of this court could not read the plain text of the 14th Amendment," which states that "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States," Yohnka added.

Jason Mazzone, professor of law at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, praised the Supreme Court for conferring "a broad protection for birthright citizenship that cannot be undone by a president's executive order or even by Congress."

He noted that the decision came down shortly before July 4, when the United States will celebrate its landmark semiquincentennial.

"With the nation's 250th anniversary days away, the Court's ruling is a powerful reminder of the nation's commitment to the fundamental principle of birthright equality," added Mazzone, director of the Illinois Program in Constitutional Theory, History, and Law.

The Associated Press contributed.

TERMINALS

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it's the first of its kind in the city of Chicago. We have our own unique set of circumstances that exist in Chicago."

CARE first debuted in 2021 under Mayor Lori Lightfoot as the idea of sending crisis response teams with mental health professionals gained popularity following nationwide protests against police brutality. Lightfoot piloted a co-responder model with Chicago police and fire that progressives such as Johnson bristled against. He ousted her in 2023 with a platform that included transitioning law enforcement out of the program.

The results the last three

years have been bumpy. The Fire Department stopped reliably staffing CARE units with its paramedics, leading to responses plummeting almost 70% during Johnson's second year, and his former Health Commissioner Dr. Olusimbo "Simbo" Ige sparred with senior mayoral staff over filling dozens of vacancies. She resigned at Johnson's request in May.

Following police radio communications was the most reliable way for the mental health teams to hear about emergencies and dispatch themselves to scenes, and once the Police Department took them away that in 2023 with a platform for undisclosed reasons, the teams' responses to mental health emergencies fell another 52%.



Jennifer Garross, a mental health clinician, checks radios as she and other members of the city's Crisis Assistance Response and Engagement team start their day on July 14, 2022. **BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

CPD's press team deferred questions about the situation to the Johnson administration.

Asked why he could not corral city agencies under

his control sooner, the mayor said "when we're building something new, something transformational," his team takes a "layered approach towards ensuring that this new initiative works for the benefit of the people."

"My commitment and investment in public mental health services, I'm only second to Mayor Harold Washington," Johnson said. "I'm going to continue to make sure that these departments are aware of those desires. ... As far as those vacancies are concerned, I know the (health) department is working diligently to fill them."

Johnson's deputy mayor of health and human services, Arturo Carrillo, previously told the Tribune that CARE

was also planning to expand its hours — now from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. — into the evening, with a target deadline of October. The mayor on Tuesday touted that update and that CARE will be expanding city-wide, which was announced last month days before Ige was pushed out.

Health Committee Chair Ald. Rossana Rodriguez Sanchez, 33rd — a Johnson ally who is also the City Council's loudest champion of the "Treatment Not Trauma" campaign that included transitioning police out of CARE — declined to comment Tuesday on its progress.

The Tribune's Jake Sheridan and Robert Channick contributed reporting.