

THE Beacon-News

\$2.00 TUESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2025 AURORABEACONNEWS.COM

‘Budgets are a moral document’

State Sen. Villa joins race for Illinois comptroller

By Molly Morrow
Aurora Beacon-News

On Monday, state Sen. Karina Villa, of West Chicago, officially announced her bid for Illinois comptroller in the 2026 election. She joins a growing list of candidates vying for the seat after current Comptroller Susana Mendoza announced last month that she wouldn't seek reelection, leaving open the possibility of chal-

lenging Brandon Johnson in a bid for Chicago mayor. Villa, a Democrat, has been the state senator for District 25 — which includes portions of municipalities like Aurora, West Chicago and South Elgin — since 2020, when she defeated Republican Jeanette Ward and, in doing so, flipped a Republican-held seat, according to past reporting. Before that, she was the state representative for the 49th

District. She also served as a West Chicago School District board member, and said she previously worked as a school social worker. In addition to Villa, other Democrats who have thrown their hats in the ring for the 2026 comptroller race include state Rep. Margaret Croke, D-Chicago; state Rep. Stephanie Kifowit, D-Oswego; Lake County Treasurer Holly Kim and Champaign County Auditor George Danos, according to past

reporting. Croke narrowly won the Cook County Democratic slatemakers' endorsement for comptroller last month. The comptroller's responsibilities include maintaining the state's central fiscal accounts, ordering payments into and out of the funds held by the state treasurer and signing paychecks or granting approval to electronic payments by the state to its employees and creditors, among other duties, per the state.



On Monday, Villa said her financial background included addressing student needs while still passing a balanced budget each year when she served as a West Chicago School District board member. Likewise, she said, her time in the state legislature involved passing budgets, even when programs that she “really stood for” were cut, like a health care program for immigrant adults

Turn to Villa, Page 3



City of Aurora officials, working through the 2026 budgeting process, say the city is facing a nearly \$30 million deficit. R. CHRISTIAN SMITH/THE BEACON-NEWS

Officials: Aurora facing nearly \$30M budget deficit

City may look to cut non-essential services, cut staff or stop previously approved spending

By R. Christian Smith
Aurora Beacon-News

Aurora is facing a \$29.7 million deficit in the 2026 budget's general fund, city officials say. That preliminary number, shared at a meeting with reporters on Monday, is based on early work city officials are doing to build next year's budget. Not included in that nearly \$30 million figure is the additional \$10.3 million requested by departments as a part of the budget process, which officials say they still need to go through. “We’re going to have, basically,

some tough choices,” Aurora Chief Financial Officer Stacey Peterson said of the 2026 budgeting process. According to Peterson's presentation, the city is currently looking at a 2026 budget with \$231.5 million in anticipated revenue and \$261.2 million in anticipated expenditures. That's specifically just in the city's main operating fund, called the general fund. Contributing to the projected budget gap is that several important funds were previously not being funded at the level they needed to be, according to Peterson. She said the city now has to

put \$3.3 million into the Compensated Benefits Fund, \$3.8 million into the Property and Casualty Insurance Fund and \$9.4 million into the Capital Improvement Fund, amounts taken out of previous budgets in an effort to balance them. Not included in the nearly \$30 million figure are any cost of living increases for non-union employees' pay or any increases to contracts with various unions that are currently under negotiation, Peterson said. That number also assumes that Aurora will continue to collect the \$4.5 million per year it gets from the 1% grocery

tax, which the city is considering extending locally after it expires statewide at the end of the year. The Aurora City Council is set to vote on the local extension of the grocery tax, and is expected to get a similar update on the city's financial situation, at its meeting Tuesday. To deal with the budget gap, the city may look to cut nonessential services, cut staff or stop previously-approved spending that was planned over several years, Peterson said. Plus, Aurora Mayor John

Turn to Budget, Page 2

Justice Department demands Ill. voter data

Election officials are debating compliance

By Dan Petrella and Rick Pearson
Chicago Tribune

Illinois election officials are weighing whether to comply with a demand from Republican President Donald Trump's Department of Justice to turn over by Sept. 1 the state's full voter registration list, including voters' birth dates, driver's license numbers, signatures and partial Social Security numbers. The Labor Day deadline, sent to Illinois State Board of Elections officials via email Thursday, marks an escalation of a conflict that's been brewing between state and federal officials since the Civil Rights Division of Trump's Justice Department in late July requested the voter data and a laundry list of other information on Illinois elections and voters. The push for disclosure of Illinois voters' sensitive personal information is part of a broader effort from the Trump administration to exert federal authority over state-run elections, including shifting the Civil Rights Division's focus from ensuring access to the polls to combating the specter of voter fraud. Several other states, including neighboring Wisconsin, have received similar data requests this summer, while the Justice Department in recent months has filed lawsuits against election officials in North Carolina and Orange County, California, over issues related to their voter rolls. A spokesman for the Illinois board said election officials intend to respond to the Justice Department's latest demand by Sept. 2, the day after the Labor Day holiday. During Trump's first term, a so-called election integrity commission he established made a similar request, but the board never turned over the data.

Turn to Data, Page 3

Aurora event offers chance to start Christmas shopping early



Carrie Birdwell, of Batavia, looks at items at a booth during a holiday-oriented craft show at Abbey Farms in Aurora on Sunday. DAVID SHAROS/FOR THE BEACON-NEWS

By David Sharos
Chicago Tribune

For some, the spirit of Christmas and all that goes with it lives year-round, which is something Ginger Kudchadker of Naperville strongly supports. “I love the whole Christmas thing. I like it all year-round. It's just fun,” Kudchadker said at a craft show at Abbey Farms in Aurora on Sunday that focused on holiday-oriented items. “For me, Christmas is all year long.” More than 65 local crafters and artisans were on hand offering handmade goods and seasonal items. Both the farm store as well as the cafe and bar were open to provide snacks, meals and beverages during the event.

Phil Nork, associate director at Abbey Farms, said heavy rains forced the rescheduling of the Christmas in July Craft Show event last month to August. The change wound up affecting the number of vendors, with 91 planned for the original date for the show in July. “Unfortunately, a number of those vendors weren't able to reschedule this month so we're having about 67 who are set to be here,” Nork said before Sunday's opening at 11 a.m. “We're pretty much offering the same kind of products which are all different ranging from fall things to Christmas items. About 95% of the vendors are local artists and craft artisans.” Like Kudchadker, Nork agrees that Christmas shopping for many never seems to go out of season and

even though the holiday is still four months away “people still are interested.” “There are so many people that do think about Christmas 12 months out of the year,” he said. Last year, despite temperatures in the 90s and high humidity levels, the event drew close to 400 people, organizers said. Sue Nelson of Elmhurst was operating the Retired & Inspired booth at the event and said she and a partner have been making Christmas decorations the past two years. “We make everything by hand — wreaths and canes and prints. As far as people shopping like this well before Christmas, sometimes it's hit and miss,” Nelson said. “Some want

Turn to Christmas, Page 2