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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Aldermen press mayor for report on savings

Early skirmish in what may be a fight to find money to balance budget

By A.D. Quig
Chicago Tribune

Skeptical aldermen pressed Mayor Brandon Johnson’s administration Tuesday to release a publicly funded outside report on potential government savings heading into 2026, an early skirmish in what could be another tough fight to find money to balance Chicago’s budget.

During a Budget Committee hearing with Johnson finance officials, aldermen reminded administration representatives that they pledged to be transparent heading into this year’s budget cycle, a potential sign of continued mistrust after last year’s oft-tense negotiations.

The full release of a report by accounting firm Ernst & Young — which cost at least \$3 million in taxpayer funds — quickly emerged as a key sticking point.

The Ernst & Young team was hired in late April to dig into the city’s fines and fees, benefits, contracting and opportunities to deliver better service to constituents. E&Y has had broad access to the city’s internal systems and data for the past several months.

Downtown Ald. Brendan Reilly, a frequent Johnson antagonist, was one of a handful of council members who asked Budget Director Annette Guzman whether the council would be given access to the firm’s full conclusions.

Guzman told him that any report would “go through many iterations,” including fact-checking and “filtering.”

The administration will then release “the final options that we believe are — after talking to our own departments who have to do this work — practical for the city of Chicago,” Guzman said.

Reilly, 42nd, said he was concerned the administration would ignore budget proposals that didn’t match Johnson’s preferred path to closing what the

Turn to Report, Page 6



Sohibl Sky, 35, swims in Lake Michigan near Montrose Harbor on Aug. 28 in Chicago. **ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Report: Region not ready for data center demands

If not addressed, Great Lakes area could see water shortages and conflict

By Adriana Pérez
Chicago Tribune

Data centers require massive volumes of water to operate, and the growing use of artificial intelligence means more of these centers are popping up in water-abundant regions such as the Great Lakes. However, despite their access to the vast bodies of water, not all communities in or near the Great Lakes basin have the capacity to sustainably support this industry, experts say.

A recent report warns the region is not prepared for the unprecedented, growing demand from data centers and other

water-heavy users — which, if not addressed, could lead to shortages and conflict. The report also points to agriculture as a growing stressor.

Every Great Lakes state has passed tax incentive legislation to encourage data centers to locate there. But these incentives are not “reflective of where water is available — and where it isn’t,” said Helena Volzer, author of the report and senior source water policy manager at the nonprofit Alliance for the Great Lakes.

In addition, data centers are not required to report their water consumption.

The threat reaches far beyond what the eye can see and deep

under our feet. The volume of fresh groundwater in the basin is equal to that of Lake Huron, earning it a nickname among scientists: the sixth Great Lake. Alongside precipitation and snowmelt, the inflow from this underground water helps replenish the massive bodies of water. But that still happens very slowly — each year, 1% of the Great Lakes is recharged.

“Those of us who work in this space think of the Great Lakes more as a finite resource,” said Melissa Scanlan, director of the Center for Water Policy at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee.

And it’s experiencing strain

like never before. Last year, the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory estimated that in 2023, data centers across the country consumed 17 billion gallons of water for cooling and projected that those figures could double or quadruple by 2028.

Additionally, hotter summers and drought — exacerbated by human-made climate change — are increasing agriculture’s reliance on irrigation.

“There are some gaps that we need to address, to accommodate (the) increase in demand,” Volzer said. State laws and regional planning need to inform economic

Turn to Centers, Page 2



Former state Sen. Darren Bailey speaks at a rally in support of the SAVE Act, a bill that would require states to obtain documentary proof of citizenship in order to register to vote in federal elections on Sept. 2 in Orland Park. The rally was organized by Tea Party Patriots Action. **ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Bailey seeks rematch against Pritzker

Lost governor’s race in 2022, wants GOP nomination next year

By Rick Pearson
Chicago Tribune

Darren Bailey, the downstate Christian conservative farmer and former state lawmaker who was the Republican Party’s unsuccessful 2022 candidate for governor, will seek the nomination next year to once again challenge Democratic Gov. JB Pritzker, Bailey’s planned running mate said.

Aaron Del Mar, the Cook

County Republican chairman who also had been considering a bid for governor, said Tuesday he had agreed to serve as Bailey’s lieutenant governor candidate. Del Mar said the two will be campaigning more as a “regional partnership,” with Bailey focused south of Interstate 80 and Del Mar concentrating on Chicago and the collar counties.

A formal campaign announcement is expected by the end of the month, Del Mar said.

“I think that we can repack-age and rebrand and have a more comprehensive strategy and forecast a better perspective

for Illinois than they’re currently getting with the current governor,” said Del Mar, who was the lieutenant governor candidate of businessman Gary Rabine’s unsuccessful 2022 GOP primary campaign.

A 2026 run for governor would be the third consecutive major race for Bailey, a wealthy farmer from Louisville in tiny Clay County. Last year, he narrowly lost his Republican primary challenge against veteran U.S. Rep. Mike Bost of Murphysboro for the GOP nomination in the 12th Congressional District, which

Turn to Governor, Page 6

Friends lauded Epstein in 2003 ‘birthday book’

Jokes show how lewd, lecherous behavior with girls was known

By Matthew Goldstein,
Jessica Silver-Greenberg
and Steve Eder
The New York Times

One friend compared him to the main character in Ernest Hemingway’s “The Old Man and the Sea,” except instead of fish, Jeffrey Epstein caught women, “blonde, red or brunette.”

Another friend described a demeaning sexual encounter that a woman endured in the back of a car that left Epstein “howling with laughter.”

“So many girls, so little time,” wrote a third associate of Epstein.

Such tributes are part of the “birthday book,” which was dedicated to Epstein on his 50th birthday in 2003.



A sign supports victims of Jeffery Epstein during a news conference Sept. 3 at the U.S. Capitol. **KEVIN WOLF/AP**

The 238-page book, littered with candid photos, drawings and collages, was released Monday by the House Oversight Committee among the documents turned over by Epstein’s estate after being subpoenaed by the committee.

It offers a portrait of how Epstein’s lewd and lecherous behavior with young women was

Turn to Epstein, Page 10

INSIDE

Immigration enforcement subdued

Area politicians and immigrant rights groups say President Donald Trump’s latest immigration crackdown — dubbed “Operation Midway Blitz” — was relatively subdued on the ground Tuesday with minimal arrests. But they’re preparing for more. **Chicagoland, Page 3**

Quarterbacks go in different directions

As the Vikings’ J.J. McCarthy blossoms during his NFL debut, the Bears’ Caleb Williams reverts to 2024 form. **Brad Biggs in Chicago Sports**

