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Filing: Feds violated immigration order

Government accused of defying consent decree, wrongly deporting hundreds of area detainees

By Laura Rodríguez Presa and Gregory Royal Pratt
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

The federal government knew it had wrongfully arrested Henry Cordova Jaya.

He had been detained by immigration agents last year during President Donald Trump's ramped-up immigration enforcement raids in

violation of a court order restricting warrantless arrests.

In January, the government acknowledged that his arrest was a violation of the 2022 Castañon Nava consent decree. In early February, lawyers for the federal government said in a court filing that they were seeking Cordova Jaya's release from custody.

But instead of releasing Cordova

Jaya, the government kept him in detention for 18 more days and then sent him back to Ecuador, according to a new filing in federal court.

At least 70 other immigrants detained last year were also forced to leave the country after signing voluntary departure forms, receiving removal orders — even after, in some cases — the government acknowledged they had been wrongfully detained, according to the National Immigrant Justice Center, which spearheaded the federal case.

"Hundreds, if not thousands," of people arrested in the Chicago area could have ultimately been found eligible for release, based on the total number of arrests, but the U.S. government failed to provide their records in a timely manner to determine whether they were class members, said Allena Martin, senior litigation attorney at the National Immigrant Justice Center.

Only about 100 immigrants have been released in the months since the judge ordered in November that hundreds of cases be reviewed,

forcing the federal government to provide the information.

Last week, the federal government released 14 detainees who were wrongfully detained. But hundreds more immigrants arrested during large-scale enforcement operations in the Chicago area may have been entitled to relief under the federal court order. Yet, many were deported or left the country before their cases could be reviewed.

See **DETAINEES** on Page A5

Lawmakers weighing school board pay

Legislation would pave way for compensation for Chicago members

By Kate Armanini
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Serving as a member of the Chicago Board of Education can mean upward of 25 hours per week attending meetings, reviewing hundreds of documents, visiting schools and hosting office hours. All on a volunteer basis.

Two board members have left full-time jobs. Others say it's difficult to juggle the demands of the role with personal and professional responsibilities.

But a new bill in the Illinois House would pave the way for board members to receive compensation, a change advocates say could broaden representation as it transitions to a fully elected body.

State law currently bars Illinois school boards from paying members. The bill would lift that restriction, allowing a more diverse slate of parents, educators and community members to lead Chicago Public Schools, according to state Rep. Marcus Evans, who is sponsoring the proposal. It also has implications across the state: Suburban school boards have long been elected nonpaying positions.

All 21 seats of Chicago's first elected school board will be on the ballot in November. Eight months before the election, education groups are still debating how to ensure it reflects the city it serves.

"It's a very large, complicated district that requires a lot of time," said Evans, a Chicago Democrat. "For \$0, what type of person are you going to get on the board? Are you going to get working-class people? I think we all know the answer."

The bill is backed by several public education advocacy groups, along with the Chicago Teachers Union. A CPS spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

It's not the first time legislators have floated the idea of paying Illinois school boards. State Sen. Robert Martwick, a Chicago

See **BOARD** on Page A5



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STRENGTH IN UNITY

Felicia Yauch, left, holds hands and shouts with her friend Terrisa Scott, both of Chicago's Andersonville neighborhood, during a women's day march on East Wacker Drive in Chicago's Loop on Sunday. **Chicagoland**, Page A3



Andres Rodriguez walks through a lounge at Verano's headquarters on Feb. 17 in Chicago. Verano is a publicly traded multistate cannabis company. **STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

From a seedling to a cannabis leader, Verano has navigated ups and downs

Restaurateur has led Chicago-based firm through challenges

By Robert Channick
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

When Illinois took the plunge and legalized medical marijuana in 2013, restaurateur George Archos decided he would get in on the ground floor.

Archos, who grew up in the family restaurant business, had already opened several successful Wildberry Pancake and Cafe

locations in Chicago and the suburbs, and was convinced his hospitality experience would serve him well in the nascent cannabis industry.

The budding entrepreneur has since turned Chicago-based Verano from a pipe dream into one of the largest publicly traded cannabis companies in the country. And he still owns seven Chicago-area restaurants.

"I love the restaurant business, and everything that I've learned in the restaurant industry is directly applied to our success in the cannabis indus-

try," Archos, 46, said during a recent interview at Verano's new Chicago headquarters.

One maxim has certainly applied to both businesses: you can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs.

From opening the first cannabis cultivation facility in the state more than a decade ago to building a vertically integrated company that ranks third in retail sales nationally, Archos has surmounted myriad regulatory and operational hurdles.

See **VERANO** on Page A2

Iran picks son of slain leader as successor

Trump had opposed choice; another US service member dies

By Jon Gambrell, Sam Metz, Kareem Chehayeb and Samy Magdy
ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Mojtaba Khamenei, son of Iran's late supreme leader, has been named his successor, Iranian state TV announced early Monday there, as the nine-day war that began with his father's killing took a dramatic turn.

On Sunday, the U.S. military said a service member died of injuries from an Iranian attack on troops in Saudi Arabia on March 1. No further details were given. Seven U.S. soldiers have now been killed in the war.

The younger Khamenei, 56, had long been considered a contender for the post, even before an Israeli strike killed his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and despite never being elected or appointed to a government position.

Iran's powerful paramilitary Revolutionary Guard answers to the supreme leader, and now Mojtaba Khamenei will have the central say in war strategy.

See **IRAN** on Page A10

Economy not quite 'roaring' in 2026

President Donald Trump promised that 2026 would be a bumper year for economic growth, but instead it has kicked off with job losses, rising gasoline prices and more uncertainty about America's future. **Nation & World**

Growth leads Sox's Smith to opener nod

A year after competing for a roster spot as a rookie, White Sox pitcher Shane Smith has been named the 2026 opening day starter. The 2025 All-Star will face his former organization, the Brewers, in Milwaukee on March 26. **Sports**

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WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY H:70 L:50
TUE. H:59 L:39
WED. H:43 L:29
Complete details on Page A12

INDEX

Almanac A10
Arts & Living B5
Comics B8-9
Crossword B9
Editorials A7
Horoscope B8
Nation & World B1
Obituaries A10
Television B7

178th year No. 68
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