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ELECTION 2026
U.S. SENATE

Lessons in finance, Pritzker's power

Issues largely clouded by fighting over how campaigns are funded

By Rick Pearson and Dan Petrella
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

When U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin announced last April he would not seek a sixth term, he created the state's first open U.S. Senate seat in a generation and kicked off a tumultuous campaign that has unfolded amid the turbulence of President Donald Trump's second term.

Since then, Illinois Democrats have battled through a primary shaped by Trump's aggressive and sometimes deadly federal immigration enforcement, threats to strip federal funding from Illinois and other states that have opposed him and, more recently, a war with Iran.

On Tuesday, voters will choose the nominees to succeed Illinois' senior senator — the chamber's No. 2 Democrat — ending a crowded and expensive scramble among 10 Democrats and six Republicans seeking the first open Senate seat in Illinois in 16 years.

On the Democratic side, the contest has narrowed to three leading contenders — U.S. Reps. Raja Krishnamoorthi of Schaumburg and Robin Kelly of Lynwood and Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton — in a race that has become noteworthy for how modern-day federal campaigns are financed by inside and outside influences.

The outcome could also serve as

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MORE ELECTION COVERAGE:

■ An unprecedented \$62 million shapes Chicago-area congressional primaries and some decry 'highest bidder' politics. **Page A2**

■ Races for the Illinois General Assembly feature open seats, big bucks and a reelection bid after corruption mistrial. **Page A8**

■ Illinois Democrats spend \$190,000 to defend state Sen. Sara Feigenholtz from a progressive challenger. **Page A9**

A DELUGE OF DEVELOPMENT

By John Lippert and Alicia Fabbre
FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

As a little girl, Terri Papesh learned to swim, fish and ice-skate on Jackson Creek. She and her husband, Ralph, built their dream home alongside the creek near Elwood, a suburb 40 miles southwest of Chicago. They hammered it together themselves with help from their friends and family.

Today, the bluegills, catfish and Canada geese that once populated the area have mostly abandoned the creek, which has long been polluted by runoff from farms and nearby parking lots. Every couple of years, during a hard rain, the creek floods her driveway.

And new problems are piling up at a dizzying rate. A surge of investments in data centers, warehouses and solar farms threatens to pave over many of the corn and soybean fields that have long provided both a threat and a

Will County faces flood of data centers, warehouses and solar farms and some residents say it's too much too fast

Above: Ralph Papesh, 65, and his wife, Terri Papesh, 63, sit in their living room at their home in Elwood on March 5, 2026. The couple are worried about pollution and the risk to the community water supply if a data center is built near their property. Terri lives with medical issues that already limit her abilities as diesel truck traffic increases in the area. **JOSH BOLAND/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

haven for her Jackson Creek refuge.

Just three-quarters of a mile to the north of Papesh's home, Dallas-based Hillwood Investment Properties wants to build a \$20 billion data center. At the western edge of her property, Kansas City-based NorthPoint Development has purchased land for dozens of warehouses. Meanwhile, solar farms are sprouting up a mile and a half to the east and beyond. These include Arlington, Virginia-based Earthrise Energy's plan for a patchwork of solar fields stretching 45 square miles.

"We're not against people working," Papesh said. "We're against industrializing this entire area and basically obliterating it from the face of the earth."

"It's your basics, you know. It's water, air and land," she said. "And we just keep giving them up to these billionaires."

Disputes over data centers are play-

See **WILL** on Page A4

DACA delays lead to lost jobs, less stability, anxiety

Without renewal, recipients in danger of deportation

By Gregory Royal Pratt and Laura Rodríguez Presa
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Victor Jardon-Reyes worked for companies that provide airplane repair supplies, commuting to O'Hare and Midway airports from his home in Belmont Cragin to put in half-day shifts consulting with mechanics and giving them the needed parts to keep the skies safe.

But on Feb. 18, the 33-year-old lost his job. Through no fault of

his own, he had lost the right to work.

Jardon-Reyes is a recipient of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, a federal program instituted under President Barack Obama that gives some legal protection and a work permit to children who were brought to the U.S. by immigrant parents without legal authorization.

DACA lasts for two years and then must be renewed. Jardon-Reyes applied to renew his in November. The government confirmed receipt later that month. He received an appointment for fingerprinting in January but the expected renewal did

See **DACA** on Page A10



ANTONIO PEREZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Windswept on Wacker

Pedestrians struggle to walk across Wacker Drive at Jackson as high winds batter the Chicago area on Friday. The city and surrounding suburbs faced some wind gusts reaching up to 60 mph, causing power outages, tree limbs and debris to blow across yards and roads and semitrucks to roll over on highways.

INSIDE

2,500 Marines to deploy to Mideast

The USS Tripoli and expeditionary units trained and equipped for amphibious landings and are headed to the Middle East. **Nation & World, Page B5**

'We just lost focus'

Illinois lets a big lead slip away in a 91-88 overtime loss to Wisconsin in the Big Ten Tournament quarterfinal on Friday. **Sports**

Lifetime of curiosity

Musician David Byrne's "Theater of the Mind" is a tour inside the skull of a famously quizzical man. **Arts & Entertainment**

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