

# Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

## Legal video gambling in Chicago?

Johnson ally's proposal might pave way by letting businesses replace untaxed sweepstakes machines

By Dan Petrella  
Chicago Tribune

A Springfield ally of Mayor Brandon Johnson has introduced a measure that could help pave the way for Chicago to legalize the kind of video poker and slot machines that have proliferated

at bars and restaurants across the state over the past decade.

The proposal from Democratic state Rep. Kam Buckner of Chicago comes as City Hall continues to seek new revenue streams to help stabilize its nearly \$17 billion budget and pay for Johnson's progressive policy proposals.

In addition to helping address the city's revenue needs, the Illinois House measure also aims to address racial disparities within the state's video gambling industry by finding a way for Chicago businesses to swap the legally murky sweepstakes machines that can be found at bars, gas stations and even laundromats around Chicago for state-licensed — and taxed — betting devices.

Since legalized video gambling

went live statewide in 2012, Chicago has never lifted its local law banning the devices that have become a fixture at taverns, restaurants and other liquor-serving establishments throughout many suburbs and downstate. That's given rise to the spread of the largely unregulated and untaxed sweepstakes machines, especially in Chicago.

Those machines — which state regulators long have contended

are illegal gambling devices that also have been featured prominently in several recent federal public corruption trials — look like traditional video poker terminals. But they instead allow customers to put in money in exchange for coupons for online merchandise, then play slot-like games and cash out winnings. Sweepstakes machines also offer an option to

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## Vacant lots near transit present challenges

Hopes for development in predominantly Black communities

By Sarah Freishtat  
Chicago Tribune

More than one-third of vacant lots in Chicago are close to "L" stations, a new report shows, creating challenges for neighborhoods and the CTA alike.

And most of those vacant lots are in predominantly Black communities, a glaring symbol of historic disinvestment, according to the report from transit-focused development collaborative Elevated Chicago, the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University and community groups.

The city has long been plagued by vacant lots, often concentrated in Black neighborhoods. But vacant land near the CTA poses additional challenges. Sometimes breeding environmental hazards and safety concerns, unmaintained vacant lots can limit how willing residents are to walk to transportation and other neighborhood amenities, shaping when and how residents take public transit and the ability of transit, often considered a neighborhood asset, to connect communities to the rest of the city.

And vacant lots' proximity to public transportation has taken on increasing importance as the city has tried to spur development near bus and train lines, including recently a direct focus on the South and West sides.

In 2022, aldermen approved the newest version of the city's transit-oriented development ordinance, which officials said at the time was intended to address gentrification and undo inequities that came from earlier versions of the policy, which led to the vast majority of development near transit taking place in areas such as the

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BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## Scrambling for Easter eggs

Anderson Jones, 9, center, and other children race at the start of an Easter egg hunt after Cardinal Blase Cupich celebrated Mass on Sunday at St. Moses the Black Parish in Chicago's Grand Crossing neighborhood. **Chicagoland, Page 3**

## Pope rises above health woes, leads Mass

He celebrates Easter, greets crowd, urges cease-fire for Gaza

By Nicole Winfield  
Associated Press

ROME — Pope Francis rallied from a winterlong bout of respiratory problems to lead some 60,000 people in Easter celebrations Sunday, making a strong appeal for a cease-fire in Gaza and a prisoner swap between

Russia and Ukraine.

Francis presided over Easter Sunday Mass in a flower-decked St. Peter's Square and then delivered a heartfelt prayer for peace in his annual roundup of global crises. Gaza's people, including the small Christian community there, have been a source of constant concern for Francis, and Easter in the Holy Land overall was a somber affair this year given the war.

"Peace is never made with weapons, but with outstretched

hands and open hearts," Francis said from the loggia overlooking the square, to applause from the wind-swept crowd below.

Francis appeared in good form, despite having celebrated the 2½-hour nighttime Easter Vigil just hours before.

The pontiff, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, has been battling respiratory problems all winter and his full participation in Easter services was not entirely guaranteed, especially after he skipped

the traditional Good Friday procession.

But in a sign the 87-year-old pontiff was feeling OK, he made several loops around the piazza in his popemobile after Mass, greeting well-wishers.

The Vatican said about 60,000 people attended the Mass, with more packing the boulevard leading to the piazza.

Easter Mass is one of the most important dates on the liturgical

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## Migrant boy finds refuge on the diamond

16-year-old here from Venezuela says baseball has helped him adjust

By Nell Salzman  
Chicago Tribune

Between batters with no music playing, Yoel Guerra danced, swinging his hips in the infield between the bases. But as his opponent stepped up to bat, he crouched down, ready to field the ball.

The 16-year-old from the northern state of Aragua, Venezuela, has played baseball since he was 4. He's been in Chicago for over a year now, and he said he derives the most joy from the field.

Guerra, who plays second base for the Farragut Career Academy Admirals in Little Village, scored two of the three runs — including one where he stole home — in the

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Farragut Career Academy sophomore Yoel Guerra, 16, from Venezuela, adjusts his glasses after scoring a run against Mather High School in La Villita Park in Chicago on Friday. **ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**



CHRIS SWEDA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## Herbie Hancock captivates crowd

Chicago native, jazz icon made his 14th Symphony Center appearance in 26 years, delivering a smartly paced set with a well-cast group of musicians. **Arts & Living**

## Israelis call for early elections, cease-fire

Tens of thousands gathered outside the parliament building in the largest anti-government demonstration since the country went to war. **Nation & World**

