



FROM LEFT: Crystal Ramirez, Jacey Kessler and Makenzie Thomas Monday night versus Tri-County. Tri-County won the game 53-23. Photos by Nancy Rairden.

UPDATED: State preparing further defense of assault weapons ban

Judge found fault with often-used legislative shortcuts

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SPRINGFIELD - Attorney General Kwame Raoul on Monday filed a petition asking an appellate court to vacate a temporary restraining order that was issued late Friday afternoon blocking enforcement of the state's recently-passed assault weapons ban.

Raoul's office filed the petition in the 5th District Appellate Court in southern Illinois, arguing that Effingham County Judge Josh Morrison had abused his discretion and the plaintiffs are unlikely to succeed in their lawsuit, thus the restraining order was granted incorrectly.

Morrison's late Friday order applies to only the 800-plus plaintiffs in the case filed by Tom DeVore, the unsuccessful 2022 GOP candidate for attorney general.

"Although disappointing, it is the initial result we've seen in many cases brought by plaintiffs whose goal is to advance ideology over public

safety," Gov. JB Pritzker said in a statement shortly after the order was announced.

House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch, D-Hillside, and Senate President Don Harmon, D-Oak Park, issued similar statements within hours of the judge's decision.

"We passed the Protect Illinois Communities Act to get dangerous weapons off the street and create a safer state," Harmon said in a statement. "This ruling will be appealed. We look forward to our day in court to zealously advocate for our neighbors who are weary of the gun violence epidemic."

But the Illinois State Rifle Association, which has filed a separate challenge to the law in federal court, applauded Morrison's ruling, saying the ruling is "a clear indication" that Pritzker and lawmakers "rammed this law through improperly."

In his ruling Friday, Morrison sided with the plaintiffs' argument that there were legitimate issues about

whether the law violates their rights to due process and equal protection because it limits most people's Second Amendment right to keep and bear certain firearms, while at the same time exempting some groups of people from the law but not others.

But Morrison also devoted much of the opinion to the procedural shortcuts lawmakers used to pass the bill - shortcuts routinely used in order to pass legislation quickly, especially when the General Assembly is facing statutory or constitutional deadlines.

In this case, the law's underlying bill, House Bill 5471, passed through both chambers in its final form during the final two days of the legislature's "lame duck" session earlier this month, with Pritzker signing the bill the night of Jan. 10. At noon the next day, Jan. 11, newly-elected lawmakers were sworn in and a new biennial session began, meaning the process would have had to start over after that point.

A House committee held multiple hearings on the bill in December, but at that time the draft language of the bill was contained in HB5855.

The Illinois Constitution requires that bills be read by title into the record on three different days in each chamber, a process that would normally take at least five days to complete. But at the tail end of the lame duck session, lawmakers didn't have that much time, so engaged in a commonly-used maneuver known as "gut and replace."

That means the Senate took a bill that had already passed the House - in this case, one amending a portion of the state's Insurance Code dealing with public adjusters - gutted it of all its content and replaced that content with the language of the assault weapons ban. Then they sent the "amended" bill back to the House for an up-or-down concurrence vote.

"This Court finds that the Defendants unequivocally and egregiously violated the Three

Readings Rule of the Illinois Constitution in order to circumvent the Constitutional requirements and avoid public discourse," Morrison wrote.

Morrison also said he believes the legislation violates the Constitution's requirement that bills be limited to only one subject, unless they deal with appropriations, codification, revision or rearrangement of laws. He said the assault weapon bill violates that provision because it contains provisions that also relate to human trafficking and drug trafficking.

The Illinois Supreme Court, however, has historically declined to strike down legislation based on either of those two arguments, ruling repeatedly that if the speaker of the House and president of the Senate both certify that a bill was properly passed, the court would not second-guess that decision.

Morrison was just elected as a 4th Circuit judge in November. Prior to that, he

had been the state's attorney in Fayette County and was among a group of state's attorneys who sued the state to challenge the constitutionality of the sweeping criminal justice reform law passed in 2021 known as the SAFE-T Act.

In 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Morrison also wrote to Raoul to question the enforceability of Pritzker's emergency orders at the time. DeVore later cited that letter as part of his 2022 campaign for attorney general.

Editor's note: This story has been updated to reflect the attorney general's latest legal filings.

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Try this easy pizza recipe for a quick and fun meal

I crossed off another bucket list item this past weekend. I made homemade pizza for the first time. As you can tell, my bucket list is not very exciting.

I like to cook, but I'm not very patient and I'm not super keen on following all the directions. I like to experiment a little in the kitchen.

Fortunately, the pizza recipe I found is easy and forgiving, so my little tweaks didn't hurt anything. Plus, I think I found an easier way to make dinner rolls.

The crust recipe is essentially a bread recipe, but it was easier than most breads I've made. It only took maybe 20 minutes to make the dough.

The ingredients are simple: 1 cup warm water (110 degrees)

1 (.25 oz.) package of rapid-rise yeast

2.5 cups flour (bread or all-purpose)

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon garlic salt (optional)

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. You want to go ahead and do this first to make sure the oven is good and hot. Residential ovens are not great for baking pizza.

Place the water in a bowl and add the yeast and sugar. Mix and let it stand about 10 minutes.

Add the flour, salt and oil and mix well. Also add the garlic. The recipe didn't call for garlic in the dough, but I saw it in another recipe, so I added it to give the dough a little more flavor.

I also didn't measure the flour, but I've made enough bread that I can tell when it's enough. I did most of the mixing with a wooden spoon but eventually just stuck my hands in and kneaded the dough. If it's sticky, keep

adding flour, about half a cup at a time.

When the dough is the right consistency, you can mold it into a ball. I covered the bowl with plastic wrap and let it sit to rise but only about 10 minutes.

Then I lightly floured the counter and rolled the dough with a rolling pin. The recipe says you can just press the dough onto an oiled pan, but I wanted a consistent thickness.

We have a round pizza pan that's perforated on the bottom, but you could use a regular baking pan/cookie sheet.

I placed the pan upside down over the dough and used a butter knife to cut the dough about an inch bigger than the pan. I set aside the extra dough and rolled it to make bread sticks. You could also use it to make a few cinnamon rolls or soft pretzels.

I placed the round dough on the greased pizza pan and

rolled the excess over to make a thicker crust on the edges. I used a fork to stab holes all over the crust. This keeps the crust from forming bubbles when it bakes.

I did not make my own sauce. I used about half a jar of sauce from the store. I spread the sauce around and then covered it with a package of shredded mozzarella and half a package of shredded cheddar. Then I covered that with pepperoni slices. You can use any toppings you want.

I stuck it in the oven and put

the breadsticks on the upper rack of the oven. The breadsticks were done in 15 minutes. The pizza needs to go 17-20 minutes depending on how crisp you want your pizza.

That's all there was to it. It wasn't the best pizza I've ever had but it was pretty good; better than some I've had in pizza restaurants. It was quick and easy, two things that are important to me.

This would be a fun recipe to make with kids. I had enough sauce and pepperoni left over to make another one,

so we'll have it again this week sometime.

I think I'll use the dough recipe next time I want to make dinner rolls. I'll just add some time to let the rolls rise more.

As soon as the breadsticks came out of the oven, I coated them with butter to keep them soft while the pizza baked a little longer. At the table, I just spread butter on the sticks, but you can dip them in cheese sauce, marinara or heat up some of the leftover pizza sauce.

On a scale of 1-10, I'd rate the recipe a 10 for quick, an 8 for easy (including cleanup) and an 8 for taste. I'm not sure you can do better than that with a residential oven.

© Copyright 2023 by David Porter who can be reached at porter@ramblin-man.us. I'll try this recipe again, but I won't be opening up a pizzeria anytime soon.

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter

