

# Illinois House Speaker Calls Bears Stadium Ask "Insensitive"

Franchise threatened to move to Indiana if Illinois lawmakers don't lend a hand

by Ben Szalinski., Capital News Illinois  
Illinois House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch said he is hopeful about the Chicago Bears' prospects of victory over the Green Bay Packers in their playoff game on Saturday.

But he likely didn't instill any hope in team officials who are seeking state resources to build a new stadium in Arlington Heights.

"When folks say what's your priority going into the legislative session, we're trying to bring down the cost of living," Welch said at a City Club of Chicago event on Tuesday. "Talking about a brand new Bears stadium when this one's not even 25 years old, that's insensitive to what real people are going through right now."

Welch was addressing questions about the Bears' request for property tax breaks and more than \$800 million in state support for infrastructure upgrades.

Bears president Kevin Warren claimed in a letter to fans last month that the team, which Forbes valued at \$8.2 billion, was "told directly by State leadership, our project will not be a priority in 2026." Welch, a Democrat from west suburban Hillside, did not dispute the claim.

The Bears' current home, Chicago Park District-owned Soldier Field, was rebuilt with state money in 2002. Warren and the Bears say their new project should be a priority for state lawmakers seeking to create jobs and build the state's economy.

Gov. JB Pritzker has said he is open to allocating state funds for infrastructure upgrades to accommodate crowds near the former Arlington Park race course, the team-owned potential development site. But he's so far declined to support direct tax breaks or financial aid for team facilities.

After being shafted by the Gen-

eral Assembly for several years, Warren threatened to explore building the stadium in northwest Indiana. That excited Indiana Republican Gov. Mike Braun, who said he will work with the team.

Some suburban Democrats support helping the Bears relocate to Arlington Heights, but the team faces a math problem in the legislature. Twenty-eight of the 78 House Democrats live in Chicago and several of them have expressed opposition to the team moving out of the city. Welch has adopted a rule for the House Democratic caucus that at least 60 Democrats must support a bill to allow it to move forward.

Senate President Don Harmon, D-Oak Park, isn't prioritizing the Bears in the Senate either.

"President Harmon agrees that we need to stay focused on issues like education and health care and everyday affordability - the things people care about - especially given the economic uncertainties being thrown at us by Washington," Harmon spokesperson John Patterson said in an email.

### Budget situation

Another hindrance for the Bears is the state budget. Pritzker told lawmakers last year during his annual budget address there was little room for new spending and any lawmaker that wanted money for a new program would have to come up with a corresponding cut.

The fiscal year 2026 budget ultimately increased spending in most areas by less than 1% from the previous year.

State lawmakers will return to Springfield this week to begin the spring legislative session, and the budget picture remains murky.

The governor's budget office announced in the fall that the state was on track to run a \$2.2 billion in fiscal year 2027, which begins on July 1.

\*\*\*

"Why do they call it rush hour when nothing moves?"

- Robin Williams

# THE CLASSIFIEDS

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### Thank You

Our family would like to express our deepest gratitude to our friends, neighbors, and community for the overwhelming kindness shown to us during Wayne's illness and following his passing. The meals, cards, phone calls, visits, prayers, words of encouragement and hundreds of other acts of kindness meant more to us than we can ever express.

Your compassion, generosity, and support carried us through one of the most difficult times in our lives and reminded us how truly blessed we are to be part of such a caring community. Each gesture, no matter how small it may have seemed, made a lasting difference and will always be remembered.

With heartfelt thanks,  
The Benson Family

1p

### Thank You

The Midland Boys Basketball Team and coaches would like to express our deepest gratitude for everyone's donations to the Midland High School boys basketball team in honor of Wayne Benson. Wayne loved basketball and working with the students throughout the years. Wayne was the Midland boys basketball assistant coach and also officiated for a number of years. He was also a wonderful mentor to the players and many people he was in contact with. Anyone that had any kind of interaction with Wayne Benson was blessed.

With our deepest gratitude,  
Midland High School Boys Basketball Team  
Coach Allan Hattan  
Coach Tim Smith

1p

(ANSWERS ON PAGE 4)

## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Post-WWII alliance
- 5 Life story
- 8 Quick kiss
- 12 Challenger's words
- 14 Oklahoma tribe
- 15 Misses an opportunity
- 16 Without acting
- 17 Prattle
- 18 Contacts, e.g.
- 20 Vowel group
- 23 "Misbehavin' "
- 24 Japanese noodle
- 25 Anthology
- 28 Pvt.'s superior
- 29 To the third power
- 30 Green shade
- 32 Cruised in style
- 34 Furnace fuel
- 35 Region (Abbr.)
- 36 Natural talents
- 37 Nap
- 40 Extinct bird
- 41 "Hulk" star
- 42 Distributes
- 47 "Smallville" girl
- 48 Coffee bar order

### DOWN

- 1 Zilch
- 2 Hubbub
- 3 Prof's aides
- 4 Salem's state
- 5 Invitation initials
- 6 Debtor's letters
- 7 Summarized
- 8 Unspecified travel destination
- 9 LAX postings
- 10 Natalie or Nat
- 11 Piano pieces?
- 13 Isaac's eldest
- 19 Author Bagnold
- 20 Ger. neighbor
- 21 Jittery
- 22 Speck
- 23 Fossil resin
- 25 Incensed
- 26 Atop
- 27 Bicycle part
- 29 Guitarist Atkins
- 31 Gore and Pacino

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