



SOUTHERN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY TODAY

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SERVING ALL OF SOUTHERN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

South County SPOTLIGHT



St. Patrick Catholic Charities - Tolono IL Free Food Pantry Every Monday from 5-6:30 & Friday 9-10:30 Located at the Parish - providing Fresh produce, meat and pantry items. Serving all of Champaign County.

The Giving Place is open every Wednesday from 4pm-6pm in Tolono to help families in need of food items

3rd Thursday of every month Tolono Fun Day Committee Meeting 6:30 @Police Station

1/19 Sidney American Legion Meeting at 6pm

If you have an upcoming event that you would like to see featured in Spotlight email: jamie@thecounty-chronicle.com

Coach Brad Wilson Wins his 100th Game



Coach Brad Wilson won his 100th win on January 3rd and to the Hawks Girls Basketball Team scored another victory.

Upcoming Catholic Schools Week, Pancake & Sausage Breakfast, Daddy Daughter Dance, Bingo & More

By Diane Ducey Staff Writer Sunday, January 18th St. Thomas school in Philo will host their 59th Annual Pancake and Sausage Breakfast from 7am-1pm.

In the past close to 1,100 people were served pancakes and sausage with links and packages sold to people on the way out from Allen Meats from Homer.

Tracy Cain, a secretary at the school, is grateful to all the volunteers and donors who contribute to the successful fundraiser.

Suggested donation: \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors and \$8 for children, plus various classes bring in homemade treats for the bake sale, a quilt is raffled off and other games and contests to raise money.

Next up will be Catholic Schools Week, the last week of January.

Twenty-five dollar raffle tickets (or six for \$100) to win the top prize of \$4,000 as well as the Parent Teacher Organization coordinating a dance, Bible Trivia and a special game of volleyball between the staff and 8th graders are a few highlights the Tigers are looking forward to!

Collecting non-perishable food options for St Patrick's food pantry and writing notes to community members are some of the service being

done by students to help others. More details can be found at school.StThomasPhilo.org

The High School of St. Thomas More is hosting their annual post prom fundraiser on Friday, February 13th from 6:30-8:30pm with their Daddy Daughter Dance. Getting tickets early is recommended for planners to get treats, have their selfie station, door prizes and of course, a variety of music from different genres for the fathers and their girls to have a memorable date night together!

Catholic Charities of Champaign and Piatt counties will be doing a BINGO night on Saturday, February 7th at the Elks Lodge #2497 at 903 N Dunlap Avenue in Savoy (behind Old Orchard Lanes) with doors opening at 5pm, soup supper for a suggested \$10 donation, cash bar and the 10 games start at 6pm. \$30 for the 10 Bingo Cards, bring your own dauber (or buy one for \$5) auction items, games like "heads or tails" will be part of the fun experience as money is raised to help St Patrick's Food Pantry 304 E Vine (in Tolono Mondays 5-6:30pm and Fridays 9-10:30am).

The second Wednesday of the month is the St Patrick's Senior Luncheon for people 55+ (\$3 suggested donation at the door, bring a side to share) plus the Light of Hope pro-



Photo above: Crowds enjoying their all you can eat breakfast at St Thomas Schools Pancake and Sausage Breakfast 2025. Photo to right: Dan Neuhauser and Nick Unser serving whole hog sausage at the St. Thomas Breakfast 2025. Photos by Tracy Cain provided by Diane Ducey.



gram that has helped people in our community get assistance one time (with a bill, rent or other concerns). For more information about these resources, feel free to email: DianeDucey@yahoo.com

Despite Mounting Budget Pressure, Graduated Income Tax Remains Political Longshot

When a progressive Chicago alderperson scolded Gov. JB Pritzker in November over his opposition to Mayor Brandon Johnson's failed proposal to tax large corporations \$21 per employee, Illinois' billionaire chief executive was quick with a retort defending his progressive bona fides.

"What we need is a progressive income tax, a graduated income tax in this state," Pritzker told Chicago Ald. Byron Sigcho-Lopez, a democratic socialist who confronted him following a Veterans Day commemoration in Little Village. "You know that I've worked very hard to get that passed."

Pritzker poured \$58 million into the 2020 campaign advocating for a change in the state constitution to allow for an income tax structure that would charge higher rates for higher levels of income.

For nearly six decades, Illinois' had a flat income tax that charges one rate each

for individuals and corporations regardless of income level. But Illinois voters ultimately rejected the proposal to change it, leaving the tax rate at 4.95% for individuals. It only received 46% support, far below the threshold needed to change the state constitution.

In the years since the flame-out, Pritzker and Democrats who control the state legislature have mostly shied away from the cause — all while managing to balance the books under the existing tax structure, largely thanks to a strong economy and federal aid in the years after the pandemic.

There are signs, however, that the state's chronic fiscal challenges are reemerging and likely to be exacerbated by federal policy changes enacted by the Trump Administration. Despite this, it appears the graduated income tax will also be off the table as a remedy, at least in 2026.

Pritzker, who put the "fair tax" at the center of his 2018 gubernatorial campaign and served as its chief champion during the failed 2020 referendum campaign, told reporters in November that putting the question on the ballot is "not something that's been a priority for me going into the next session."

"I think it's something that is being talked about by members of the General Assembly — we'll have to see if it gets proposed," Pritzker said, reiterating his belief that "a graduated system is better than a flat tax system."

Pritzker is running for reelection in 2026 and is widely viewed as a potential Democratic candidate for president in 2028.

Renewed push While Pritzker isn't putting it at the top of his agenda, some Democrats in the legislature would like to again place a graduated income tax question before the voters.

State Sen. Rob Martwick, D-Chicago, introduced legislation in both 2023 and 2025.

The first was a lone-wolf effort that did not get called before the 2024 election. But Martwick has 17 co-sponsors on his current resolution. And similar legislation in the House, filed by state Rep. Abdelnasser Rashid, D-Bridgeview, has more than two dozen co-sponsors.

Then-state Rep. Rob Martwick, who now serves in the Illinois Senate, speaks in favor of a graduated income tax constitutional amendment on the floor of the Illinois House in May 2019. (Capitol News Illinois file photo by Jerry Nowicki)

The deadline for lawmakers to pass a resolution to place an amendment on the 2026 ballot is May 3.

"I feel like there is this huge appetite for some sort of restructuring of our tax system to make it less regressive (and) to provide relief

to middle and working class people," Martwick told Capitol News Illinois.

Republicans and the state's business community have long opposed the idea. The 2020 initiative was in part torpedoed by a relentless \$60 million ad campaign that was mostly funded by billionaire Ken Griffin, the state's wealthiest resident at the time.

From a policy perspective, a graduated income tax structure is one of the easiest ways to rectify the state's chronic structural budget deficit while simultaneously shifting the tax burden to its wealthiest residents, advocates say.

Those points have been reinforced this year amid fallout from Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which granted significant tax relief to the country's top earners while slashing social spending that states like Illinois have relied

upon to balance their budgets.

According to the governor's budget office, the state is facing a \$2.2 billion budget deficit next fiscal year — a number that could grow to more than \$5 billion by 2031. The numbers are based on current law, meaning they assume no new spending or tax increases.

Changes enacted in Trump's signature law — such as a requirement that states spend more on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and reductions to Medicaid — could exacerbate the state's fiscal issues.

"The party's over" When the graduated tax amendment failed in 2020, Pritzker lashed out at Republicans and the business community, declaring state tax policy "at a crossroads" and warning "there will be cuts, and they will be painful."

But with boosts from federal stimulus funds and increased tax **Cont. pg. 4**