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Will state deliver \$150M for CPS?

Support exists among lawmakers, but path to make it happen steep

By Kate Armanini, A.D. Quig and Olivia Olander
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

When Chicago Public Schools passed its \$9.96 billion budget on Thursday night, several board members made a high-stakes gamble: that state lawmakers will deliver \$150 million in additional funding.

The Chicago Teachers Union and its board allies argued that CPS is chronically underfunded by the state, and that the amended 2026-27 spending plan would restore hundreds of positions lost to layoffs and shield classrooms from cuts.

But CPS leaders, including CEO Macqueline King, issued a sharp warning. Building a budget around uncertain money could deter lenders, officials said, threatening the district's ability to secure short-term borrowing and make payroll. And, if the funding fails to materialize, schools across the district could face even deeper cuts.

"We are still working through what this decision by the board means for CPS, legally and financially," King said in a letter to families Friday. "At this point, we do not know if this will impact the opening of schools on Aug. 24."

The entire Board of Education has expressed support for lobbying for additional state money. CPS is funded at just 73% under the state's own evidence-based funding formula, which aims to steer revenue to the neediest districts in Illinois. But while there's broad agreement that the district needs more funding, there's far less consensus over how to get it.

CTU and allied board members say the amended budget is a pressure tactic designed to force state lawmakers to act. Several legislators, including embattled Illinois House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch, said they'll work to pass a supplemental funding bill — though it remains unclear where that money will come from in the state's budget.

"There's no revenue currently for what they've described," Gov.

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DREAM DEFERRED

By Daniel C. Vock and Gregory Royal Pratt
FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

WASHINGTON — At a tidy Lutheran church near the U.S. Capitol in mid-July, Tereza Lee, a 43-year-old professional musician who has performed at Carnegie Hall and with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, sat at a grand piano near the wooden altar and played a portion of Frédéric Chopin's iconic "Fantaisie-Imromptu."

In the pews, more than a dozen well-dressed young Black, Hispanic and Asian men and women gathered for an unusual ceremony. They wore caps and gowns of various colors — mostly black, but also shades of blue and cardinal red — from colleges across the country. One decorated her green cap with flowers, a butterfly and the message: "Dreams without borders. Gracias mami y papi."

At a place of honor up front sat U.S.

Sen. Durbin's quarter-century fight for the DREAM Act remains illusory, but its effects are real

Above: Sen. Dick Durbin cheers with dreamers on July 22 at the Lutheran Church of the Reformation on Capitol Hill in Washington during a mock graduation event to commemorate Durbin's long advocacy for the DREAM Act, a path to citizenship for undocumented people brought to the U.S. as children. Tereza Lee, right, was his inspiration for the legislation. **BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, an 81-year-old Democratic lawmaker on the verge of retirement, whom many in the room credited for allowing them to attend college, find jobs and start families because of — and this doesn't happen often — a bill he has for decades tried, but failed, to pass.

The mock-graduation ceremony celebrated those achievements and Durbin's advocacy for the DREAM Act, legislation that would allow immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children to become citizens. Inspired by Lee, Durbin first introduced the measure in 2001, before the September terrorist attacks made talk of immigration reform toxic to many Republicans on Capitol Hill.

In the quarter century since, Durbin has repeatedly reintroduced the measure, recruited new GOP co-sponsors and sought novel strategies to get it

See **DREAM** on Page A4

A pastor became an oilman. Spills and pollution followed

At least 11 overflows linked to Indian Liberty's roughly 1,400 wells

By Jonathan Bullington and Adriana Pérez
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

LAWRENCE COUNTY — Tens of thousands of gallons of fluid spilled from the open pit, urged on by heavy spring rains and unencumbered by an emergency pump disabled by a power failure.

The toxic mix of oil and an underground water called brine, several times saltier than the ocean, poured into a ditch along Petrolia Lane and crept toward an unnamed stream.

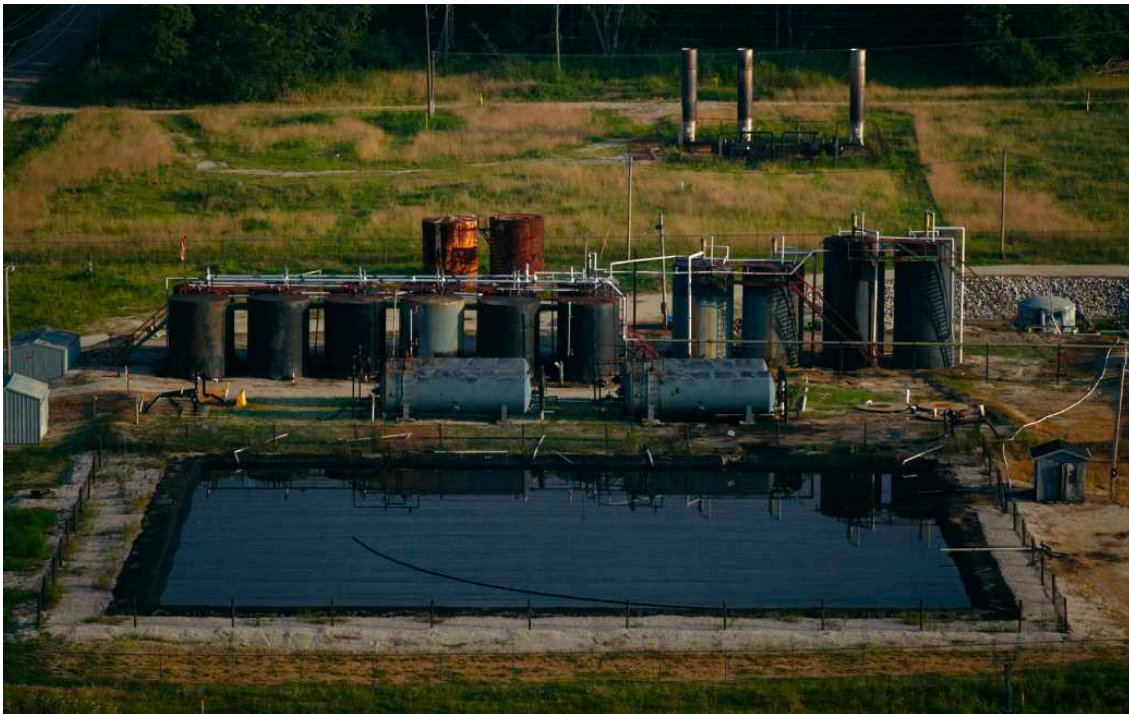
It then flowed for 3 miles along a serpentine creek, heading east and north en route to the Embarras River. From there, the current

of the river known downstate as the "Ambraw" took it toward the Wabash River along the Illinois-Indiana state line.

An Illinois Department of Natural Resources conservation police officer spotted the unmistakable sheen of oil on the Ambraw that morning in March 2024 and alerted local emergency management officials and the state agency.

Some 150 miles southwest at the far southern tip of the state, utility company Illinois American Water was told to be ready to operate an emergency intake on the Ohio River, downstream of the Wabash, as a last resort to prevent the contaminants from polluting the Mississippi River and, ultimately, the Gulf of Mexico.

Over the next few days, a network of at least 30 divisions within local,



Indian Liberty Boyd facility on Petrolia Lane in downstate Bridgeport on July 20. The 140-square-foot open pit is where, according to state records, a spill originated in March 2024. **E. JASON WAMBSGANS/TRIBUNE**

See **WELLS** on Page A6



SPORTS For Cubs, Sox, help wanted

Trade deadlines come and go, but the "savior" narrative never fades, writes columnist Paul Sullivan. This year's big haul? Tigers ace Tarik Skubal, but he's unlikely to land in Chicago.

NATION & WORLD Trump's threat for Iran

President Donald Trump threatened more strikes on Iran on Saturday as the U.S. presses for the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and uncertainty grips the region. **Page B5**

CHICAGOLAND Responses to Benton report

Following the release of the report on disgraced former state Rep. Harry Benton, there were two opposite responses. One from an ex-staffer and one from the Illinois speaker. **Page A3**

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179th year No. 214
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Journaling on trip creates lasting souvenir



Rick Steves

My latest book, “On The Hippie Trail,” is an almost-too-intimate recount of my 1978 overland journey from Istanbul to Kathmandu.

It’s also my oldest book, as it’s essentially my journal from that trip, which was packed away upon returning and ignored for 42 years. Then, stuck at home during COVID-19, I stumbled across it. The entries vividly captured moments, smells and emotions.

Flipping through the pages was like an anthropological dig into a 23-year-old version of myself. “On The Hippie Trail” is both a treasure — a documentation of that coming-of-age trip — and an ode to journaling.

Travel can make you a poet. And travel can make you spiritual. You meet people on the road you’d never meet otherwise. Good travel rearranges your cultural furniture, challenging truths you just assumed were self-evident and God-given. By traveling, you learn not only about the people and places you visit — you learn about yourself.

But without capturing your thoughts on paper, the lessons of travel are like shooting stars you just missed — butterflies you thought you saw. Collecting intimate details on the road — netting them as they flutter by — and then recording them into a journal sharpens your ability to observe and creates a souvenir you’ll always cherish.

Choosing your travel journal is important. I prefer a plain, simple, empty book — hardbound, so it lasts and gives me something solid to write on. Avoid spiral notebooks — they feel unimportant and fall apart. A hardbound book filled with your hand-



Rick Steves’ journal entries from his 1978 journey from Istanbul to Kathmandu became his most recent book, “On the Hippie Trail.” **RICK STEVES’ EUROPE**

written experiences will become a classic on your bookshelf. I like blank pages, not the ones featuring extra literary frills and verbose doodads. It’s my journal, not someone else’s chance to decorate my observations. I use black ink or a mechanical pencil. Nothing should compete with the simple words.

The key to good journaling is being both observant and disciplined — to take the time to notice what you’re noticing and then jot down your thoughts. I use a tiny pocket-size notepad to capture the moment right there. Then, when I have time, I pull out my actual journal and organize those notes into something vivid, fun to read and clearly written in the field, complete with squished bugs forever

ornamenting the margins.

Thinking back, it seems I’ve always wanted to capture my discoveries and eureka’s in a journal. On my first trip (as a 14-year-old), I logged my experiences in a file of about a hundred postcards, each numbered, packed with my notes, stained with gelato drips, mailed home and surviving to this day.

For every trip after — even back when I was simply a footloose, fancy-free vagabond with no intention of being a travel writer — my journal writing was like a ritual: The flight over came with an introspective inventory of where I was at, psychologically and emotionally. And the flight home came with a similar introspective wrap-up. Each night in between, I

wouldn’t go to sleep without writing my day’s experiences, discoveries and thoughts. The book, which started empty, always came home full.

Journaling helped me realize my career. As a teenage traveler, I hiked deep into a misty English moor, dipped my pen into the cry of the birds and wrote: Long-haired goats and sheep seem to gnaw on grass in their sleep. We were lost in a world of green, wind, rocks and birds — singing, but not present. Then we found the stones. Standing in a circle, they’ve waited for forty centuries, as if waiting for us to arrive. And in stillness, they entertained. After being alone with our private stone circle, Stonehenge — with its barbed wire, tour buses

and port-a-loos — won’t quite make it.

On the boat to France the next day, I worked on those rough notes and realized that finding such hidden bits of Europe and bringing them home through my writing was what I wanted to do for a living. I mark that as the day I became a travel writer.

Five decades later, I still snare those magic moments as they flutter by, eager to see what I can build with them. That’s how each of my fifty or so guidebooks has begun. And discovering that 1978 Hippie Trail journal was like stepping back into that long-forgotten trip. Opening a page, I was right back in Kathmandu:

I lost myself in Durbar Square. This was a tangled, medieval-ish world of tall,

terraced temples; fruit and vegetable stands; thin, wild and hungry people praying, begging and living their lives through rituals; giggling children, oblivious to it all, playing tag among the frozen Buddhas; rickshaws; and bread carts ... It was a living museum, a cultural circus, a story that doesn’t need a plot.

For the rest of my days, I can travel back to 1978 — to what, for me, was the end of the Hippie Rainbow — thanks to that great souvenir: my journal.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com, and follow his blog on Facebook.

CELEBRITY TRAVEL

For Dash, Croatia elegant, timeless

By Jae-Ha Kim
TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY

For New York City-based activist and model Ava Dash, traveling is less about an itinerary than it is about embracing the moments she never planned for, like “watching the sun set over the ocean with close friends, discovering a tiny restaurant you found by accident or getting completely lost in a city and ending up somewhere even better than where you intended to go.”

The daughter of music mogul Damon Dash, she co-wrote the novel “96 Words for Love” with her mother, Rachel Roy. Additionally, Dash is one of the stars of the Bravo reality series “Next Gen NYC.”

This interview with Dash has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: What can you share about your role on this season of “Next Gen NYC”?
A: (It feels a lot more personal. People will see me navigating a new chapter of independence, building unexpected friendships and saying yes to opportunities that pushed me outside of my comfort zone. It’s definitely a side of me viewers haven’t seen.

Q: You were born and raised in New York. Have you discovered anything new about the city while working on this show?
A: Growing up in Manhattan, you think you’ve seen everything. But filming reminded me that the city is always evolving. Every block can become the backdrop for a completely different story. It also



Ava Dash, seen May 7, says the best way to experience New York City is by walking. **DIA DIPASUPIL/GETTY**

reminded me how much I love this city. Personally, I realized I’m more adaptable and resilient than I ever gave myself credit for. Reality television is unpredictable. I learned to trust myself instead of trying to control every outcome.

Q: Some things you would recommend in New York?
A: My favorite days in New York don’t usually involve checking landmarks off a list. I’d spend the morning walking through the Tribeca with a matcha, window shop in SoHo, wander through the galleries at the MoMA, stop for a bagel at Apollo Bagels and end the evening with dinner at Sant Ambroeus. The best way to experience New York is simply to walk. You always stumble upon something or someone memorable.

Q: What is your favorite vacation destination?
A: Hvar, Croatia, is somewhere I never get tired of. There’s something so timeless about it. The pace slows down, every meal feels intentional, the cobblestone streets are safe to wander, the sea is calm and refreshing, and even the simplest afternoons somehow become unforgettable. It’s the perfect balance of elegance and ease.

Q: What was a trip you took as a child that stands out?
A: Visiting India will always be one of the most meaningful trips I’ve taken. It

gave me a deeper appreciation for my heritage. I still think about the colors, architecture, markets and incredible food. It’s a place that stays with you long after you leave.

Q: Where are some places modeling took you?
A: Modeling has taken me to places I dreamed about growing up, including Paris, London, Italy, Mexico and throughout the United States. One of my favorite parts of the job is seeing how every city has its own perspective on fashion and creativity.

Q: Where are your favorite weekend getaways?
A: The Hamptons in the summer, my dad’s house in Florida or my mom’s house in Texas. And anywhere on the coast where I can completely unplug for a couple of days.

Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been to before?
A: Ibiza has been at the top of my list for years. I’m hoping to finally make it there this summer. Beyond that, I’d love to explore Korea and Japan.

Q: When you go away, what are some of your must-have items?
A: A great skincare routine, my camera, wired headphones, a speaker, a good book for the flight and a portable charger.

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Passenger unable to stay overnight in airport with baby denied refund

By Christopher Elliott | KING FEATURES SYNDICATE

I booked a round-trip flight with Aeromexico from Washington, D.C., to Oaxaca, Mexico. Recently, the airline informed me that it had changed my connecting flight to the next day. The new itinerary left me with a layover of more than 8 hours in Mexico City. My flight would arrive at 9:30 p.m., but the connecting flight wouldn’t leave until 6:15 a.m. the following morning.

I’ll be traveling with a newborn. This schedule will not work for me because I can’t stay overnight in the airport with a baby. I requested a cancellation and refund for the flight, but the airline is refusing. I’ve called nearly a dozen times to speak to different people.

They finally responded to the case, telling me that because their contract says that flights are subject to change, my request was denied.

Can you help me get my \$1,360 back?
— Allison Turpen, Linden, Virginia

A: Aeromexico should’ve refunded your ticket the moment that you pointed out the schedule change. In fact, it should’ve offered you a full refund automatically when it revised your schedule.

Airlines love to tell passengers that schedules are subject to change. It’s written into their contracts of carriage — the legal agreements between you and the airline — to protect them from liability when weather or mechanical issues cause delays. But they shouldn’t be able to use these clauses to hold your money hostage when they completely rewrite your itinerary.

You were holding a ticket for a flight departing from the United States, which means that you’re protected by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). According to the government, you’re entitled to a refund if the airline makes

a “significant schedule change and/or significantly delays a flight, and the consumer chooses not to travel.” The DOT defines it as 3 hours for domestic itineraries and 6 hours for international itineraries. Aeromexico’s response to you was disappointing. “Our transportation contract stipulates that all our flights are subject to changes or cancellations,” a representative wrote to you. “For this reason, although we would like to help you, the request is denied.”

This is nonsense. The airline’s internal policies don’t supersede federal regulations. When you run into a stone wall like this, you have a few options. You can file a complaint directly with the DOT. This usually gets an airline’s attention because it affects their performance statistics.

You could also appeal to a manager. I publish the names, numbers and email

addresses of the Aeromexico executives on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org.

You decided to ask me for help. My advocacy team contacted the airline on your behalf, pointing out that because your itinerary included a flight from the U.S., DOT regulations require the airline to provide a refund. Aeromexico reviewed your case again and processed a full refund of \$1,360.

“This is a huge relief!” you told me. I’ll bet. If this ever happens to you again, remind the agent of federal regulations. And if they don’t listen, you know where to find me.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.