

Citizen



ILLINOIS BILL TO EXTEND TIME FOR HOMEOWNERS TO PAY DELINQUENT PROPERTY TAXES

According to Cook County Treasurer Maria Pappas, there are more than 58,000 property owners who owe more than \$180 million in delinquent taxes. Those taxes would have been put up for auction on Friday, May 8, but SB3356 was introduced to provide them with some relief.

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Illinois State Representative of the 38th Legislative District, Debbie Meyers-Martin (pictured), co-sponsored SB3356, which would allow an extended deadline for Cook County property owners to pay their delinquent property taxes. Photo courtesy of Debbie Meyers-Martin

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FTC RETURNS MORE THAN \$3.1 MILLION TO VICTIMS OF STUDENT LOAN DEBT RELIEF AND CREDIT REPAIR SCHEME

The Federal Trade Commission is mailing checks totaling more than \$3.1 million to consumers who were victims of a student loan debt relief and credit repair scheme. Strategic Student Solutions (also doing business under other names) and its owner, Dave Green, settled FTC allegations that they charged consumers illegal upfront fees and falsely promised to reduce their student loan debt or monthly payments by enrolling them in student loan forgiveness or other programs. The FTC also alleged that the defendants falsely promised to apply monthly payments to consumers' student loans and to improve their credit scores and histories.

The FTC never requires people to pay money or provide account information to cash a refund check. If recipients have questions about the refunds, they should contact the FTC's refund administrator, JND Legal Administration, at 1-888-304-0184.



HEALTH

BUSINESSES MOVE TO FILL GAPS IN THE MEDICAL SUPPLY CHAIN

HanesBrands has joined a cooperative consortium of other major apparel manufacturers that are dedicating manufacturing capacity to meet the U.S. need for masks during the COVID-19 crisis.

The company is producing cotton masks, approved by the FDA, for use when N-95 masks are not required or available. Matt Hall, chief communications officer at HanesBrands, was featured on NPR to discuss the company's ongoing efforts to combat COVID-19.

Visit hanesforgood.com/inthistogether/ to learn more about the initiative.

LAW & POLITICS

DNC LAUNCHES DIVERSE MEDIA ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

The Democratic National Committee (DNC) recently launched a diverse media advertising campaign in 6 key battlegrounds (AZ, MI, NC, PA, FL, WI), beginning with ads highlighting Republicans' broken promises on the issue of health care to voters of color. The DNC is beginning this campaign with a significant initial buy and will make an overall six-figure investment in minority-focused media outlets.

"Victory in 2020 will be won in Black and Brown communities throughout the country, and we cannot afford to take a single vote for granted," said DNC Chair Tom Perez. "President Obama, Speaker Pelosi, and Democrats in Congress made access to health care a reality for millions of people, especially in communities of color, and Trump's agenda has trampled on that progress. In a time where America is facing a pandemic, it is important for voters to remember who has their back when it comes to protecting and expanding access to health care. These investments in diverse media outlets are happening much earlier in the cycle than ever before and we will continue to engage voters where they are on this critical issue, as often as possible," stated Perez.

Illinois Bill to extend time for homeowners to pay delinquent property taxes

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BY TIA CAROL JONES

According to Cook County Treasurer Maria Pappas, there are more than 58,000 property owners who owe more than \$180 million in delinquent taxes. Those taxes would have been put up for auction on Friday, May 8, but SB3356 was introduced to provide them with some relief.

SB3356 increases the amount of time property owners have to pay before their taxes go to auction from nine to 13 months. Illinois State Representative Debbie Meyers-Martin, who represents most of the Southland, is the sponsor of the bill on the House side. She said the legislature felt, in compliance with the treasurer's thoughts, the time should be extended.

"The General Assembly actually helped reduce the amount of time from 12 months to nine months. This bill would extend it to 13 months," she said. "The feeling being that if property owners had more time, a lot of tax sales wouldn't occur because people would be able to redeem those back taxes."

Meyers-Martin said the decrease in

time happened before she was in office, so she is not really sure why it happened. "It may have been the political climate at the time. I just know that in 2014, it was reduced to nine months, and this would bring it to 13 months," she said.

Meyers-Martin said property taxes are a big issue, especially in the South Suburbs.

"I was looking at some numbers, in my district alone, in Harvey, there were over 5,000 properties that were delinquent in taxes; in Markham, there were over 1,000; in Hazel Crest, there were over 500, in Park Forest, there were 413. And so, there are many elements and steps that we all need to take in order to address some of those issues, and this would be one of them," Meyers-Martin said. Giving homeowners who find themselves in delinquency additional time to come up with the money is not the complete answer, she said, but it is part of the solution.

Meyers-Martin said being a part of the solution is why she decided to sponsor the bill on the House side. And, she said the bill has gone to revenue because there is an indication that a fiscal note may have been filed.

"Right now, because we haven't been in Springfield, the House anyway since the first week of March, everything is sort of at a standstill. But if it were to pass both the Senate and the House, it would be effective immediately," she said.

Meyers-Martin said this bill was introduced before the Coronavirus outbreak and the Cook County Treasurer's Office closing as a safety precaution and tax sales being postponed indefinitely.

"Once the General Assembly gets back in session and can begin to process the bills, this would be additional assistance. Along with the many other programs that are being proposed now, both federally and statewide," she added.

Meyers-Martin said sustaining homeownership in the South Suburbs is a priority for her.

"It is very important to me, as a legislator and a citizen of the South Suburbs that I continue to address the many challenges in the Southland," she said. "Homeownership and the fact that our region never fully recovered from the housing crisis of 2018, it is just a very important priority with me."

Convention Centers Needed To Help Treat COVID-19 Patients

BY WENDELL HUTSON
Contributing Writer

State and federal health officials are seeking to transform convention centers into overflow sites to treat COVID-19 patients and to ease the burden on hospitals running out of beds.

According to the World Health Organization, COVID-19 (coronavirus disease of 2019) is the name of the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus and it originated in Wuhan, China in late 2019, but has since spread worldwide affecting more than 1 million people. Symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. The period within which symptoms would appear is two to 14 days.

The McCormick Place Chicago is already being redeveloped for COVID-19 patients and now the 75,000-square-foot Tinley



The 75,000-square-foot Tinley Park Convention Center is being considered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to house COVID-19 patients as a way to ease the burden on local hospitals. Photo credit: Wendell Hutson

Park Convention Center is the latest site being considered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said Pat Carr, assistant village manager and director of the Emergency Management Center for Tinley Park.

"We had a site survey by the Army Corps of Engineers last week, but have heard nothing else from them," said Carr. "We are in agreement that if the county, state or federal government wants to

use the facility to address the current situation, then we will provide them support if requested."

He added that the Tinley Park Convention Center, 18451 Convention Center Drive, is designated as a shelter facility anyway, so "if they want it, they get it."

And while the center is being considered as an alternate site, David Niemeyer, village manager said, there have been "no proposals or agree-

ments from either the state or federal government related to the convention center."

Patrick Bray, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, did not return calls seeking comment.

Like many local municipalities, Tinley Park public buildings are no longer open to the public, and its April 7 village board meeting was held by phone. Residents submitted questions in advance to have board members address them, according to William Brady, a village board trustee.

"This was the first time we held a board meeting by phone so it's new to all of us, but is necessary during these trying times," he said.

At the McCormick Place, 500 beds are now available for use and eventually three exhibit halls will house 3,000 COVID-19 patients thanks to \$15 million in federal funding.

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