

PM

First Quarter Report 2015

GOVERNMENT

WJBC - AM

GOVERNMENT

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Brady predicts special election for comptroller

Date: 1-2-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

State Sen. Bill Brady, R-Bloomington, said Republicans who oppose a special election in 2016 to replace late comptroller Judy Baar Topinka face an uphill battle.

"Just the raw politics of it, given the fact (Democrats) have a majority and currently the governor, if I had to predict, I'd predict they would pass it," Brady said.

Brady told WJBC's Scott Laughlin, he understands why Democrats wouldn't want governor-elect Bruce Rauner to make a four-year appointment.

"Of course it makes partisan sense for the Democrats would want have another shot at the election since it's not a Republican who is going to be appointed," Brady said.

Quinn appointed his budget director, Jerry Stermer, as interim comptroller after Topinka died last month. But Stermer's term ends when Gov.-elect Rauner takes office Jan. 12. Rauner has said that whoever he appoints should remain in office the next four years. But Quinn hopes in his last full week of office the special session he called for Thursday will result in lawmakers approving the special election.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Barickman says time to consider comptroller-treasurer merger

Date: 1-6-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Illinois lawmakers are expected to consider a special election for the comptroller vacancy this week, but state Sen. Jason Barickman, R-Bloomington, tells WJBC's Scott Laughlin, he would like to see a comptroller vote of a different kind.

"If there's going to be any vote this week on anything relating to the comptrollers office it ought to be that we plan to merge those offices," Barickman said. "That's a Constitutional amendment. We could take it up in the 2016 elections. It seems like the time is now to do that."

A bi-partisan bill to merge the comptroller and treasurer's offices that was introduced in 2013 by publican Senator Matt Murphy and Democratic Senator Kwame Raoul has been stuck in committee. Barickman said the Democratic House Speaker has kept this measure from seeing the light of day.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Local lawmakers say Rauner can't please all

Date: 2-4-2015

Time: 1 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Local lawmakers say Gov. Bruce Rauner's State of the State address Wednesday was bi-partisan and set the tone for his upcoming budget address.

State Rep. Dan Brady (R-Bloomington) says there's no way for Rauner to please everybody.

"No matter what this governor does, he is going to make a group, associations, whatever, upset, because there aren't good answers to these problems, and there are painful solutions that he is going to have to try and implement," Brady said.

One such proposal in Rauner's State of the State speech Wednesday was consolidating local governments. Brady said he's in favor of that idea, all the way up to consolidating the comptroller and treasurer's offices.

Another proposal that Rauner offered Wednesday involves raising the state's minimum wage to \$10 per hour in seven years. State Sen. Jason Barickman (R-Bloomington) said the economy needs to improve before the legislature raises the minimum wage, so seven years isn't too long to wait.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Normal Council approves electronics recycling

Date: 2-6-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

The intergovernmental agreement for splitting the cost of electronics recycling in the area is now in the hands of the City of Bloomington and McLean County.

The Normal Town Council approved the deal Monday night. City Manager Mark Peterson said the agreement is retroactive to Jan. 1.

"We actually entered into the contract in, I believe, September. So we're taking care of all the cost from that point to the end of the year," he said.

Peterson explained recycling the electronics costs between \$8,000 and \$9,000 a month. Under the agreement, Bloomington will pick up 45 percent of the cost, Normal will cover 31 percent and the county will take on the remaining 24 percent.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Four candidates vying for Normal Council

Date: 3-5-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Four candidates are fighting for three seats on the Normal Town Council in the April election.

Two are incumbents, two are challengers, and all agree right to work zones are a bad idea.

Incumbent Jeff Fritzen said the local community is "blessed" not to have a lot of "strife" between labor and management.

"My preference would be that our community could be a model for the rest of the state," said Fritzen.

"The cooperative relationship that exists locally comes through communication."

Fritzen's fellow incumbent, Chuck Scott, said he constantly experiences the high quality of work from laborers.

"Within the eight unions in my department alone management and labor often do agree," Scott said.

Challenger R.C. McBride does not believe right to work zones provide any benefit for either side.

"Personally, I am hopeful that Governor Rauner will turn his attention to more constructive conversations," McBride said.

Another newcomer, Kathleen Lorenz, had similar thoughts.

"(I've) read up on a lot of publications, both for and against," said Lorenz. "Coming away from that research, I am not convinced that it is an effective means towards competitiveness."

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: County officials hoping for relief

Date: 3-25-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

County election officials are hoping for some financial relief as they prepare for two special elections to replace outgoing U.S. Rep. Aaron Schock this summer, but state elections officials aren't sure it's possible.

State Rep. Dan Brady said the Rauner administration is working on a solution.

"It's incumbent upon us (lawmakers) and the administration is looking - is there another way to do something?," Brady asked.

That might include a way to bypass a primary - and have the party chairmen in the district's 19 counties select a candidate.

"I suppose the only way something like that could be done would be some sort of legislation," Jim Tenuto, assistant director with the State Board of Elections said, adding that such a law would likely be challenged in court.

One option to avoid a primary is one runoff with all of the candidates. Tenuto said the law is intended to require the winner to get more than 50 percent of the vote.

BUSINESS

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Mitsubishi reports great sales year

Date: 1-5-2015

Time: 2 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Mitsubishi North America is reporting a great sales year for 2014. Alex Fedorak is a spokesman for Mitsubishi and says the Outlander Sport helped the company realize a 25 percent increase in sales last year over 2103. He says the Normal, Illinois produced Outlander Sport is one of the top sellers. Fedorak says 2015 looks to be a great year as well with a new version of the Outlander being released. Mitsubishi sold nearly 78-thousand vehicles in North America in 2014.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Country recognized for customer service

Date: 1-26-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

County Financial has been recognized by J-D Power for its commitment to customer service. J.D. Power's Certified Contact Center Program has awarded certification to COUNTRY's auto and home contact centers for providing "excellent customer service experience." Country's vice president of customer service McDade said Country is proud of this recognition. "J.D. Power Certification Program surveys our customers and J.D. Power audits our practices," said McDade. "Based upon that they award certifications to the top 20 percent of all contact centers." McDade explained the customer contact centers are there to help when a customer's financial representative is not available. "We've made investments in technology, and staffing, and training to make sure that we're there when our customers need us," McDade said. McDade added Country is always looking for ways to improve customer service.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: O'Brien Mitsubishi top dealer

Date: 2-4-2015

Time: 3 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

It's a different year, but the beat continues for Mitsubishi Motors.

After seeing record numbers in 2014, the company reported 2015 has started just as strong with total sales jumping 33.4 percent in January compared to January 2014. That didn't surprise spokesman Dan Irvin. He said the auto market as a whole is "really strong" right now.

"Really, everybody is seeing increases," said Irvin. "I heard somebody say 'a rising tide raises all ships.'

Thankfully, Mitsubishi is included in that."

The Twin Cities built Outlander Sport had its best January sales month ever, with a jump of 23.3 percent compared to a year ago.

"O'Brien Mitsubishi here in Normal was the number five Mitsubishi dealer in the country and number two in Outlander Sport sales," said Irvin. "We really appreciate the local community supporting us by buying our vehicles."

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Veterans Bridge project starts

Date: 2-23-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

If you travel on Interstate 74 by the Veterans Parkway bridge regularly, you may have to alter your commute starting next week.

That's the tentative start time for phase two of the Veterans Parkway bridge reconstruction project, weather permitting. Marked detours will be in place at that point, directing drivers away from some ramps connecting I-74 and Veterans Parkway that will be closed. The ramps that will be impacted are the following:

Southbound Veterans to eastbound I-74

Westbound I-74 to northbound Veterans

Westbound I-74 to southbound I-55

Eastbound I-74 to northbound Veterans

Drivers heading west on I-74 to southbound Veterans will be detoured to Market Street. Those heading south on Veterans wishing to enter eastbound I-74 will be detoured to the Shirley Road exit. East- and westbound traffic on I-74 wishing to go northbound on Veterans will be detoured to Main Street.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Sales numbers climb at Mitsubishi

Date: 3-3-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Sales numbers continue to rise for Mitsubishi Motors. Spokesman Dan Irvin says sales rose 26 percent in Feb. 2015 from the same time last year.

"February was a big month," Irvin said. "It continues this very positive momentum that Mitsubishi has had, really, for the last 18 months."

February was the 12th-straight month of year-over-year sales increases at Mitsubishi. The Outlander Sport, which is produced in Normal, sold about two percent better in Feb. 2015 compared to Feb. 2014. Irvin said O'Brien Mitsubishi of Normal cracked the top 10 in vehicle sales nationwide last month.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Direct Travel buys Suzi Davis

Date: 3-13-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Direct Travel Inc. has acquired Bloomington-based Suzi Davis Travel. Owner Tim Davis said the merger won't negatively impact any of their local operations.

"At this point, we certainly have no plans or desire to close any of our offices," Davis said. "Not the big ones, not the small ones."

Davis says no employees will be let go, and current employees will have access to better benefits now.

"The one good thing that being part of a larger enterprise will do for our folks is that they will now have a corporate insurance program that they'll be able to sign onto that we were not able to provide as a smaller company," Davis said.

Davis said they're in a "continuous recruiting phase" when it comes to hiring new employees. The merger will also have a positive impact on customers, too, Davis said.

"In the Direct Travel family, we now have the top-shelf perks and relationships with the Deltas, the Uniteds, and all the airlines that are out there," Davis said.

Suzi Davis Travel will also be rebranded as part of the merger, but Davis said he's not sure when that will occur.

CRIME

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Murder trial continues

Date: 1-7-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Former neighbors testified this morning in the murder trial of Nicholas Compton.

Kristen Vannon and April Johnson both lived in the same apartment building as the victim's mother, Danielle Fischer, until a few months before three-year-old Robbie Cramer died in March 2013.

Vannon and Johnson ran into Fischer, Cramer and Compton at Eastland Mall a few days before the child's death, and Vannon said she noticed Cramer was bruised, had an abrasion on his face and also lost his hair.

"It looked like there had been patches of hair missing, and then they continued to shave the rest of it off," Vannon said.

Assistant State's Attorney Adam Ghrist argues Compton abused Cramer, causing injuries that eventually led to a fatal seizure.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Murder victim testifies

Date: 1-8-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

The mother of a murder victim testified in court Thursday.

24-year-old Danielle Fischer was called to the stand regarding the death of three-year-old Robbie Cramer in March 2013. 25-year-old Nicholas Compton is accused of causing injuries that eventually led to Cramer's death.

Fischer said she confronted Compton about injuries Cramer sustained in late Feb. 2013, but Compton responded harshly.

"Are you kidding me? I've never hurt that boy. Don't ever text or call me again," Fischer said while reading a text message Compton sent her Feb. 28.

Fischer said Compton apologized, but the injuries didn't stop appearing.

"Well, you never have a <expletive> explanation as to why he has bruises all over," Fischer said in court Thursday, reading another text message she had sent Compton in March. "(Cramer) never had a problem before."

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Mays gets 55-year prison term

Date: 2-6-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

A Bloomington man will see 55 years in prison for shooting another man to death in May 2013. 29-year-old Michael Mays was sentenced Friday on charges of first-degree murder in the death of Aaron Robinson. Karen Robinson, Aaron's mother, says Mays should see more time in prison.

"He took my son's life, I think he should get life, which, by the time he gets out, it'll be most of his life anyways," Robinson said. "But he had no remorse from the time of the trial to now. He had no remorse whatsoever."

Mays shot Robinson after a series of altercations on May 13, 2013, and Mays contends Robinson was the aggressor in the situation. The defense filed a motion for a new trial because they say Mays' criminal record had been entered into evidence in error, but judge William Freitag denied the motion.

Both Mays and Robinson were accused of participating in gangs, but the murder was not considered gang-related. In asking for a harsher sentence, Assistant State's Attorney Jacob Harlow said Mays violated prison rules 13 times while in custody, including two fights. The defense argued those altercations were caused by friends of Robinson seeking revenge.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Victim's families want charges filed

Date: 2-9-2015

Time: 10 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

The family of two pedestrians killed say they want charges filed against the driver who hit them. Relatives of Pedro and Alejandro Guerrero rallied Sunday at the McLean County Law and Justice Center over the decision not to prosecute a driver who struck and killed the two in October 2013. State's Attorney Jason Chambers said there wasn't anything they could charge the driver with.

"Is there excessive speed involved? Is there alcohol involved? Is there drugs involved? Is there a cell phone or texting involved? Or did they try to conceal the identity of the driver? All of those were absent in this situation," Chambers said.

Chambers said the driver, whose name has not been released, did leave the scene after initially stopping, but he returned less than 10 minutes later and cooperated with authorities.

Protest organizer Sonny Garcia said some community members believe the driver wasn't charged because both victims were Latino. Chambers said the decision not to file charges was not based on race.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Vandels paint historic tank

Date: 3-20-2015

Time: 10 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Vandals spray painted a rare World War One tank at Miller Park in Bloomington this week. Bob Mays with Bloomington Parks and Recreation tells WJBC's Dan Swaney the memorial to our soldiers will be cleaned up Saturday.

More work is needed to restore the tank. Only a handful of the tanks are on display around the country.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Bomb threat a hoax

Date: 3-26-2015

Time: 11 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Bloomington police say a bomb threat called into to the Walmart on West Market Street in Bloomington late this afternoon (Thursday) was a hoax.

Police say the threat was phoned in by a male caller from a blocked number at about 5:20pm. The building was emptied and searched, but no threat was found.

Police say the investigation into the matter is over.

SCHOOL

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: District 87 head talks about geography

Date: 1-8-2015

Time: 3 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

As cold as it was this morning, it wasn't cold enough for District 87 to close school.

District 87 Superintendent Barry Reilly told WJBC wind chills in the area of 25 below zero were close to the breaking point.

"It's a tough call to make, because if I see sustained wind chills over the course of the day that are going to remain in that 30 below mark with gusts even stronger than that, we are likely not to be in session," Reilly said.

Wind chills were reported as low as 23 below early Thursday.

Reilly said the district is unique in that its busses don't have long distances to travel if they break down.

"Given the close proximity we have to our schools and our neighborhoods we are in a better position to have school than most districts are," Reilly said.

He said the district has school resource officers who were out this morning to help any students outside walking to school or were underdressed.

Reilly said the Bloomington-based school system only spans 10.5 miles a small fraction of the miles school districts such as Unit 5 and Olympia cover.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Sex assault programs

Date: 1-8-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Representatives from local hospitals, advocacy groups, law enforcement and universities joined for a sexual assault prevention conference on Illinois Wesleyan's campus Thursday morning.

The goal was to strengthen collaborations among community partners. IWU Vice president of student affairs Karla Carney-Hall said there are a lot of people in the community who care about "eradicating sexual assault."

"It's been wonderful to work with people who really want to make a difference in addressing sexual violence in our community both on college campuses and in the greater Bloomington-Normal area," Carney-Hall said.

Illinois State University assistant director for women's and gender studies Stacia Kock explained many who attended were pleasantly surprised at the prevention programs already in the area.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Heartland to see tuition hike

Date: 2-17-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Schools

Students at Heartland Community College will see an increase in tuition and fees beginning in the fiscal year which starts this summer.

The school's Board of Trustees on Tuesday approved a 2 percent tuition and fees increase. That equates to \$3 more per credit hour.

President Rob Widmer said Heartland looks at a number of factors when considering this type of increase.

"Trying to analyze what is the most logical picture of projection of revenues that we would have available and managing our expenses and looking at expenses where we feel confident we know where those expenses are going to fall," Widmer said.

Widmer explained the school tried to make sure the increase would have the least amount of impact as possible on students.

"The tuition increase was what we felt was the amount that we really needed to have to proceed budgetary this year," he said.

Widmer said Heartland does have about \$300,000 in scholarship money available which could help lower the financial impact to any current or prospective students.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Unit 5 parents discuss principal merger

Date: 2-25-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - A plan for Towanda and Carlock elementary schools to share a principal next school year is drawing concern from parents.

Several parents expressed their distaste for the idea Wednesday night while addressing the Unit 5 school board. Kelly Dunn has two children at Towanda and said the principal currently at the school is a "huge part" the student's days.

"From greeting kids getting off the bus, to throughout the day, to setting the tone of how the day is going to go," Dunn said.

Brett Lueschen is another Towanda parent who also happens to be the chief of the Towanda Fire Department. He said it's important to have a principal in the building at all times.

"We've had not major emergencies, but we've had some medical emergencies in the past," said Lueschen. "The principal, Mr. Vogel, has been very good. He's actually provided us with the information that they have on the child."

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Unit 5 parents upset with decision

Date: 3-11-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

A decision by the Unit 5 Board of Education to not bring back assistant band directors at the district's two high schools is drawing a lot of concern from the public.

More than 150 people packed the board's meeting Wednesday to express their displeasure. President of the Parent Band Board Joe Peebles said this decision is not what's best for the students.

"We recognize this current decision does not directly eliminate any band programs, but there will be negative impacts," said Peebles. "For our directors teaching high school band, it's more than teaching four concert bands they oversee all of our extracurricular programs as well."

Superintendent Mark Daniel said Unit 5 has to find ways to reduce its costs.

"We're looking across the entire district trying to find positions we believe will not eliminate programs," Daniel said.

Over 20 teachers are not being brought back for the 2015-2015 school year.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: District 8 t o reduce staff

Date: 3-11-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

The District 8 school board approved a reduction in force during Wednesday night's meeting. District 8 Superintendent Dr. Barry Reilly said around 15 staff members will be let go.

"But overall, it's a typical number that you'd see on a reduction-in-force list," Reilly said.

Reilly said many of the positions are part-time positions and they aren't all teachers, either. But just because they're on the reduction in force list, doesn't mean they're definitely going to be let go.

"If you don't reduce them on the list, you're locked in to bringing them back," Reilly said.

The District 8 board also approved the 2015 summer school program, a map of serious safety hazard locations and the district's IHSA membership renewal.