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Immigration arrests at courts persist

Despite state law, federal agents are in or around county courthouses about twice a week

By Madeline Buckley and Allison Kiehl
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Lucia Vasquez-Gonzalez thought she was doing the right thing when she went to court in March.

Vasquez-Gonzalez migrated to the U.S. in search of a better life but did not have legal permission to live here. In January, she was charged with one count of misdemeanor domestic battery in a confrontation with her roommate, according to court records, but she appeared before a judge hoping to take care of

the matter responsibly — despite the risk posed by continuing immigration activity around Cook County courthouses.

After leaving court, though, Vasquez-Gonzalez said she was stopped by immigration agents a couple of blocks from the building and pulled out of her car.

“I was in complete shock because I didn’t know what was happening,” Vasquez-Gonzalez told the Tribune in Spanish. “I was like, ‘Why are they arresting me if I didn’t do anything bad?’ ... And then they said, ‘No, it is because you missed

the first rule of immigration, which was don’t get into any problems.’

“I said: ‘But this is the problem that I am fixing.’”

In December, Gov. JB Pritzker signed into law a ban on federal agents making certain arrests near courthouses and easing a path for individuals to sue if they think their rights were violated during civil immigration arrests.

The Court Access, Safety and Participation Act, which is being challenged by the Trump administration, followed an order issued by Cook County’s chief judge at the

time, Tim Evans, similarly barring civil immigration enforcement around county courthouses.

Despite the measures, though, the presence of immigration agents around Cook County courthouses is stubbornly persistent, according to a Tribune review of a tracker maintained by the Cook County public defender’s office.

Since the beginning of the year, immigration agents have been in or around county courthouses at least 50 times through June 9 — a rate of

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Lucia Vasquez-Gonzalez poses with her daughter, Luciana. Vasquez-Gonzalez was detained by immigration agents after appearing for a hearing at the domestic violence courthouse at 555. W. Harrison St. on March 10. She has since been deported to Venezuela. **LUCIA VASQUEZ-GONZALEZ**



SNAPPING INTO ACTION

Scientists team up in ‘unparalleled’ effort to protect Illinois’ endangered turtles from increasing threats



Top: Wildlife tech Caitlin Mrowiec uses calipers to measure a Blanding’s turtle as she and others document and collect samples from turtles trapped in nearby wetlands during “Blanding’s Bowl” week on June 22 in Lake County.

Above: Veterinarian Laura Adamovicz swabs the mouth of a Blanding’s turtle during Blanding’s Bowl week on June 22. **STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTOS**

By Adriana Pérez | CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Over the squelching and sloshing of waders and the eggy smell of shallow wetland waters, Matt Allender bent down and caught something in his hand. He raised it triumphantly. “Found a turtle!”

It’s a snapping one, and it does just that; it snaps at him, unhappy about being grabbed.

It was in 2015 — when all the equipment he had fit in a tackle box and the only help he had was a part-time vet student — that Allender, now the director of conservation biology at Brookfield Zoo, began heading out to Lake County every year to tend to turtles in the wild. They would do some blood work and test for a few diseases.

In the years since, as science has uncovered more threats, viruses and bacteria affecting turtles, these field visits have become longer and more complex.

This June, Allender was joined by more than 20 people, mostly veterinarians, in a yearly “Blanding’s Bowl” — a friendly competition that splits scientists from multiple institutions, including the Cook and Lake County forest preserves, into several teams to tend to native species such as the painted turtle, the common snapping turtle and the event namesake, the state-endangered Blanding’s turtle, of which fewer than 500 are left in Illinois.

“So now it’s quite the operation,” Allender said. “We’re doing something special, and people want to be a part of that.”

The groups found a total of 50 different Blanding’s turtles over four days.

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4TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Strong-arm election tactics raise criticisms

Opponents of García’s chosen successor face ballot challenges

By Jake Sheridan
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

As Manny Diaz testified in a fluorescent-lit basement hearing room, he returned time and again to a single response: “I do not recall.”

Pushing to kick a progressive independent Latina off this autumn’s 4th Congressional District election ballot late last month, he said he couldn’t recall if he had ever before challenged a candidate’s signatures. He said he didn’t know if he had ever worked outside regular business hours in his busy job as a political staffer.

Most strikingly, Diaz paused when asked whom he worked for, responding only when the attorney representing him in the hearing gave him the go-ahead.

The answer — and the man now intimately tied to the strong-arm effort to clear the opposition to his preferred candidate off the ballot — was U.S. Rep. Jesús “Chuy” García.



García

The exchange highlighted the charge by García opponents that the outgoing congressman from the Southwest Side is incinerating his long progressive track record by resorting to the kinds of obstructionist Chicago Democratic machine election tactics his outsider movement has railed against for decades.

In his relentless attempts to clear the way for his chosen successor — his former chief of staff, Patty García — to coast to an easy win this November, García is no better, they say, than the political insiders who have long leveraged their deep pockets and control of the election rules to keep themselves in power in the face of challenges from grass-roots political organizations in and around Chicago.

“This will certainly taint his legacy as someone who leaves out the back door, suppressing the voice of the people, anointing a successor,” said one of the two progressive Latino independent candidates García’s organization is trying to boot from the ballot, fire-brand Southwest Side Ald. Byron

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NATION & WORLD

US says it is striking Iran

Iran said it considers the Strait of Hormuz closed after a vessel was struck by a warning shot. U.S. Central Command said its forces began a third round of strikes against Iran. **Page B5**

SPORTS

Sox pick Cholowsky

There was plenty of debate over which direction the White Sox would go with the No. 1 pick of the MLB draft. In the end, they looked west and selected UCLA shortstop Roch Cholowsky.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

50 years of Rush in Chicago

Rush will play a sold-out four-night stand at United Center beginning July 16, building on a local legacy equaled by few artists. The band has logged upward of four dozen concerts in the area.

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