

Voice of the people



Amid the pandemic, tables and chairs at Manny's Deli are pushed into a corner while it sells food through carryout and delivery. (Chris Sweda/Chicago Tribune)

Go to court over dine-in ban

Thousands of independent Illinois restaurants will not survive much longer unless Gov. J.B. Pritzker's ban against dine-in service ends soon.

Outside of Illinois, at least 34 states have allowed restaurants to reopen for dine-in service of some kind. But here in Illinois, dine-in service remains off the table, and thousands of owners and their employees face financial ruin.

Many owners can't pay their rent and overhead. And these owners say the governor's five-phase plan to "restore" the state will wipe them out.

That's because the governor's plan won't allow dine-in service until Phase 4. This may not happen until the end of June. And some say it won't happen until July or August. This, coupled with the expected drastic reduction in capacity, will be too late for many small restaurants.

Recently, the governor has eased restrictions against outside dining. But it won't help restaurants without a patio or access to a street. And remember, cold weather and rain limit business and profits.

Of course, most restaurants' core business model is inside dining.

Can Pritzker allow dine-in service with reasonable precautions? Yes. After all, at least 34 governors across America have allowed restaurants to resume dine-in service typically with reduced capacity, and with staff wearing masks and getting health-screened.

So what can an owner do now? He or she can resume reasonable dine-in service by successfully challenging the governor's shutdown order in court. In fact, Wisconsin is a great example. There, the state Supreme Court struck down Wisconsin's unlawful stay-at-home order.

Let's face it; no one typically wants to go to court. And there are no guarantees. But the price of doing nothing, for many, will cost them their restaurant. In other words, going to court is the best option for those about to go under.

— Francis Ostian, attorney, Chicago

Peaceful assembly over death

God bless the good people of the Englewood neighborhood who peacefully organized to express their outrage at the killing of George Floyd. And God bless every Chicago police officer who exercised enough decency and restraint to maintain the peace. These souls are Chicago's hope.

— Barbara Whitney, Glenview

A list in honor of columnist

Columnist Mary Schmich occasionally writes lists about people, places and things that she wants to share with her readers. I compiled a list of things I miss about her writing when her column doesn't appear in the paper:

1. Finding her column in the main section. It's like waking up to see a good friend.
2. Her use of President Donald Trump's own words to create one-of-a-kind rhymes to laugh at the absurdity of it all.
3. Her recommendations from flowers to wine to socks.
4. Her ability to expound on new vocabulary as it is developed from current events ("coronaclock").