



Herald & Review

Mt. Zion native's son a pole vault world record holder

PAGE B1



SEC proposes allowing fewer quarterly earnings reports

PAGE A6

Thursday, May 7, 2026

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DECATUR PUBLIC SCHOOL

PREP STUDENTS STRIVE TO EXCEL



VALERIE WELLS, HERALD & REVIEW

Alivia Bray laughs as Richland Community College President Cris Valez shakes her hand during rehearsal for the Prep Academy banquet celebrating Cohort 2's successful completion of both high school and associate's degree requirements.

Academy's second cohort hits finish line in dual degree program

VALERIE WELLS
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DECATUR — Kamryn Johnson is tired. At the end of four years of Prep Academy, the MacArthur High School senior is still facing a couple of final exams.

"I'm excited, but my tiredness is kind of winning out right now," she said, chuckling. "I'm kind of worn out right now, but I think tomorrow will make it real. I have a final due tonight, and Thursday is my last final, and when it's over, I can finally go home."

Prep Academy is Decatur Public Schools' dual credit program, where high school students earn both a high school diploma and an associate's degree from Richland Community College.

The workload is heavy and the pressure is on, but 34 students — 17 from each high school — made it through and will walk in graduation ceremonies at both their own high school and at Richland, proudly wearing their Prep Academy stoles.

"I still remember when the professors came to talk to us freshman year," Kamryn said. "And then in junior year, we started commuting out to the college. The time has really gone quickly. I knew it was going to be hard. A lot of people came in thinking, oh, this is going to be the same as high school,

and it wasn't. It was a lot harder."

Kamryn is part of Cohort 2, the second group to finish the program successfully. Cohort 6, this year's eighth graders who will begin Prep Academy in the fall, were welcomed to the program at an event on Monday. All of the students who embark on the Prep Academy don't make it to the end, but last year's finish rate of 58% was surpassed by this year's rate of 62%, said Ashley Grayned, executive director of strategic planning and innovative programs, who initiated the program six years ago.

"You have worked so hard to be here," Grayned said to the students as they rehearsed on Tuesday for the ceremony at the banquet. "It is my honor to celebrate with you."

Students who successfully complete the program not only have a leg up on college credits and save tuition they'd have to spend for those two years of college, but they learn to manage their time, tackle a tough academic program, and find out they are capable of more than they realized, said Isaac Zuniga, executive vice president of academic and student success at Richland.

The skills they acquire during their four

Please see **COHORT**, Page A3

ELECTIONS

How remap fight cut voters from tight races

Competitive House districts were already at historic lows before Supreme Court ruling

JOSEPH AX
Reuters

The number of competitive U.S. House of Representatives districts in this fall's midterm elections was already near historic lows before the U.S. Supreme Court's decision last week opened the door to even more aggressive efforts to draw district lines for political gain.

The court's ruling, which arrived amid what was already an unprecedented national fight over congressional redistricting, may usher in a new era of nakedly partisan gerrymandering that results in still fewer competitive elections, leaving voters with less power than ever, experts said.

The lack of competitive races means that control of the U.S. House of Representatives will likely be determined in November's midterm election by fewer than 10% of Americans, with the winners in the vast majority of districts all but assured before a single ballot is cast, a Reuters analysis found.

Only 32 of the House's 435 seats are currently considered competitive, according to the analysis. Those districts were rated either toss-ups or leaning toward Democrats or Republicans by three leading independent forecasters: Cook Political Report, the University of Virginia's Crystal Ball and

Please see **RACES**, Page A3

CONGRESS

Online betting scandals are getting worse

ZACHARY SCHERMELE
USA Today

WASHINGTON — As scandals continue to plague popular online betting platforms, calls to intervene grow louder within Congress.

Controversies last month — from political candidates profiting from their own campaigns to a soldier's alleged bet on a major military operation — prompted a unanimous April 30 decision to change the Senate's rules. Senators and their staff members were banned from trading on prediction markets, where people can buy and sell bets online on future events.

Sen. John Curtis, R-Utah, vowed that it was just the beginning of a new wave of federal scrutiny. Next on the legislative agenda, he said, would be prohibiting all government officials from using insider information to bet on prediction market contracts.

Please see **BETTING**, Page A3

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Inside

ADVICE	B6	LIFE	A4
COMICS	B7	OPINION	A7
SPORTS	B1-B4	TV HIGHLIGHTS	B6



7 02138 00001 2