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Lafayette church marks 180 years of Black history



The front of the new memorial plaque describes the founding of Bethel AME Church, and its lasting impact on the Lafayette community. PHOTOS BY QUINT HOLGUIN/LAFAYETTE JOURNAL & COURIER

Plaque installed outside Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

Meagan Hipsky
Lafayette Journal & Courier
USA TODAY NETWORK

LAFAYETTE, IN — Before Sunday, it was easy to miss the stucco two-story on Ferry Street. No longer.

Now unveiled outside Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a plaque commemorates history on the 180th anniversary of the oldest black congregation in Tippecanoe County.

With its pastel-stained windows and warm wood interior paneling, the building stands as one of Lafayette's last landmarks of pre-Civil War African American history. For decades,

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Banners hanging in the church show core values of the Bethel community and its religion.

Privacy concerns arise over Flock cameras

Jillian Ellison
Lafayette Journal & Courier
USA TODAY NETWORK

LAFAYETTE, IN — Fifty Flock Safety cameras are spread throughout Tippecanoe County, with the lion's share of those devices set up in Lafayette.

The cameras, which photograph vehicles as they pass by and store the images in a cloud database for 30 days, have been in operation since 2024, according to Lafayette's contract with the company, Flock Safety. The contract is scheduled to expire at the end of 2028.

But Greater Lafayette residents who spoke out during Monday night's city council meeting are requesting the city terminate its contract early.

Kenny Bright, a Lafayette resident, said he believes the use of Flock Camera violates the Fourth Amendment, which protects residents from unreasonable searches and seizures.

"This amendment is why police need a warrant to access cellular data that reveals location history or to place a GPS tracker in a suspect's vehicle. It's not about how this information is obtained, it's the nature of the information that's obtained that constitutes the search," Bright said. "The history of a person's movements, where and when they go to work, where they take their kids to school, their chosen place of worship, where they shop for groceries, whose houses they visit regularly, how often they go to the doctor. All this information paid for with my tax dollars provided to a private company for them to sell to whomever they feel like without my consent."

But Lafayette Police Chief Scott Galloway said that is not how the cameras are used. The cameras capture a picture only of the vehicle's license plate and do not capture identities or other details about the driver.

Colleen Mathews, owner of Fuel Coffee Shop in Lafayette, said she is concerned with Flock Safety's weak

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Candidate argues social media posts should nullify votes

Cate Charron
Indianapolis Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

A Trump-backed state senate candidate is still fighting to win a tight election by making an unusual legal claim that voters' social media posts exposed that they voted illegally under an obscure state law.

Republican Paula Copenhaver was one of many primary challengers seeking to defeat Indiana senators who defied U.S. President Donald Trump's demand to redraw Indiana's congressional district boundaries to favor Republicans.



Copenhaver

She was vying to unseat incumbent state Sen. Spencer Deery of West Lafayette, but lost by three votes in the May 5 primary.

In her request for a recount, Copenhaver argues that social media posts and interviews with a journalist prove that several Democratic voters wrongfully crossed over to the Republican primary, swinging the election in Deery's favor. The crossover voting warrants investigation, she claims.

Her argument hinges on a largely unenforced Indiana law that many voters, advocates and experts say they have never heard of. Her method of challenging voters in a recount is likely a first in Indiana and appears to conflict with the state's enforcement interpretation.

"It's unprecedented to challenge voters

the way Copenhaver is, even wanting to comb through their social media," said Amy Courtney of voter advocacy group MADVoters in an email. "The real question is whether we want a government spending time and energy monitoring our social media statements and inspecting our private votes."

One of the affected voters was Noemi Ybarra, who lives in Tippecanoe County. Copenhaver initially challenged her vote, but suspended the challenge after it became clear that Ybarra lived outside of the senate district.

Ybarra said on Facebook that she thought about potentially pulling a Republican Party ballot, but she didn't end up doing so. She only learned her vote was chal-

lenged when a local journalist reached out.

"If they want to police what I say on social media, they're going to waste a lot of time," she said. "It's a foolish thing to be going looking at people's social media posts, true or not, and then kind of generate some legal thing to invalidate votes."

Some Indiana Republicans, including Lt. Gov. Micah Beckwith, are pushing to require voters to register with a party to vote in a primary election. This effort to "close" primaries follows multiple pushes over past elections to cross party lines in primary elections. Legislation is expected to be filed next session, though similar bills failed in recent years.

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