



THE ACADIANA ADVOCATE

THEACADIANAADVOCATE.COM | SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2025 \$2.00

"This rule would turn the Clean Water Act on its head."

MARK DAVIS, director of Tulane University's Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy

EPA plans to reduce wetland protections

Rule change could open millions of acres to development



STAFF FILE PHOTO BY JOHN MCCUSKER

Wetlands surround a home in Slidell's Avery Estates. A proposed federal rule could dramatically reduce the number of wetlands in Louisiana that qualify for protection under the Clean Water Act.

BY ALEX LUBBEN
Staff writer

A proposed federal rule could dramatically reduce the number of wetlands in Louisiana that qualify for protection under the Clean Water Act, a move that could expose millions of acres to development.

Under the proposal from the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, only wetlands with a "continuous surface connection" to waters that are "relatively permanent" — meaning they hold water year-round or with only brief interruptions — would remain federally protected. Wetlands that are seasonal, intermittent or connected only after storms would likely fall outside federal jurisdiction.

The change is intended to conform with the U.S. Supreme Court's 2023

ruling in *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*, which sharply restricted how wetlands can be regulated.

But the new proposed rule, issued last month, goes further by removing several long-standing categories of protected water, such as interstate waters, and by formally defining terms that are likely to make federal oversight even narrower.

"This rule would turn the Clean Water Act on its head," said Mark Davis, the director of Tulane University's Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy.

A report from the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental advocacy nonprofit, estimates that up to 3.9 million acres of Louisiana wetlands — roughly half of the state's remaining wetlands — could lose protection under the

proposed rule. Nationally, the group projects that as much as 84% of wetlands protected before the *Sackett* ruling, or 55 million acres, could fall outside federal authority.

Since the 1930s, Louisiana has lost more than 2,000 square miles of wetlands.

The EPA, led by Administrator Lee Zeldin, said the proposal is designed to provide legal clarity by defining a "Water of the United States," or area protected under the Clean Water Act.

"Democrat Administrations have weaponized the definition of navigable waters to seize more power from American farmers, landowners, entrepreneurs, and families," Zeldin said in a statement. "No longer should America's landowners be forced to spend precious money

► See **WETLANDS**, page 5A

Haynes gets 7 years in bribery scheme

Ex-assistant DA got kickbacks from intervention program

BY CLAIRE TAYLOR
Staff writer

Former Lafayette Assistant District Attorney Gary Haynes was sentenced Friday to seven years in a federal prison and was immediately taken into custody after he was found guilty on six federal charges related to a bribery scheme in the pretrial intervention program of the 15th Judicial District Attorney's Office.



Haynes

U.S. District Judge David Joseph, who presided over Haynes' September trial by jury, determined the sentence based on federal guidelines.

Haynes' attorney, Todd Clemens, asked Joseph to postpone the day Haynes had to report to prison, allowing him to spend the Christmas holidays and his 68th birthday with family.

"I submit he is a flight risk," federal prosecutor John Luke Walker replied, noting Haynes has business connections in other countries, including Panama, and could choose to leave the country even though federal officials took his passport.

Haynes previously requested a new trial based on allegations of improper exclusion of evidence, improper admission of evidence, prosecutorial misconduct and statements, and judicial bias.

Joseph recently declined to open a new trial.

► See **HAYNES**, page 5A

Louisiana, CVS to settle drug price dispute

BY MEGHAN FRIEDMANN
Staff writer

Louisiana has agreed to settle two lawsuits against CVS Health that were filed earlier this year over the company's treatment of independent pharmacies and its general business practices, court records show.

The terms of the settlement were not immediately available. On Friday, a spokesperson for Attorney General Liz Murrill said he could not yet provide details.

A spokesperson for CVS declined to comment.

The cases represent two of three actions Murrill brought against CVS in June after state leaders

► See **CVS**, page 5A

SoLAcc to expand with land purchase

\$3.6M deal includes building for classroom, labs

BY ASHLEY WHITE
Staff writer

South Louisiana Community College is finally getting to expand its Lafayette campus.

The school, through the Louisiana Community and Technical College System that oversees it, closed on the nearly \$3.6 million deal last week for nearly 6 acres at the corner of Dulles Drive and

Luke Street. The deal includes a 30,000-square-foot office building, which college officials say will be used for academics with classrooms, labs and other instructional spaces.

Also in the deal is a 3-acre lot with 70 paved parking spots and undeveloped land.

"SoLAcc continues to build tremendous momentum with the expansion of its academic and workforce blueprint, and this acquisition reflects the strength of our partnerships across the state," SoLAcc Chancellor Vincent June said in a statement. "We appreciate the LCTCS Board of Supervi-

sors for believing in our mission and supporting this effort. Their confidence in our vision empowers us to keep moving forward in ways that directly benefit our students and our region."

The seller was DMDA of Lafayette LLC, which is registered to Donald Dupuis. His company, ACS Medical Business Solutions, formerly Acadiana Computer Systems, was housed on the property, which is about a third of a mile from the college's main campus.

The building will be retrofitted for SoLAcc's needs, spokesperson

► See **EXPAND**, page 5A



STAFF FILE PHOTO BY BRAD BOWIE

South Louisiana Community College Chancellor Vincent June said the school's \$3.6 million land purchase for expansion "reflects the strength of our partnerships across the state."

WEATHER

HIGH 78
LOW 53

PAGE 6A



Business**3B**
Classified**10C**
Comics-Puzzles**7C-9C**

Living.....**5C**
Metro**1B**
Nation-World.....**2A**

Opinion**4B**
Sports**1C**

101ST YEAR, NO. 166

ACA Saturday

