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Tax Watch
David McKay Wilson
Rockland/Westchester
Journal News

Rep. Lawler touts big victory on SALT cap

Federal spending bill increases limit on deductions to \$40K

Rep. Mike Lawler came to Yorktown on Aug. 1 to take a victory lap on his advocacy for a raise in the cap on the deductibility of state and local taxes on your federal tax return.

The cap, set at \$10,000 for singles and married couples filing jointly since 2017, was quadrupled to \$40,000 in the omnibus tax bill passed in Congress in early July.

Joined by a slew of Republican town officials and a local real estate broker, Lawler spoke at Yorktown Town Hall before an audience peppered with both Lawler supporters and opponents carrying signs decrying the federal bill, which included widescale cuts to Medicaid.

Lawler was a vocal member of the House SALT Caucus, which held out for the increase during months of intense negotiations in Washington, D.C.

See WILSON, Page 4A



“I stood up against voices from both sides of the aisle,” Rep. Mike Lawler said of efforts to raise the cap on SALT deductions. PETER CARR/THE JOURNAL NEWS

Judges find new ways to block Trump policies

Bart Jansen
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump recently declared victory against what he called “radical left judges” blocking his second-term policies – such as toughening immigration enforcement and reducing the federal workforce – after the Supreme Court pulled the rug out from under their reasoning.

But at least seven judges – four appointed by Republican presidents, including one by Trump – have continued to block Trump policies under legal strategies that the high-court justices suggested in their landmark ruling.

From New Hampshire to Texas, judges with lifetime appointments to the federal bench have temporarily blocked Trump’s policies through two bedrock legal strategies that allow a president’s opponents to challenge federal policies: class-action lawsuits and administrative challenges.

See JUDGES, Page 4A



Joe Gagnon of Katonah looks out over the Death Valley, California, landscape as he runs a stretch of highway during the Badwater ultramarathon, a 135-mile competition through the desert over three days last month. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JOE GAGNON

‘Incredibly quiet satisfaction’

Katonah’s Joe Gagnon finishes grueling Badwater ultramarathon in California desert

Nancy Haggerty Rockland/Westchester Journal News | USA TODAY NETWORK

At Badwater, over nearly two days of running, jogging and walking, Joe Gagnon had taken four or five naps, all lasting about five minutes.

His daughter, Kimberly, headed his support crew. Earlier, she’d had to tell her hallucinating dad, whose steps had sometimes left the road’s white line and devolved into a meandering S-shaped route, that no, there wasn’t a restaurant with outdoor seating in front of them, and, no, they weren’t in a tunnel, but were instead under a cloud.

Now she was feeling generous. She told Gagnon he could sleep for seven minutes.

Gagnon sat down and rose seven minutes later, feeling, he recalled, like “it all cleared. Like clouds went away.”

Soon, he was “passing people, smiling. It was like a fever broke,” he noted.

And that feeling didn’t fade – not through the remaining desert furnace, not during a final eight-mile

climb to the Mount Whitney-portal finish.

Gagnon, who, at 64, is “stronger by 10 times” than he was at age 40 and is, a safe bet, in far better shape than nearly all 40-year-olds, completed the race in 43 hours, 56 minutes, 2 seconds.

That time was good for 78th place out of the 99 people who started and the 93 who finished before Badwater’s 48-hour cutoff.

Chances are his emotions would have been much the same had he finished first.

Gagnon has trained or competed seven days a week for 13 straight years, never wanting to take a day off.

His resume will soon hit 100 for his combined number of marathons and ultramarathons. Badwater was his 11th race of 100 miles or longer.

This finish was so different from all that came before.

See ULTRAMARATHON, Page 2A



Gagnon with his daughter, Kimberly, who served as crew chief of his support team.

New City day care site faces \$50,000 in fines

Operators accused of packing children into unsafe conditions

Steve Lieberman
Rockland/Westchester Journal News
USA TODAY NETWORK

NEW CITY – Clarkstown has filed more than two dozen fire and safety code violations in court against the operators of a day care facility accused of packing dozens of children into windowless basements and charging parents a weekly fee of \$1,500 per child.

The town will seek fines topping \$50,000 against the operators, Aaron and Chany Altman, for endangering the children and other code violations as the case proceeds in the Clarkstown Justice Court, Town Attorney Kevin Conway said.

Officials said the violations include operating a day care facility without town and state permits and required inspection documents, lacking building permits and fire suppression equipment, and placing the children in dangerous and overcrowded conditions.

The children, ages 3 months to 5 years old, were lined up in cribs located near a basement boiler, loose wiring and other hazards, officials said.

The Justice Court case is scheduled to start in August with an arraignment on the violation charges. Eventually, Justice Keith Braunfotel will hear the case. Braunfotel had issued the search warrants for inspectors to enter the buildings at 86 and 96 Maple Ave.

A New York State Supreme Court judge has prohibited Congregation Morah Chany and property owner Aron Altman, who owns both 86 and 96 Maple Ave., from running a day care facility without proper approvals and a day camp on the properties.

See DAY CARE, Page 2A



Town inspectors photographed rows of cribs at an illegal day care in New City that handled an estimated 80 kids. PROVIDED BY THE TOWN OF CLARKSTOWN

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