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Poughkeepsie Journal

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2025 | POUGHKEEPSIEJOURNAL.COM

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# No phone? No problem

Rising eighth-grader Fiona Price said social media bullying, including kids spreading awkward pictures of students, isn't a big problem at Suffern Middle School simply because kids don't have access to their cell phones.

PETER CARR/THE JOURNAL NEWS

## Middle school students say bell-to-bell device ban's no big deal

Nancy Cutler

Rockland/Westchester Journal News  
USA TODAY NETWORK

SUFFERN – As New York schools gear up for a bell-to-bell cell phone ban across campuses, students at Suffern Middle School have been working in a no-device environment for four years now. Their general message to peers about to face a non-networked day: It's just fine.

"Sometimes things on social media scare me," said Fiona Price, one of 10 rising eighth graders who were on campus Aug. 21 to help out during a sixth grade family welcome day. Not having the opportunity to check her social feeds during the school day, the 13-year-old said, "I feel a lot calmer."

See **DEVICE BAN**, Page 2A

Alana Winnick, educational technology director for the Pocantico Hills Central School District, sees a school phone ban as a step toward helping kids modify excessive screen habits.

FRANK BECERRA JR./THE JOURNAL NEWS

"Sometimes things on social media scare me."

Fiona Price

Suffern Middle School Eighth grader

# Lawler challenger registered as Dem

Chris McKenna

New York State Team  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The latest Democrat looking to challenge Republican Rep. Mike Lawler comes to that crowded congressional race with an unusual political profile: He just registered as a Democrat for the first time.

John Cappello, a 61-year-old Air Force veteran, was registered as a Republican in Rockland County until he switched his party enrollment on Aug. 15, 10 days after he filed federal paperwork to run in a Democratic primary for New York's 17th Congressional District. He's the eighth candidate to jump into the competition for a coveted swing seat in 2026.

In an interview, Cappello described his belated party change as an oversight, saying he didn't realize he was still registered as a Republican in the county where he grew up and continued to cast ballots after leaving to serve in the Air Force. More recently, he had been living in Virginia and casting votes in that state instead of New York.

Cappello's party change came after the USA TODAY Network asked the Rockland County Board of Elections for his voting records.

Cappello, who retired from the Air Force in 2016, now runs two organizations related to Serbia, the Balkan nation where he used to be stationed. He said he recently moved back to Rockland, and cast his foray into politics as "my next step of service" after a 25-year military career.

"I lived my dreams," he said. "I have a responsibility to provide that for others."

Cappello said he planned to announce his campaign on Aug. 26 after keeping a low profile for a few weeks after filing his federal candidate paperwork. He hadn't spoken yet to any of the Democratic leaders in the district's four counties – Rockland, Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess – as candidates usually do.

Lawler plans to seek a third House term next year, having ruled out a 2026 run for governor that he had publicly weighed since last year. He first won his seat in 2022 and was reelected last

See **CHALLENGER**, Page 6A

# Trump announces firing of Federal governor

Bailey Schulz, Bart Jansen, Medora Lee and Rachel Barber  
USA TODAY

President Donald Trump's announcement that he's firing Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook is an unpre-

cedented move that could lead to a long legal battle as the president looks to shape the balance of the central bank's seven-member board in his favor.

The Aug. 25 move raises more questions about the Fed board's independence, a president's involvement in mon-

etary policy and credibility in U.S. investments.

"I have determined that there is sufficient cause to remove you from your position," Trump wrote in a letter to Cook shared on Truth Social, pointing to accusations that Cook made false state-

ments on mortgage agreements.

Cook said Aug. 26 the president lacked the basis and the authority to oust her from the board of the central bank.

See **FIRING**, Page 2A

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