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# THE MORNING CALL

\$4.00 | THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2026 | THEMORNINGCALL.COM

## Court diminishes Voting Rights Act

Justices rule 6-3 to strike down mostly Black district in La.

By Mark Sherman  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Wednesday weakened a landmark Civil Rights-era law that has increased minority representation in Congress and elsewhere, striking down a majority Black congressional district in Louisiana and opening the door for more

redistricting across the country that could aid Republican efforts to control the House.

In a 6-3 ruling, the court's conservative majority found that Louisiana district represented by Democrat Cleo Fields relied too heavily on race. Chief Justice John Roberts had described the 6th Congressional District as a "snake" that stretches more than 200 miles to link parts of

Shreveport, Alexandria, Lafayette and Baton Rouge.

"That map is an unconstitutional gerrymander," Justice Samuel Alito wrote for the six conservatives.

The effect of the ruling may be felt more strongly in 2028 because most filing deadlines for this year's congressional races have passed. Louisiana, though, may have to change its redistricting plan to

comply with the decision.

It is unclear how much is left of the provision, known as Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the main way to challenge racially discriminatory election practices.

Not much, Justice Elena Kagan wrote in a dissent for the three liberal justices. "The consequences are likely to be far-reaching and grave. Today's decision renders Section 2 all but a dead letter," Kagan wrote.

In a statement, Fields said the

decision's "practical effect is to make it far harder for minority communities to challenge redistricting maps that dilute their political voice."

The voting rights law succeeded in opening the ballot box to Black Americans and reducing persistent discrimination in voting. Nearly 70 of the 435 congressional districts are protected by Section 2, election law expert Nicholas Stephanopoulos

See **COURT** on Page A4



Aria Vega, who suffers from nonconvulsive overnight seizures, does physical therapy with Alyssa Metzger, pediatric physical therapist on April 16 at Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hyland Center in Allentown. **APRIL GAMIZ/THE MORNING CALL**

## Service dog lost in fine print

Family raised \$12,000 for canine. But after one was donated, getting that money hasn't been easy

By Isabella Gaglione  
SPECIAL TO THE MORNING CALL

A Bangor couple has reached a roadblock in a nearly five-year journey to get a service dog to help detect their 7-year-old daughter Aria's nonconvulsive overnight seizures.

After raising over \$12,000 for a trained service dog through a nonprofit, the family was offered a donated untrained dog that could join them sooner, according

to Aria's mother, Jess Wojciechowski. But, the nonprofit says the donors intended their money to be used for a service dog through its organization and it cannot redesignate the funds toward the new dog's training.

Donors who reached out to the nonprofit to clarify their donor intent were given the option to have their donation returned to them. The family is fighting to redirect all the money, much of which was raised by Lehigh Valley

donors.

"Every night that passes is another night that something could go wrong," Wojciechowski said. "So one more night sooner that we can get a dog into this house that is trained to alert us is the first that we will have a good night of rest. It will be the first night that we don't need to about worry if she's going to be there in the morning."

Wojciechowski signed a contract in 2021 with 4 Paws for

Ability, an Ohio nonprofit that places service dogs with children and veterans with disabilities, which would cover half the cost to breed, raise and train the dog. The family needed to raise \$17,000 to be matched with a dog.

When Wojciechowski inquired about using the donations for training the new dog, the nonprofit said the money was "funds restricted by donors

See **DOG** on Page A2

### LEHIGH COUNTY

## New chief clerk of elections selected

Michael Paston's hiring comes weeks before the May 19 primary

By Chris Dornblaser  
and Laurie Mason Schroeder  
THE MORNING CALL

Weeks before the May primary election, Lehigh County has a new chief clerk of elections.

Michael Paston, most recently a deputy chief clerk of courts in Bucks County, was sworn in Tuesday. Paston, of Upper Dublin Township, Montgomery County, said he was eager to get started in the post.

"I'm excited to have this position, and about the confidence they had in me," Paston said following his confirmation hearing in Allentown. "I'm excited to meet the staff. I've heard good things about them. We're going to focus on the primary, because it's going to come up fast. After the primary, I'm hoping there's time to take a step back and examine how we do things, why we do things, and maybe share some ideas from the other counties that I've worked in."

Paston became first deputy clerk of courts in Bucks County in 2020. He was in the same role in Montgomery County from 2013 to 2019, according to the news release announcing his selection to the Lehigh County job. Paston is an attorney and tax professional, and managed dozens of people between those roles in Bucks and Montgom-



Paston

See **ELECTIONS** on Page A2

### INSIDE

#### Nazareth's wins send message

With Nazareth's hard-fought 8-6 win over Northampton, coach Bryan Wolf believes his team punched its ticket to the EPC tournament. **Sports**

#### Dems grill Hegseth on the war in Iran

The defense secretary rejects criticism at hearing as the conflict's cost hits \$25 billion. **Nation & World, Page A13**



Ellen Saracini, left, holds a candle during a vigil at the Garden of Reflection on Sept. 10, 2011 in Lower Makefield. Ellen's husband, Victor Saracini, was the captain of United Airlines Flight 175. She is among those calling on Lower Makefield to allow a candlelight vigil to mark the 25th anniversary of the terror attack. **ALEX BRANDON/AP**

### BUCKS COUNTY

## Plan for evening 9/11 ceremony at memorial splits community

The observance falls on Rosh Hashana, a Jewish High Holiday

By Jo Ciavaglia  
BUCKS COUNTY COURIER TIMES

The nonprofit representing Pennsylvania's official 9/11 memorial is threatening to withhold funding if the Bucks County township where it's located does not approve a permit for a candlelight ceremony marking the 25th

anniversary of the deadliest terrorist attack on U.S. soil.

The first night of Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year and a High Holiday, begins at sundown Sept. 11 this year, which has put Lower Makefield Township and the 9-11 Memorial Garden of Reflection Inc. at odds over the proposed night vigil at the Lower Makefield park.

The holiday conflict led Lower Makefield supervisors to deny

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### WEATHER FORECAST

Breezy in afternoon with a shower. **High 63° | Low 39°**  
Weather, NEWS 8

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