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$4.00 | MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2026 | THEMORNINGCALL.COM

Allentown police union suing City Council

At issue is council's refusal to adopt new pension program; warns of wave of officer retirements

By Lindsay Weber
THE MORNING CALL

Allentown's police union is suing City Council over its failure to approve a program allowing officers to collect pension payments while working.

In response, members of City Council said they will "vigorously defend Allentown City Council's legislative authority," and added that they remain concerned about the long-term financial consequences of such a program.

Queen City Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 10 filed a legal complaint in Lehigh County Court on Oct. 16, alleging council is impeding its collective bargaining rights by failing to approve the "Deferred Retirement Option Plan" program, which the union and mayor agreed to implement in its next union contract taking effect in 2027.

"Despite the existence of a fully negotiated agreement, City Council has refused and/or failed to enact the ordinance required for implementation," FOP lawyer Thomas Gribbin wrote in the legal complaint.

The police union and Allentown Mayor Matt Tuerk in February entered into a memorandum of understanding to implement the DROP program in the union's next collective bargaining agreement, the suit says.

However, the program needs a "yes" vote from City Council to amend its administrative laws before it can take effect.

City Council members on June 11 debated and ultimately delayed a vote to amend the law adding the DROP program, which would allow police officers to defer their retirement for up to five years while collecting pension payments.

Via DROP, officers who are eligible to retire could instead continue working and receive their regular salary plus their pension payments, which would be placed into an interest-accruing account managed by the city. That money would be paid out upon the date of the officer's retirement, upon which they would also start to directly receiving their monthly pension.

During that City Council meeting, Allentown police Chief

See **LAWSUIT** on Page A2



About 275 Liberty High School Grenadier Band and majorette alumni join current members to perform on the field to celebrate the band's 100th anniversary Saturday at halftime during the Freedom-Liberty football game at Bethlehem Area School District Stadium.
APRIL GAMIZ/THE MORNING CALL PHOTOS

Liberty High School band marks 100 years

270 alumni return to perform at halftime of rivalry game

By Elizabeth Deornellas
THE MORNING CALL

Fall Out Boy's "Centuries" sounded the opening fanfare as 270 alumni joined the 200 student members of the Liberty High School band to celebrate the program's 100th year with a halftime performance at the Liberty-Freedom rivalry football game Saturday.

The LHS Grenadier Band has been performing its signature British military style for six decades of that century of history. Its bagpipe corps tripled in size for the anniversary performance, with 26 alumni signed up to join the current 12 pipers.

"This is kind of the most visible performance that the band does, and so we thought this would be a great way to bring folks back and have them on the field in front of a huge crowd," said Allen Frank, who is now in his sixth year as the band's director.

The band's unique look stems from uniforms made by the same supplier responsible for His Majesty's Coldstream Guards, whose iconic big, fuzzy hats can be seen on patrol outside Buckingham Palace.

Interest in the band's

See **BAND** on Page A4



'With joy, hope and humility'

Dee is 1st female bishop to lead Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Northeastern Pa. Synod

By Graysen Golter
THE MORNING CALL

The first female bishop has taken her new role for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, which includes the Lehigh Valley.

The Rev. Jennifer K. Dee was elected to the role in June and began her six-year term Sept. 1, succeeding the Rev. Christopher deForest.

She is the fifth bishop for the synod, which includes 235 congregations and spans the northeastern portion of Pennsylvania, bordering with Berks County, New York and New Jersey.

Dee was installed as the bishop during a Saturday service at First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem.

"When Bishop Dee accepted the call to serve as your bishop, she spoke of this new call coming with joy, hope and humility," the Rev. William J. Gohl Jr. of the Delaware-Maryland Synod said during the service. "And we pray those things for you each and every day. From the beginning, she has reminded us that the brave life of faith begins not with self-importance or certainty, but with joy, hope and humility."

In the week before the service, Dee said that it was humbling and "long overdue" to become the synod's first female bishop.

"We have so many amazing female clergy in our synod and in the ELCA that I'm excited to be the first female bishop," she said. "But gosh, it's taken a while to get here in northeastern Pennsylvania."

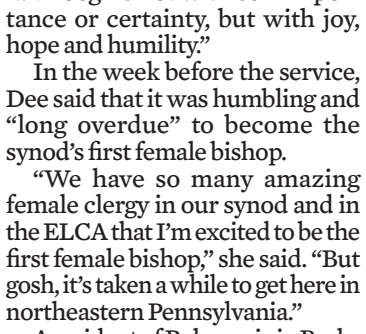
A resident of Robesonia in Berks County, Dee was ordained nearly 20 years ago and previously worked as a pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Robesonia as well as St. John's Lutheran Church in Indiana.

Neither Dee nor anyone she knew put her name on the ballot for the bishop election, but others did.

"I had prayed about it and talked with my husband (Billy) about it and said if my name was on that first ballot, then I was going to stay in the process," she said.

Dee also felt the synod needed a change in leadership, and that she was looking for a bishop who could still give a "pastoral presence" to the other synod leaders.

See **BISHOP** on Page A2



The Rev. Jennifer K. Dee reacts at the conclusion of her installment as the fifth bishop of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in a service Saturday at First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem.
SHARON MERKEL/SPECIAL TO THE MORNING CALL

ELECTION 2026

Democrat backs GOP candidate in Michigan

El-Sayed rival touts Republican Rogers for pivotal Senate race

By Joey Cappelletti, Corey Williams and Mike Householder
ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT — Michigan Democrat Abdul El-Sayed's former opponent in the U.S. Senate primary, Haley Stevens, stunned party officials Sunday by endorsing Republican Mike Rogers after Democratic tensions boiled over days before the election that could determine the balance of power on Capitol Hill.



Stevens

Stevens endorsed Rogers after attending a Detroit church service with him. The remarkable show of support for the President Donald Trump-backed candidate in the tightly contested race comes after she was uninvited to a joint event the same day with El-Sayed, who defeated the congresswoman by a slim margin in the August primary.

"Our Democratic nominee for Senate said I was no longer welcome in his campaign and that I should stay away," Stevens said in a video announcing the endorsement, which led her top aide to quit. "And he's right. And that's why I am endorsing Mike Rogers for the United States Senate today."

See **STEVENS** on Page A16

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WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY	TUE.	WED.
H:66 L: 39	H:68 L: 46	H:70 L: 54

FULL WEATHER REPORT A6

INDEX

Classified C6
Comics/TV A11
Games A9
Horoscopes A11
Life A12
Monday Go A7
Nation/World A13
Opinion A5
Sports C1

6 73249 01400 0