

The Philadelphia Inquirer

ALWAYS ASKING. ALWAYS PHILLY.

‘Brazen’ mailer twists truth on Pa. voter map

The political ad, sent by a GOP-affiliated PAC tied to billionaire Jeffrey Yass, suggests the Pa. Supreme Court created the congressional map it actually threw out.

By Katie Bernard
Staff Writer

A GOP-affiliated PAC is sending Pennsylvania voters a mailer warning that members of the state Supreme Court “gerrymandered our congressional districts to help Democrats win.”

The postcard even provides a picture of a map with wildly shaped

districts circled in red.

The issue? The pictured map was not drawn by Pennsylvania’s Supreme Court; it was drawn by legislative Republicans and thrown out by the justices as an unconstitutional gerrymander.

The misleading mailer even made its way to the home of one of three justices standing for retention in November. Justice David Wecht was astonished when he saw the postcard.

“That one goes beyond hyperbole or exaggeration into outright, brazen misrepresentation,” Wecht told *The Inquirer* on Friday. “It’s probably the most shameless political ad I’ve ever seen.”

Wecht and the other justices faced severe backlash in 2018 for the decision to throw out the GOP map — the one featured on the

campaign mailers — with some Republicans later calling for Wecht’s impeachment from the court in part because of it.

The campaign literature, sent by the Commonwealth Leaders Fund, which has ties to Pennsylvania’s richest man, Jeffrey Yass, is one of several recent mailers and digital ads that sparked outrage among Democrats, who have decried deceptive tactics in the critically important judicial election. It follows a pattern of misinformation common in judicial contests.

Commonwealth Partners, the organization that runs the Commonwealth Leaders Fund, did not respond to a request for comment or questions about how widespread the mailer was.

Yass frequently supports GOP

→ SEE MAILER ON A5



Pa. Supreme Court Justices (from left) David Wecht, Christine Donohue, and Kevin Dougherty at a forum at Central High School on Sept. 8. The justices are up for retention in November. Wecht said he was astonished when he received the misleading mailer. Monica Herndon / Staff Photographer

EAGLES 31, BUCCANEERS 25



Birds survive sloppy second half

Moro Ojomo sacks Tampa Bay quarterback Baker Mayfield with 1:45 left in the 4-0 Eagles’ victory on Sunday in Tampa, Fla. The play derailed a potential Bucs comeback drive. More coverage in Sports on C1. Yong Kim / Staff Photographer

COURT RECORDS:
SABATINA USED ‘HIT
LIST’ TO HIRE PATRONS

The city’s register of wills is accused of unfairly terminating employees. A document lists department workers who were targeted to make room for supporters.

By William Bender and Ryan W. Briggs
Staff Writers

Ian Ewing thought his job was secure in the Philadelphia Register of Wills office. A November 2023 performance review found that he was “exceeding expectations” as a records clerk, a position he had held for three years.

But in January 2024, Ewing said, an aide to newly elected Register of Wills John Sabatina Sr.

informed him in the middle of the workday that he was being fired. Immediately.

“They said I can go upstairs and grab my belongings or they could have someone do it,” Ewing recalled last week. “I wasn’t given any reason.”

What Ewing didn’t know is that the Sabatina administration had created an internal list of employees it was planning to fire to make way for new hires. Ewing was on it.

“It was a hit list,” said Ewing’s lawyer, Timothy Creech. “It wasn’t to save money. It was specifically to hire their own people.”

The city recently agreed to pay Ewing \$40,000 to settle his lawsuit that claimed that he was fired for not supporting Sabatina’s campaign, in violation of his First Amendment rights.

Sixteen other former register of wills employees have filed similar

→ SEE SABATINA ON A5

Penn cuts doctoral admissions over funds

The university admitted 20% fewer students this year, citing Trump’s threats to federal research dollars. Professors say it’s already proving costly.

By Susan Snyder and Kayla Yup
Staff Writers

The University of Pennsylvania admitted about 20% fewer doctoral students this year across its schools, citing proposals by President Donald Trump’s administration that threaten hundreds

of millions of its federal research dollars.

And educators are concerned it’s only going to get worse. They fear that reducing doctoral students, if this continues over several years, ultimately could mean fewer teachers for undergraduate students, less research, and less innovation.

The Ivy League university stands to lose about \$250 million in research funding if courts allow a federal proposal to limit indirect cost reimbursements from the National Institutes of Health to proceed. The uncertainty resulted in the university bringing in 527 new doctoral students this fall, down from 656 last year. That includes doctoral admissions to its School of

→ SEE PENN ON A6

Trump to attend gathering of top generals

The president’s presence will add security concerns to the highly unusual meeting.

By Tara Copp, Dan Lamothe, Noah Robertson, and Alex Horton
Washington Post

President Donald Trump has decided he’s going to the last-minute global gathering of the nation’s top generals that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered last week, he said Sunday, setting the stage for a highly unusual meeting between the commander in chief and top U.S. military leaders.

Trump’s appearance at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia not only overshadows Hegseth’s planned address but adds new security concerns to the massive and nearly unprecedented military event, which has required some generals and admirals to travel thousands of miles. Trump cast the discussion largely as a pep talk.

“It’s really just a very nice meeting talking about how well we’re doing militarily, talking about being in great shape, talking about a lot of good, positive things. It’s just a good message,” Trump said in an interview with NBC News. “We have some great people coming in and it’s just an ‘esprit de corps.’ You know the expression ‘esprit de corps’? That’s all it’s about. We’re talking about what we’re doing, what they’re doing, and how we’re doing.”

The comments came after the Washington Post reported earlier in the day that Trump was joining the event, whose creation caught senior military leaders by surprise last week.

“We have confirmation from the White House that POTUS is now attending the speech on Tuesday,” states a planning document sent Saturday that was viewed by the Post.

Notice went out to offices around the Pentagon that the decision will “significantly change the security posture” of the speech, set for Tuesday morning at Marine Corps

→ SEE GENERALS ON A4