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# The Parkersburg News and Sentinel

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## Willis challenging GOP stalwart Capito

**Jess Mancini**  
Staff Reporter

A candidate says he's beaten a heavily favored incumbent before and will do the same against Shelley Moore Capito for the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate.

State Sen. Tom Willis, R-Berkeley, defeated Craig Blair in the 2024 primary

when Blair was president of the Senate.

"I have proven I can slay the giants," Willis, an attorney who served in the Special Forces Green Berets and the West Virginia National Guard, said.

Six candidates are running for the Republican nomination. Also running are Janet McNulty of Martinsburg, David Purkey

of Fairmont, Alexander Gaaserud of Parkersburg and Bryan McKinney of Inwood.

While there are six, the two leading candidates are himself and Capito, Willis said.

"Really, this is between Tom Willis and Shelley Moore Capito," he said.

People have become dissatisfied with Capito

over her votes that were contrary to traditional conservative West Virginia family values and with the oligarchical presence of her family in West Virginia, Willis said. Her family includes U.S. Rep. Riley Moore, R-2nd, and Moore Capito, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia, Willis said.

She has voted against a

bill to protect traditional marriage, skipped the vote on a bill to keep boys out of girls sports, voted for the funding of Planned Parenthood and welfare for illegal aliens, voted for "red flag" laws that allows for the confiscation of firearms without due process and voted for the Afghan resettlement program, a program that resulted in an

Afghani traveling across the country and shooting two West Virginia National Guardsmen, one fatally, in Washington, D.C., Willis said. She has received failing ratings by conservative groups including CPAC, Heritage Action and Freedom Works, Willis said.

**See WILLIS, A8**



Little Hocking resident Chris Helou carries a cross along Market Street during the Good Friday Community Stations of the Cross walk. Nearly 100 people joined in the annual procession between downtown churches in memory of Jesus Christ's crucifixion.

## Judge Says Nay

**Case to block rules limiting candidate statements fails**

Steven Allen Adams

CHARLESTON — A Wheeling attorney who has yet again thrown his name in the hat for a seat on the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals lost a federal case this week seeking to overturn state rules that put limits on what judicial candidates can say during elections.

U.S. District Judge Thomas E. Johnston issued a memorandum opinion and order Wednesday denying motions for a temporary restraining order and preliminary or permanent injunction against the West Virginia Judicial Investigation Commission (JIC) being sought by Wheeling attorney Martin P. Sheehan, a candidate for the state Supreme Court.

"As the State notes in its judicial handbook for candidates and judges, '[p]ublic confidence in the independence and impartiality of the judiciary is eroded if judges or judicial candidates are perceived to be subject to political influence' ... The Court agrees," Johnston wrote. "West Virginia is assuring its citizens that West Virginia judges will 'apply the law without fear or favor[.]' Thus, West Virginia has a compelling interest in preserving the judicial impartiality of its courts."

**See SHEEHAN, A8**

## Stations of the Cross

Photos by Evan Bevins



LEFT: Vienna resident Zach Uppole carries the cross as the Good Friday Community Stations of the Cross walk departs First Baptist Church in downtown Parkersburg on Friday. RIGHT: Little Hocking resident Chris Helou carries a cross as he leads a procession of nearly 100 people along Market Street in front of the Actors Guild of Parkersburg on Friday, as part of the annual Good Friday Community Stations of the Cross walk.

## Group files motion against DOJ effort on voter records

**Steven Allen Adams**

CHARLESTON - An advocacy group is seeking to intervene against efforts by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to obtain voter registration records after the West Virginia Secretary of State Kris

Warner said no to turning over those records in February.

The West Virginia Citizens Action Group (CAG), represented by the ACLU-WV, filed a petition Thursday to intervene in a lawsuit brought in the U.S. District Court for the

Southern District of West Virginia on Feb. 26 by Harmeet K. Dhillon, a U.S. assistant attorney general with the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division.

The DOJ is asking a federal judge to order Warner to turn over the

state's entire voter registration database, including the names, date of birth, addresses, drivers' license numbers, and the last four digits of Social Security numbers of voters. While voter registration is conducted by county clerks, the Secretary of State's Office

maintains the Statewide Voter Registration System.

West Virginia is one of 29 states being sued by the DOJ for refusing to turn over voter registration. In a separate memorandum of law filed along with the motion to intervene, the ACLU-WV and CAG

argue that the DOJ has provided no reasoning for seeking the data as required by the Civil Rights Act.

"(The Civil Rights Act) requires the Attorney General to provide both the basis and the purpose for

**See GROUP, A8**

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### MORNING NEWS BRIEFING

#### WVU football great scheduled for homecoming fundraiser

Owen Schmitt, football standout at West Virginia University who played in the NFL will be featured in a Parkersburg Homecoming Festival fundraiser this month, the Homecoming Committee has announced.

**Details, Page B1**

#### Frontier High School's Payton Tyler prepares for legal career

Payton Tyler has aspirations to become a criminal defense attorney. Even though the junior has another year at Frontier High School remaining, Tyler has her eyes on the prize and plans in place for her academics in the coming years.

**Details, Page #C**

### READER

Thank you,  
**John W. Dye**  
of Vienna  
for being a News and Sentinel subscriber.