Political consultant sues over 2025 arrest

Man alleges authorities still hold electronic devices

BY DEAN BOUDREAUX
Staff writer

A Lafayette political consultant arrested in 2025 over campaign messages sued the Lafayette Parish sheriff and other officials in federal court, claiming the arrest was politically motivated and that authorities still hold his electronic devices.

Chun Ping "Eddie" Lau filed the lawsuit Nov. 4 in the U.S. District Court in Lafayette. It names Sheriff Mark Garber, state Attorney General Liz Murrill, District Attorney Don Landry, Sheriff's Office Detective Wesley Vanmieghem and unnamed deputies and attorney general's investigators.

Lau was booked March 13, 2025, on a felony count under a state law that bars distributing campaign material by a person "knows or should be reasonably expected to know" is false. Court filings show no formal charge has been filed.

Lau worked for Jesse Regan's campaign in the Feb. 15, 2025, special primary for state Senate District 23. Brach Myers, a Republican, won with 54.8% of the vote.

According to the lawsuit, authorities accused Lau of creating a Facebook page called "The Lady Dems of Acadiana" and sending a text message that suggested a democratic group backed Myers. Lau's attorneys said the page reposted Myers' own campaign video and urged people to vote for him. They said that is protected political speech.

Judge Andre Doguet signed search warrants for Lau's home and business March 12, 2025, court records show. Deputies seized at least 19 devices, according to returns Vanmieghem signed March 11, 2026, 363 days after the searches.

The lawsuit said earlier complaints about the messages drew no action before the election, and the warrants were signed the day after Myers took office. It also said Garber told others he planned to run for U.S. Senate against a candidate Lau advised.

Lau is seeking damages from Garber, Vanmieghem and the unnamed defendants. He is asking the court to declare the law unconstitutional, bar its enforcement against him and order his property returned. Murrill and Landry are named only for that declaratory and injunctive relief.

In July 2025, Lau filed a motion in

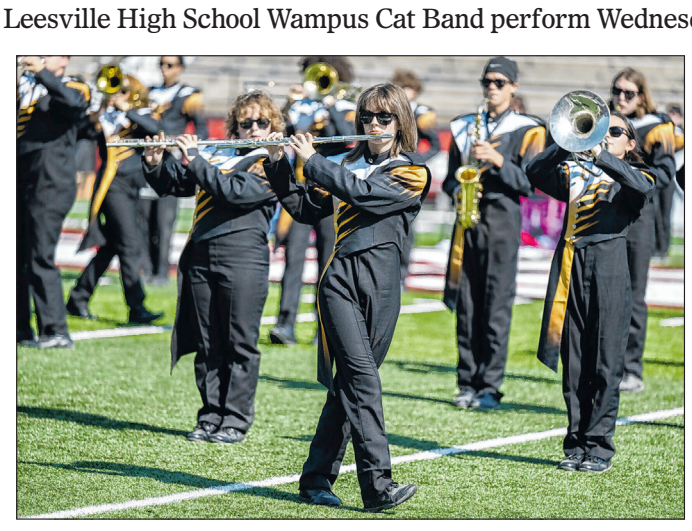
➤ See **LAWSUIT,** page **4B**



STAFF PHOTOS BY LESLIE WESTBROOK

MARCH TO THE BEAT

ABOVE: Members of the Patterson High School Timberland Regiment Band perform during the Louisiana Music Educators Association State Marching Championships Wednesday at Cajun Field in Lafayette. **RIGHT:** Members of the Belle Chasse High School Cardinal Color Guard rehearse before entering the stadium to perform during the competition. **BELOW:** Members of the Leesville High School Wampus Cat Band perform Wednesday.





Acadiana mourns death of Floyd Poche

Breaux Bridge restaurateur known for Cajun fare, bayou destinations

BY JOANNA BROWN
Staff writer

The second-generation owner of Poche's Market and Restaurant in Breaux Bridge died last week, leaving behind a close-knit community at the Bayou Teche meat market his family founded in 1962.



Poche

Floyd Poche died Nov. 4 at the age of 74. According to his obituary, he spent his entire life in the Poche Bridge neighborhood where he was raised — and where his father, Lug Poche, first started Poche's Market as a local boucherie.

Floyd Poche purchased the business in 1976, and spent the next 50 years developing it into a beloved smokehouse and restaurant featuring traditional Cajun fare like smothered meats, boudin, barbecue plates and seafood.

Working with his wife, Karen, and children Scotty Poche and Rebekah Poche Guidry, Poche turned the family's businesses into a series of bayou destinations — such as Poche Bridge Country Club located next door to the market, and Poche's RV Park up the road, which sold to new owners in 2019.

The restaurant and smokehouse developed a reputation that went

➤ See **POCHE,** page **4B**

Police: Girl escapes attempted kidnapping after kicking, screaming

CRIME BLOTTER
Advocate staff reports

A juvenile girl escaped an attempted kidnapping Sunday in western Acadia Parish after kicking and screaming when a man grabbed her as she walked to a friend's house, authorities said.

The incident happened around noon Sunday in the Evangeline community, according to the Acadia Parish Sheriff's Office.

Two men in an older white or gray pickup truck drove past the girl before one got out and grabbed her, deputies said. She kicked and screamed until the man released her.

Both men fled in the truck. Deputies searched for the suspects but did not locate them.

The girl described the men as appearing to be in their mid-20s to early 30s, with dark complexions and possibly Hispanic, according to the Sheriff's Office. She said the man who grabbed her had black hair and three scratch marks on his left cheek.

The make and model of the truck are unknown.

➤ See **BLOTTER,** page **4B**

New lawsuit targets Louisiana's fast-track process for data centers

Filing by advocacy groups accuses PSC of violating law

BY SAM KARLIN
Staff writer

A group of advocacy organizations filed a lawsuit Monday seeking to undo a rule that fast-tracked approval for billions of dollars in electric infrastructure for Meta's massive data center in north Louisiana, a move that could stymie Entergy's plans for several new gas-fired power plants.

The suit, filed in Baton Rouge district court, comes amid a wave of anti-AI sentiment across the country. The filings accuse the Louisiana Public Service Commission — which regulates electric utilities — of violating the law when it passed a "lightning directive" in December 2025 to speed up electric infrastructure for large projects, including Meta's data center. The plaintiffs are three groups who have opposed various aspects of Meta's data center: Save My Louisiana, Louisiana Citizens Advocacy Group and the Louisiana Landowners Coalition.

The lightning directive, passed at the behest of PSC member J.P. Coussan, a Republican from Lafayette, allows utilities like Entergy to skip some rules when building infrastructure to power certain high-energy users, including Meta's "Hyperion" data center.

The suit alleges that the PSC failed to properly notify the public before approving the lighting directive. The state Supreme Court has held that public notice is a requirement for the PSC to change its rules. The directive appeared on a December 2025 LPSC meeting agenda with the notice "Directive on commission's Lightning Initiative."

"That short agenda item did not tell the public anything meaningful, because at the time there was no such thing as the commission's 'lightning initiative,'" attorneys for the plaintiffs wrote in the lawsuit.

➤ See **FILING,** page **4B**

LSU school named for local businessman

Art Favre donated funds for new building

BY HALEY MILLER
Staff writer

LSU is poised to transform its School of Construction with a major endowment and a state-of-the art new building, thanks to massive donations from an LSU alum and Louisiana construction tycoon, the school announced Tuesday.

"Construction is no longer a low-tech industry," Vicki Colvin, dean of the College of Engineering, said Tuesday. "It's going to become a high-tech industry, and it's going to do it right here in Louisiana."

The university will name its School of Construction, as well the planned $107 million Construction and Advanced Manufacturing Building, for Art Favre and his industrial services company, Performance Contractors.

The LSU Foundation announced the new names Tuesday during a celebration event for Favre at the foundation building on Nicholson Drive. The foundation did not disclose the dollar amount of Favre's donation but said the donor has put tens of millions toward the university's construction expansion, including a previous $15 million contribution.

The new funds will establish an unrestricted endowment, meaning the money can be spent at the university's discretion.

"An unrestricted endowment gives LSU something especially powerful: the ability to be both strategic and nimble," LSU Chancellor Jim Dalton said. "Those resources help us recruit and retain extraordinary faculty, pursue emerging academic and research opportunities, respond to industry needs and ensure students are learning at the leading edge of their fields."

The construction school — which started as a department but the Board of Supervisors voted to elevate to school status last year — will be called the Art Favre School of Construction and housed within the College of Engineering. The level of school is a broader academic division within the university that the College of Engineering said aligned with the construction management program's growth and student demand, as well as success with industry partnerships.

The physical space will be named the Performance Contractors Construction and Advanced Manufacturing Building — a tribute to the company Favre founded.

Favre said he has pitched his vision for a premier construction management program for 35 years across multiple LSU presidents. Past LSU President William F. Tate IV was a close ally on the project, he said, and current President Wade Rousse took the baton when Tate departed for Rutgers University.

"We all knew we needed more independence to ensure construction had a prominent place in the College of Engineering for the future," Favre said. "The department was growing rapidly but was not keeping up with the needs for more and better-prepared graduates coming into the university. In my mind, most importantly, the LSU CM program was in a unique position to fill a void in construction-specific research to keep America competitive in the world marketplace."

University officials anticipate breaking ground on the Performance Contractors and Advanced Manufacturing Building in 2027. The 148,000-square-foot facility, the planned home of the expanded construction offerings, will be located on South Stadium Drive.

FILING

Continued from page 1B

Most & Associates, a New Orleans-based firm, is representing the plaintiffs.

Attorney William Most is also representing plaintiffs in another recent lawsuit that alleges open meetings law violations in advancing incentive deals for SpaceX.

The PSC declined to comment, citing pending litigation, but a lawyer for the PSC told Most in a letter last month that the lightning directive was "not a rule change," and was instead a "directive" that used the proper procedure.

"The Lightning Directive provides a regulatory pathway for the certification of new generation under an expedited process," PSC executive counsel Kathryn Bowman wrote in response to a letter from Most, who asked the commission to withdraw its lightning directive. "The utility still bears the burden of proof throughout the proceeding that the generation is in the public interest and is at the lowest reasonable costs."

Opposition to Meta's data center has come from the right and the left, with some conservative landowners in north Louisiana railing against plans to expropriate property to build the huge transmission lines needed to power Hyperion.

"Our coalition members are facing forced expropriation, permanent loss of value, and damage to their family farms, private homesteads, and wildlife habitats under a process cooked up behind closed doors," Dustin McAnn, head of the Louisiana Landowners Coalition, said in a statement. "The Public Service Commission owes Louisiana landowners transparency and constitutional fairness, not secret shortcuts that benefit a multi-billion dollar utility at the expense of everyday Louisianians."

Along with Meta, Applied Digital is also using the fast-track process for another data center in Boyce.

Coussan, the PSC member who authored the rule change, said the commission will likely discuss the lawsuit in private at its next meeting, which is customary among public bodies.

"Public engagement with the Public Service Commission is at an all-time high and I believe that is a good thing for the people of Louisiana," Coussan said.

Commissioner Davante Lewis, a Democrat who was the only member to oppose the lightning directive, said he still believes the directive should be rescinded.

"I warned from the beginning that this directive raised serious concerns and could face legal challenges," Lewis said in a statement. "I opposed it then, and I oppose it now."

The suit comes about a week after midterm elections in which voters around the country rebuked data centers; of more than 40 data center restrictions on the ballot across the nation, all but one was approved by voters. Candidates around the country made opposition to data centers a key part of their campaigns.

Gov. Jeff Landry has remained steadfast in his support of data centers, which he has sought to rebrand as "digital factories." On Sunday, Landry again rejected opposition to data centers, telling Fox News host Peter Doocey that he supports data centers, saying they will bring jobs to Louisiana.

Doocey cited a Fox News poll that found 76% of Americans would oppose having a data center built in their community.

"You didn't run that poll in Richland Parish and you didn't poll the teachers in Richland Parish, who went from the lowest paid teachers in Louisiana to the highest paid teachers in Louisiana," Landry replied. "You look at a parish that had extreme poverty and right now it's got record amounts of opportunity."

The lawsuit against the PSC could scramble Entergy and Meta's plans to get an unprecedented amount of new power plants and transmission lines approved by the end of the year. Entergy and opponents have litigated the plans for the expansion — involving seven new gas-fired power plants — before an administrative law judge. The PSC is expected to vote by December.

The commission has two newly elected members, Republicans Stephanie Hilferty and John Atkins. They will take office in January, moving the PSC from a 3-2 Republican majority to a 4-1 split.

BLOTTER

Continued from page 1B

Anyone with information is asked to call Acadia Parish Sheriff's Office detectives at (337) 788-8700 or Crime Stoppers of Acadia Parish at (337) 789-8477.

Branch man indicted on child rape counts

A St. Landry Parish grand jury has indicted a Branch man on three counts of aggravated rape and two counts of oral sexual battery, prosecutors said.

Chad Abraham Richard, 59, was indicted Friday in the 27th Judicial District Court. The rapes occurred before the victims turned 13, prosecutors said.

Prosecutors said Richard took the victims into the woods one at a time on an all-terrain vehicle and assaulted them in a secluded area.

Sheriff's deputies arrested Richard on July 28 after a complaint in May, deputies said. He was charged then with eight counts of first-degree rape and seven counts of second-degree rape.

An indictment is a grand jury's finding that enough evidence exists for a case to go to trial. It is not a finding of guilt.

Aggravated rape carries a mandatory life sentence at hard labor without probation, parole or suspension of sentence, prosecutors said. Oral sexual battery carries up to 10 years at hard labor.

Richard is scheduled to be arraigned Nov. 12.

Police: Man arrested after cocaine found

A Lafayette man was arrested Sunday after Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office narcotics agents said they found nearly 5 pounds of cocaine in his vehicle during a traffic stop on Interstate 10 near Scott.

Isiah Mouton, 37, was pulled over for traffic violations Sunday afternoon, the Sheriff's Office said in a news release. Agents searched the vehicle on probable cause and found the cocaine and 4 grams of marijuana.

Agents then obtained a search warrant for Mouton's home in Lafayette, where they said they found another 280 grams of marijuana and a handgun.

Mouton was booked into the Lafayette Parish Correctional Center on two counts of possession with intent to distribute Schedule I controlled dangerous substances, the Sheriff's Office said. He also faces counts of possession of Schedule I controlled dangerous substances, transactions involving proceeds from drug activity and illegal possession of a firearm in the presence of controlled dangerous substances.

The release did not state what traffic violation prompted the stop or whether bond has been set.

The Sheriff's Office said the case remains under investigation and no further information is available at this time.

Email Kristin Askelson at kaskelson@theadvocate.com.

POCHE

Continued from page 1B

beyond Acadiana, and Poche was interviewed for the Southern Foodways Alliance Oral History Project in 2007.

His obituary shared that he loved working alongside his employees, saying, "He was very passionate in his belief that everyone deserved an opportunity to be somebody." Following his death, social media tributes from former employees and colleagues remembered a supportive boss who cared about their success.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Karen Poche, and daughter Desiree Michelle Poche. A celebration of life was held at the Poche Bridge Country Club Tuesday.

Email Joanna Brown at joanna.brown@theadvocate.com.

LAWSUIT

Continued from page 1B

15th Judicial District Court asking a judge to quash the warrants and return his property. Murrill's office argued in a November 2025 brief that the law is constitutional and that property needed as evidence must be kept during an investigation. Minutes from a March 11, 2026, hearing on the motion show Judge Michelle Billeaud ordered the Sheriff's Office to review a Chevron-issued laptop and an unopened iPhone for possible return by April 15.

Email Dean Boudreaux at dean.boudreaux@theadvocate.com.

LOTTERY

MONDAY, NOV. 9, 2026
PICK 3: 2-8-7
PICK 4: 6-2-0-3
PICK 5: 0-4-9-7-8
POWERBALL: 13-34-41-45-48 (25)

Unofficial notification, keep your tickets.

Obituaries

Kavanaugh, Joseph H. 'Joe'



December 29, 1933 - November 7, 2026

Joseph H. "Joe" Kavanaugh lived a life defined by integrity, public service, and lasting contributions to the legal and civic communities of Louisiana. Born in December 1933, in Ruston, Louisiana, Joe was raised with a strong sense of discipline and commitment that would guide him through-out his life.

A graduate of Ruston High School in 1951 and Louisiana Tech University in 1954, Joe earned his law degree from Louisiana State University in 1957.

Following his admission to the Louisiana Bar, Joe served his country in the United States Army, where he was assigned to the Office of the Judge Advocate General. After completing his military service, he began a legal career rooted in public service. He was an active member of both the American and Louisiana Bar Associations and served in leadership roles within the Louisiana Bankers Association, including as General Counsel.

Beyond his professional life, Joe was deeply committed to his community and to service. He served on the Biracial Committee for East Baton Rouge Parish during a pivotal time in the region's history. He was Chairman of the Board of University United Methodist Church in Baton Rouge and gave generously of his time to the Volunteers of America, serving both as Chairman of the New Orleans Area Board and as a member of the National Board. In recognition of his humanitarian contributions, he was awarded the Creative Human Service Award in 1987. He was also a founding member and Chairman of Karren's Kids, Inc., a nonprofit organization devoted to supporting gifted and talented children in St. Landry Parish.

After retiring from Adams & Reese in 1998, Joe embraced a quieter life while remaining engaged in his community. In 2007, he settled in Washington, Louisiana, where he lived with his beloved wife, Gabriele.

Above all, Joe was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. He is survived by his wife Gabriele, four children—Michael J. Kavanaugh (Jayne), Laura Harris, Paul B. Kavanaugh (Jennifer), and Sara Sotile (Mike); grandchildren Jacob, Clayton and Trent Kavanaugh (Porter), Austin Suits (Ka-ley), Meg Pool (John), Emily Jewell (Robb), Alice Griffith (Will), Molly Harris (Legend), Caroline and Miles Kavanaugh, Michael Sotile (Emalee) and Mary Sutton Sotile along with 10 great-grandchildren who carry for-ward his legacy of dedication, integrity, and service.

He is preceded in death by his parents Morton John Kavanugh and Elizabeth Bowden Kavanaugh, brother M. John Kavanaugh, Jr., mother of his children Barbara Sutton Kavanaugh, son-in-law John Jude Harris, and grandson Brett Suits.

Joseph H. Kavanaugh will be remembered not only for his distinguished legal career, but for the character he exemplified, the lives he touched, and the enduring impact he made on his profession and his community.

In lieu of flowers, the family request memorial donations in his honor may be made to Karren's Kids, 487 White Oak Road, Washington, LA 70589, or The Town of Washington Cemetery Foundation, P. O. BOX 42, Washington, LA, 70589.

A Memorial Mass of Christian Burial for Joseph H. "Joe" Kavanaugh will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, November 14, 2026, at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, 318 E. Moundville St., Washington, LA, 70589. The Very Reverend Monsignor Keith DeRouen and Rev. Fr. Corey Campeaux will concelebrate the Mass.

Family and friends are invited to sign and view the online guestbook at www.lafondardoin.com.

Lafond-Ardoin Funeral Home of Opelousas, 2845 South Union Street, Opelousas, LA 70570, (337) 942-2638, has been entrusted with the funeral arrangements.

How to place an Obituary Notice

EMAIL:
obits@theadvocate.com

OR CALL FOR MORE INFORMATION:
225-388-0289

How to place a Memorial Ad

An "***In Memory Of***" ad, is a way to pay tribute to your loved one. This remembrance is often printed on the anniversary of a loved one's death. The deadline is two days prior to the day you want your ad to appear.

TO PLACE A MEMORIAL AD GO TO:
obituaries.theacadianaadvocate.com,
click submit an obituary and select create a memoriam.

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Public Notices

Public Notices Meet/Hear/Min

PUBLIC NOTICE

Agenda
City Zoning Commission
Public Meeting
Monday, November 16, 2026
5:30 P.M., or immediately following the conclusion of the Lafayette City Planning Commission, whichever occurs later
Community Development and Planning Department
220 West Willow Street, Building C
Town Hall Auditorium

I. Call to Order

II. Chair's Opening Remarks

III. Approval of the Minutes
October 19, 2026

Public Notices Meet/Hear/Min

IV. New Business

1. Case No. 2026-22-REZ TBD (3300 Block & 3047) Verot School Road Rezoning
A request to rezone the subject property, from RS-1 (Residential Single-Family) and MN-1 (Mixed-Use Neighborhood) to RM-1 (Residential Mixed), and MN-1 (Mixed-Use Neighborhood) to A (Agricultural) located generally north of Woodstone Drive, east of Verot School Road, and south of Points of View Parkway.

2. Case No. 2026-23-REZ 5100 Block West Congress Street Rezoning
A request to rezone the subject property, from CM-1 (Commercial Mixed) to MN-1 (Mixed-Use Neighborhood) located generally north of Trista Lane, west of Travailleur Road, and south of West Congress Street.

3. Case No. 2026-25-REZ 190 South College Road Rezoning and Conditional Use Permit
A request to rezone the subject property, from RM-1 (Residential Mixed) to MN-1 (Mixed-Use Neighborhood) with a Conditional Use Permit for a restaurant in a MN-1 (Mixed-Use Neighborhood) zoning district located generally north of North Arlington Drive, east of Acadian Drive, and south of South College Road.

V. Other Business
1. Director's Report and review of Lafayette City Council action on matters previously considered by the Zoning Commission.
2. LDC Amendments
3. Approval of 2027 calendar for Zoning Commission

VI. Adjournment

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THE ACADIANA ADVOCATE