

Week seven of the 2026 Regular Session

Editor's Note: This legislative update was submitted on Friday, Feb. 20.

As we reach the halfway point of the 2026 Legislative Session, I want to provide a clear and thoughtful update on where we stand and what lies ahead.

With more than 30 of the 60 legislative days complete, the Senate has remained focused on steady, deliberate progress. At this stage, nine of the Senate Majority's 10 top-priority bills have been filed and passed the Senate. That work reflects months of preparation during the interim and careful review in committee and on the Senate floor.

I have also heard from many of you regarding the early budget proposal filed in the House of Representatives. Budget discussions are important because they directly affect Kentucky families, public employees, and long-term fiscal stability. I appreciate those who have reached out with questions and

concerns. It is important to clarify where we are in the process. The state budget traditionally begins in the House. The current House proposal has not yet passed that chamber and remains subject to revision before it ever reaches the Senate.



STEPHEN MEREDITH

To be clear, no final budget decisions have been made. When the House sends its proposal to the Senate, we will carefully review it, evaluate any changes, and make adjustments where necessary. That is the Senate's constitutional responsibility, and we take that role seriously.

Questions surrounding health insurance costs, benefit stability, and long-term affordability deserve disciplined, data-driven review. As we move forward, our guiding principles remain consistent: maintaining a structurally balanced budget, using one-time dollars responsibly, and making transparent decisions that protect both

taxpayers and public employees.

This week, the Senate also welcomed military families from across the commonwealth for our annual Military Kids Day at the Capitol. This event recognizes the children and grandchildren of those who serve in our armed forces. While we often focus on the sacrifices of those in uniform, their families share that burden. Military children adapt to frequent moves, new schools, and long periods without a parent at home. Their resilience is remarkable. Despite construction limiting space this year, the event reached full capacity — a testament to how meaningful this tradition has become. It was an honor to recognize these young Kentuckians and thank their families for their service.

Here are several bills that passed the Senate this week:

SB 9 supports housing development by streamlining regulations and expanding financing tools for local communities. The goal is to increase housing supply, strengthen local

economies, and help more Kentuckians access affordable homes.

SB 47 expands state death benefits and tuition waivers to include search and rescue personnel who lose their lives in the line of duty, ensuring their families receive the same support as other emergency responders.

SB 69 creates the Autism Spectrum Disorder Trust Fund and allows voluntary state tax refund contributions to support autism research, services, and workforce development across Kentucky.

SJR 74 directs the creation of a statewide fiscal map of substance use disorder programs and funding to improve transparency, coordination, and accountability in prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts.

SB 85 allows public pension benefits to be placed in a Special Needs Trust for disabled beneficiaries, helping families protect long-term care while preserving eligibility for essential support programs.

SB 104 establishes a 25-foot safety zone around first responders

and creates penalties for those who intentionally interfere or threaten them, while protecting constitutional rights to observe and record.

SB 141 modernizes public notice laws by updating requirements, expanding digital access, and helping control costs while maintaining transparency for taxpayers.

SB 152 strengthens school leadership by affirming principals' final decision-making authority while maintaining structured input from teachers and parents.

SB 159 improves Kentucky's response to missing persons cases by requiring timely reporting and stronger coordination across state and federal databases.

Each of these measures now advances to the House for further consideration.

As we move into the second half of the session, deadlines are approaching, committees remain active, and coordination between chambers will continue. My focus remains on responsible governance, long-term stability, and policies that strengthen Ken-

tucky families and communities.

Thank you for staying engaged. Thoughtful input from constituents strengthens the legislative process, and I encourage you to continue sharing your perspective as we move forward.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you. I look forward to keeping you updated as the work of the 2026 Regular Session continues. If you have questions or ideas, feel free to contact my office at 502-564-8100 or email me at Stephen.Meredith@kylegislature.gov. You can learn more about bills, committees, and other updates from the Kentucky General Assembly at www.legislature.ky.gov.

Sen. Stephen Meredith, R-Leitchfield, represents the 5th Senate District, encompassing Breckinridge, Butler, Grayson, Ohio, and Meade counties. Meredith serves as chair of the Senate Health Services Committee and co-chair of the Government Contract Review Committee. He is also a member of the Senate Committees on Education; Families and Children; and Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE PASSING OF THE REV. JESSE L. JACKSON, SR

The Kentucky Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission mourns the passing of the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. — a towering civil rights leader, a courageous public servant, and an ordained Baptist minister whose life's work helped bend our nation toward justice.

Rev. Jackson stood in the long shadow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and carried forward the movement's moral clarity with fearless conviction. He gave voice to those too often ignored — Black and Brown communities, the disenfranchised, working families, and the poor — and demanded that America confronts inequality not as a talking point, but as a

moral emergency. Through decades of advocacy, organizing, and leadership, he challenged systems that excluded and diminished, while building coalitions that made room for hope, dignity, and opportunity.

As an activist and organizer, Rev. Jackson insisted that civil rights and human rights belong to everyone. As a political

leader, he expanded what was possible — bringing the concerns of everyday people into the center of national conversation and opening doors for generations of leaders who followed. As a minister, he reminded the nation that justice is not only a policy issue, but a spiritual calling — one that requires courage, compassion, and action.

We extend our deepest condolences to the Jackson family, to all who labored beside him, and to the countless individuals who found strength in his voice and vision. May we honor his legacy not only with words, but with continued work — serving our neighbors, protecting the right to vote, standing with the marginalized, and advancing the beloved

community Dr. King called us to build.

Rev. Jesse Jackson's life moved the plight of the oppressed forward. His legacy will continue to challenge and inspire us to keep pushing, keep organizing, and keep hope alive.

**Kevin L. Russell, Chair
Martin Luther King, Jr.
State Commission (KY)**

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12			13		14				15			
16				17		18				19		
20					21					22		
			23		24				25			
26	27	28	29			30						
31						32						
33								34	35	36	37	38
			39	40	41		42	43				
		44	45				46					
	47					48						
49				50			51		52	53	54	55
56				57			58					
59				60				61				
62				63					64			

CLUES ACROSS

1. What travelers must do
5. Calendar month
8. Hopefully quickly
12. Once more
14. Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!
15. "Cheers" actress Perlman
16. Astronomy unit
18. Savings vehicle
19. Get your ducks in this
20. Right away
21. Popular sports league
22. Containers
23. Entireties
26. One who wassails
30. Turned-up position
31. Extreme modesty
32. Writing utensil
33. Rewards (archaic)
34. Ancient capital
39. S. American wood sorrel
42. General discomfort
44. Philippine island
46. A witty saying
47. One who summarizes
49. Covered in
50. Mimic
51. Henry was a notable one
56. Daughter of Hera and Zeus
57. Retired NFLer Newton
58. Playground equipment
59. Concept
60. Satisfaction
61. Fishing net
62. Hammer end
63. A father's male child
64. Japanese drink

CLUES DOWN

1. Off-Broadway figure
2. Gelatinous substance
3. Concern
4. "Lick It Up" rockers
5. Serbian river
6. Part of a hat
7. Bowl-shaped drinking vessel
8. Semitic language
9. Utter a shrill cry
10. Long times
11. Animal parts
13. Causing annoyance
17. Amorous talker
24. Attempt
25. Harmonic effects
26. Cost per mile
27. They ___
28. Bitterly regret
29. Not even
35. A way to drop
36. Title of respect
37. World leader
38. Georgia rockers
40. National capital
41. Great Plains people
42. Duck-sized dinosaur genus
43. Architectural recesses
44. Member of U.S. Navy
45. Mountainous
47. Kite bird
48. Sweetheart (archaic)
49. Popular snack made of potato
52. 70s songsters The Bee ___
53. SE China port ___men
54. Something to fill up
55. League of Legends character

KIDS' CORNER

People FACT:

Approximately 73 percent of the world's population uses this.

Answer: The Internet

NEW WORD WEB

resources interconnected by the internet

How they say that in...

English: Clutter
Spanish: Desorden
Italian: Disordine
French: Désordre
German: Unordnung

Get the PICTURE?

Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

Answer: Laptop

Did You Know?

Parents should monitor their children's internet usage to make sure that they are safe while online.

1	8							3
		3	6		7			8
	5					7		
7		1			2	3		
			1		9		2	
			4		3		9	
	3				8		6	
5		4	9					

Level: Advanced

SOLUTIONS

I	K	V	S		N	O	S		N	E	E	P
E	N	I	E	S		V	H	V	A	E	D	I
M	V	S	E	E	S	M	V	C		B	E	H
H	T	H	G	I	E	E	P	V		D	V	L
			T	S	I	L	V	R	E	N	E	G
M	V	R	G	I	P	E		R	V	M	E	S
E	S	I	V	L	V	M		V	C	O		
R	U	S	S	V				S	D	E	E	M
			N	E	P		A	R	E	D	E	
			K	O	C	V		R	E	L	O	R
			S	E	I	L	I	V	T	O	T	
S	N	I	B		L	F	N		O	T	S	E
M	O	R	V		V	R	I		C	S	E	R
V	E	H	R		H	V	R		N	V	A	V
P	V	A	V		E	C	D		E	K	C	P

6	7	2	5	4	3	9	1	8
9	7	2	5	4	3	9	1	8
1	3	8	9	2	6	4	7	5
5	6	4	8	1	7	2	3	9
7	6	1	3	8	4	5	9	2
6	2	5	6	7	1	8	4	3
4	8	3	2	9	5	1	6	7
2	4	7	1	3	8	9	5	6
8	1	6	7	5	9	3	2	4
3	5	6	4	9	2	7	8	1