

Kentucky GOP hopefuls for US Senate to speak at Fancy Farm Picnic

BY MCKENNA HORSLEY
Kentucky Lantern

In what's already becoming a sizzling U.S. Senate primary, the top three Republican candidates plan to participate in a Kentucky tradition known for politicians' trading jabs in front of a crowd.

Former Attorney General Daniel Cameron and Lexington businessman Nate Morris confirmed with event organizers their plans to speak at the annual Fancy Farm Picnic in August. A spokesperson for U.S. Rep. Andy Barr told the Kentucky Lantern he also plans to speak.

The picnic, which is also a barbecue fundraiser for the St. Jerome Catholic Church in Graves County, has become a premier Kentucky tradition for elected officials and election hopefuls. In front of a fiery crowd of Republicans and Democrats, politicians take to the stage to lob verbal blows at their opponents — who are typically feet away watching the spectacle themselves.

The only Democrat to announce for the U.S. Senate seat, Kentucky House Democratic Floor Leader Pamela Stevenson, of Louisville, was invited to speak by picnic or-

ganizers, but had not responded to the invitation, according to a media advisory issued Tuesday. Her campaign did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment from the Lantern.

Republican U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell, whose plans to not run for reelection in 2026 set off the jockeying for U.S. Senate in Kentucky, has not yet confirmed his attendance with organizers this year but has acknowledged the invitation, the advisory said. He attended the Fancy Farm Picnic last year, and has gone to the event since the 1980s, when he was first elected to the U.S. Senate. Before the 2023 picnic, McConnell's appearance was still pending in the days leading up to the event.

An appearance on the stage this year could be an interesting one for McConnell, should he choose to go. The Republican candidates have attempted to distance themselves from the long-time incumbent in order to bring themselves closer to President Donald Trump, who has yet to endorse a candidate in the race.

Republican U.S. Rep. James Comer and the Democratic candidate challenging him, John "Drew" Williams, of Marshall County, have



Fancy Farm Picnic-goers stroll the grounds at St. Jerome Catholic Church. (Kentucky Lantern)

both agreed to speak at the picnic.

Other politicians speaking are:

- Republican Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell
- Republican Attorney General Russell Coleman
- Republican state Sen. Jason Howell
- Republican state Rep. Kim Holloway

Fancy Farm Picnic organizers said that no one asked to speak so far has declined the invite. Republican state officers Auditor Allison Ball, Secretary of State Michael Adams and Treasurer Mark Metcalf have not confirmed their plans. Republican U.S. Sen. Rand Paul has also not confirmed if he will attend. Kentucky's top Democrats — Gov. Andy Beshear and Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman — have not confirmed if they will attend the picnic this year. Neither of them attended last year's event. The Fancy Farm Picnic is scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 2. Ashli Watts, the president and CEO of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, will be the emcee.

Commission finds 'probable cause' Democratic lawmaker from Louisville violated ethics code

BY MCKENNA HORSLEY
Kentucky Lantern

The Kentucky Legislative Ethics Commission has found "probable cause" that Rep. Daniel Grossberg, a Louisville Democrat accused of inappropriate behavior toward women, committed ethics violations, clearing the way for the first public airing of the charges against him.

The commission's votes came after a closed-door hours-long meeting last month which included appearances by Grossberg and his lawyers, women who work in politics and workers from a Louisville strip club.

During a recent meeting, commission members voted to find "probable cause" that the lawmaker violated the state ethics code in three ways: relating "intimidating statements or actions toward a private business," "attempts to obtain contributions in exchange for possible state catering vendor business for a private company," and an



Rep. Daniel Grossberg, D-Louisville, speaks on the Kentucky House floor. (LRC Public Information photo)

interaction with an individual in Grossberg's Capitol Annex office before and after a July 2023 committee meeting "involving inappropriate treatment of that person."

The commission met in an executive session before votes were cast.

The commission may now hold a public adjudicatory hearing. After the votes, commission Chairman David Nicholas told Grossberg and his attorneys that he may file an agreed settlement in the case.

Thomas E. Clay, one of Grossberg's lawyers, told the Kentucky Lantern last Wednesday afternoon that the commission had not yet notified him of when the public hearing might be. He said he was "somewhat surprised" by the scope of the hearings because the commission had offered a settlement order based on only some of the allegations listed in the probable cause decision.

"So now, they've referred these other charges for full blown hearing, and I find that somewhat contradictory," Clay said.

Grossberg has been expelled from the House Democratic Caucus and faces calls from within his party to resign his legislative seat. The allegations that he behaved inappropriately toward women came to light last year in reporting reported by the Lexington Herald-Leader. In a separate investigation, the Legislative Research Commission questioned women about inappropriate text messages sent to them by Grossberg. Later,

the strip club, Foxys Gentlemen's Club, told the Herald-Leader it banned Grossberg for life after he inappropriately touched a dancer.

Before the June hearing, Grossberg had attempted to sway Franklin Circuit Judge Thomas Wingate to block the proceeding, but Wingate dismissed the motion. However, the case

is still pending.

House Democrats sought the investigation by the Legislative Ethics Commission. What exactly is in the complaint against Grossberg, as well as any investigation findings, are not publicly known though some details have been reported by media outlets. Kentucky law makes the ethics commission's pro-

ceedings, including complaints and other records related to a preliminary inquiry, confidential until the commission makes a final determination.

Grossberg represents the 30th House District, which includes central parts of Jefferson County. He has gained some primary challengers for the 2026 election.

See What's Taking Shape Locally

State receipts surpass estimates for 2025 Fiscal Year

BY TOM LATEK
Kentucky Today

The State Budget Director's Office said receipts for both the General Fund and Road Fund exceeded the Consensus Forecasting Group's official estimate for Kentucky state government's 2025 Fiscal Year (FY25), which ended on June 30.

General Fund receipts for FY25 totaled \$15,703.2 million, exceeding FY24 total revenue by \$131.9 million, or 0.8 percent. General Fund revenues exceeded the official revenue estimates by a nearly identical amount, \$131.3 million.

Road Fund revenues totaled \$1,863.5 million, 0.6 percent less than the FY24 total. Compared to the official FY25 Road Fund estimate of \$1,825.0 million, actual revenues exceeded the estimate by \$38.5 million.

State Budget Director John Hicks stated, "Both

funds produced revenues in excess of the enacted estimates. Major business taxes far exceeded the official estimates offsetting lower than forecasted income and sales tax receipts. Strength in business taxes demonstrates that Kentucky businesses are producing at a profitable level. On the Road Fund ledger, the use tax paid on the sales price of new and used vehicles provided the collections needed to surpass the official estimate by \$38.5 million. Car and truck sales are evidence that Kentucky consumers are earning working wages sufficient to finance these purchases."

Of the eight accounts that are part of the General Fund, four accounts had differences that were within \$10 million of the actual amounts. The other four accounts had variations ranging from \$125 million to \$500 million.

The larger differences cancelled each other out so that, in total, General Fund estimates were within one percent of the actual receipts.

Looking at the seven accounts make up the Road Fund, three accounts finished below the estimated amount while four accounts exceeded the official estimate. The forecasting differences ranged in magnitude from -\$30.4 million to \$69.4 million. Among the accounts, motor vehicle usage tax was \$69.4 million over the official estimate while motor fuels revenues came in \$30.4 million under the estimate. All other accounts, taken together, were \$0.5 million below forecasted levels.

The final budget surplus amount for FY25 will be known once the accounting records for expenditures are completed later this month.

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