

Supporters of ending ‘slavery’ in Kentucky line up behind Lexington lawmaker’s bill

BY SARAH LADD
Kentucky Today

During the six and a half years Savvy Shabazz spent incarcerated in nine Kentucky institutions, he worked for as little as 63 cents a day.

Now, he and others are pushing for an amendment to modernize Kentucky’s Constitution, which currently permits slavery and indentured servitude for people convicted of crimes.

Ratified in 1891, Chapter 25 of Kentucky’s Constitution states that “slavery and involuntary servitude in this state are forbidden, except as a punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.”

“The presence of the slavery clause and involuntary servitude in Kentucky’s Constitution perpetuate a painful legacy of oppression and dehumanization,” Shabazz, whom Gov. Andy Beshear pardoned in 2020, said Tuesday during a Frankfort press conference.

“It serves as a stark reminder of a dark chapter in our nation’s history when the fundamental rights of certain individuals like myself was systematically denied based on race,” Shabazz said.

Rep. George Brown Jr., D-Lexington, has introduced a bill to strike that “except” clause through a constitutional amendment.

“The 13th Amendment abolished slavery for all intents and purposes,” Brown said, “but slavery still continues.”

‘We’ve never been in a state without slavery’

Patricia Gailey with Abolish Slavery Kentucky said the slavery clause causes many



Patricia Gailey with Abolish Slavery Kentucky speaks to reporters about a proposal to remove from Kentucky’s Constitution a clause allowing slavery for people convicted of crimes. Behind her, Savvy Shabazz listens. (Photo by Sarah Ladd/Kentucky Lantern)

negative effects.

It can “filter up through the system, creating destruction of health, exploitation of resources, exploitation of labor, destruction of family, destruction of self agency, destruction of dignity, corruption, inhumane conditions, unsafe conditions, PTSD, increase in addictions, recidivism, all kinds of things that we don’t really want,” she said.

Shabazz has lived this, he said. Doing demolition work in Louisville for 60 cents a day put him at risk of long-term fallout, he said.

“Part of reentry into our society is to make sure that we are prepared to take care of ourselves and our families. So pay us a livable wage,” he said. “What happens if I lose a limb while building or working inside of the institution? How will I take care of myself and my fam-

ily once I’m released? If we’re really talking about reentry, we have to remove that involuntary servitude and slavery clause and do what’s right in Kentucky.”

He sees Brown’s House Bill 121 as a “segue” into larger prison reform because, he said, “we don’t want to be a slave state.”

Kentucky always has been, Gailey said. “We’ve never been in a state without slavery... without involuntary servitude,” she said. “From day one, prior to our first Constitution, this state has been a slave state. We need to change that.”

About 37,000 Kentuckians are behind bars, according to Prison Policy Initiative data. The majority — 19,000 — are in state prisons. PPI data shows Black Kentuckians and Kentuckians of color are over-represented in detention.

Kentucky is about 9% Black and 87% white, according to the United States Census Bureau. But prison populations are 21% Black and 76% white; prisoners in jails are 18% Black and 79% white, according to PPI.

Could the 2025 legislation be successful?

Brown said he’s yet to have conversations with Republican lawmakers about the legislation, but hopes to do so when the legislature reconvenes next week to finish the 2025 session.

“My hope is that we’ll have conversation with those members across the aisle,” he said. “This is the 21st century. The 13th Amendment was filed or passed, adopted, in 1865. Do the math as to how many years we’re talking about.”

Should the General Assembly

pass the bill, voters would need to weigh in next year.

Kentucky voters have a mixed record on changing the Constitution. In 2022 they struck down a proposed amendment that would have stated that there’s no right to an abortion in Kentucky’s Constitution. In 2024, they voted against another proposed amendment that would have opened a path for the Republican-controlled legislature to allow state dollars to flow to nonpublic schools, such as private or charter schools.

They did, however, approve an amendment that further prohibits people who are not U.S. citizens from voting in Kentucky elections that same year.

Brown filed this legislation in 2024, as well, and only Democrats signed on as cosponsors. It didn’t get assigned a committee, making it effectively dead on arrival.

Brown hopes for Republican cosponsors this year — and a committee hearing. So far his only other cosponsor is Rep. Beverly Chester-Burton, D-Louisville.

Gailey urged lawmakers to take the Constitution’s wording seriously.

“What other words in our Constitution are thought to be so insignificant that we could set that aside? None,” she said. “We’re talking about crimes against humanity here in our state. Until we remove this clause, because it’s in our Constitution, we are all complicit in crimes against humanity, and I’m not OK with that, and I think that our conscientious lawmakers, if they stop to think about it, they would not be okay with that either. We need to move this legislation forward, and we need to do it now.”

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PUBLIC NOTICE

INVITATION TO BID

The Lincoln County Board of Education will accept sealed bids for mowing and snow removal for 2025. Bids must be mailed or delivered to Lee Ann Smith, Lincoln County Board of Education, 305 Danville Avenue, Stanford, KY 40484 in a sealed envelope marked “MOWING/SNOW REMOVAL BID”. The name and address of the vendor shall appear on the sealed envelope. Bid specifications can be obtained from Brad Smith at the Lincoln County Board of Education by e-mailing brad.smith@lincoln.kyschools.us or by calling 606-365-2124. Bids will be opened at 10:00 a.m., February 3rd, 2025, at the Lincoln County Board of Education. None will be considered thereafter. Contract may be awarded to the lowest and/or best evaluated bidder meeting all specifications or conditions. Bids may be awarded separately for mowing and snow removal.

Interior Journal: Jan. 23, and 30, 2025

BIDS

PUBLIC NOTICE

COMMISSIONER’S SALES COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY 28TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT LINCOLN CIRCUIT COURT

Pursuant to the Judgments and Orders of Sale of the Lincoln Circuit Court, the Master Commissioner of the Lincoln Circuit Court will sell the real properties described in the following Civil Actions at the front door on the outside of the Lincoln County Courthouse, on FEBRUARY 11, 2025 at the hour of 10:00 AM, or as soon thereafter as said property can be sold. The purpose of these sale is to satisfy the Judgements of the Lincoln Circuit Court in the amounts hereinafter set forth, together with interest, advances for the protection of the property, costs and attorney fees as authorized and provided in said Judgements. The hereinafter described real properties will be sold and conveyed on the following terms and conditions:

1. Subject to valid and existing easements, restrictions, reservations, conditions, covenants, and limitations apparent or of record in the chain of title.
2. The purchaser shall either pay the entire purchase price at the time of sale; or if the sale is made on credit, the purchaser shall pay a minimum deposit of 10% of the purchase price with the balance due in 30 days. If the sale is made on credit, the purchaser shall pay the required deposit at the time of sale and execute bond for the balance due bearing interest at the rate the Judgement bears from the date of sale until paid, WITH A

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SURETY THEREON ; and the bond shall be secured by a lien upon said property sold which shall have the full force and effect of a judgement.

3. The real properties shall be sold free and clear of all liens, indebtedness, interest and claims of the parties to the proceeding, subject to any and all applicable statutory rights of redemptions, including and Right of Redemption granted to the United States of America pursuant to 28 U.S.C Sec. 2410.

4. Delinquent ad valorem taxes will be paid out of the proceeds of sale. The purchaser will be responsible for payment of the 2025 ad valorem taxes. Possession of the real property will be given to the purchaser with the delivery of the deed of conveyance thereto.

SALE NO. 1
NATIONSTAR MORTGAGE LLC V HEIRS OF JERI OSTROWSKI ET AL
24-CI-00206; JUDGMENT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$139,816.69 PLUS INTEREST IN THE AMOUNT OF \$4,940.13; AND INTEREST AT THE RATE OF 6.99%; BEING THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 285 HALLS GAP ESTATES STANFORD, KY 40484; DEED BOOK 477 PAGE 524; PVA MAP #65A-001-10

SALE NO. 2
US BANK TRUST ASSOCIATION V ANNALISA GILBERT ET AL 22-CI-00211 JUDGMENT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$89,504.97 PLUS INTEREST AT THE RARE OF 3.375% FROM 11-1-2020 COURT COST AND ATTORNEY FEES; BEING THE PROPERTY AT 901 LANCASTER STREET STANFORD, KY 40484; PVA MAP #051-04-03-015.00; SEE DEED BOOK 337 PAGE 338, LINCOLN COUNTY CLERK

SALE NO. 3
FREEDOM MORTGAGE CORPORATION V SPENCER LONGNECKER ET UX ET AL; 23-CI-00119; JUDGMENT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$111,937.88; INTEREST AT THE RATE OF 3% FROM 9-1-2022 PLUS COST AND ATTORNEY FEES; BEING 1.124 ACRES MORE-OR LESS AT 105 PLEASANT POINT SCHOOL ROAD, WAYNESBURG, KY 40489; SEE DEED BOOK 447 PAGE 92 LINCOLN COUNTY CLERK;-SEE PVA MAP#56-049A

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Interior Journal: Jan. 23, 30 and Feb. 6, 2025

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