

Kentucky state auditor to conduct investigation of Fayette County Public Schools

BY MCKENNA HORSLEY
Kentucky Lantern

Republican State Auditor Allison Ball announced her office would begin a special investigation of Fayette County Public Schools following public scrutiny of a proposed tax increase.

She announced the investigation Tuesday morning. Last week, Republican Attorney General Russell Coleman's office said the school

district's board failed to give proper public notice before voting to increase occupational taxes within the district.

"Upon review of publicly available information, as well as listening to concerns from parents and other constituents, I have determined that my office will conduct a special examination of the Fayette County Public School District," Ball said in her statement.

In May, the FCPS board voted 3-2 to approved

an occupational tax increase of 0.25% to take effect in January. The board approved a \$848 million proposed budget with the tax increase that would cost residents an average of \$13 more per month, local media outlets reported. Following the attorney general's opinion, FCPS initially planned to reconsider the tax proposal during a June 23 meeting. However, board chair Tyler Murphy said FCPS would pause the proposal, ac-

cording to the Lexington Herald-Leader.

Ball's investigation received praise from Republican state Sens. Amanda Mays Bledsoe, Jared Carpenter, Donald Douglas, Greg Elkins, Matt Nunn and Steve West. They all represent parts of Fayette County. Mays Bledsoe previously requested the attorney general's office review the matter.

In a joint statement released shortly after Ball's announcement, the senators said they are "committed to the success of our public education system and to standing with the dedicated teachers who serve our students" and have "heard from many constituents who are deeply concerned about Fayette County Public Schools, particularly regarding district spending and the board's recent occupational tax vote, which was determined to be unlawful." The senators said that decisions of the school district carry "educational consequences" as well as "regional economic and workforce implications."

"Transparency, honesty, and community engagement are essential," the senators said. "The district must practice these principles, not merely talk about them. A deeper, independent review could clarify how taxpayer dollars are being spent, identify areas for improvement, and help

restore public confidence in the district's leadership.

"We believe in our schools, we support our teachers, and we believe accountability, openness, and trust are the foundation for moving forward. If the board seeks to rebuild its image in the eyes of the public, we ask board members and district leadership to support an independent review."

The issue isn't completely partisan. Democratic Rep. Anne Gay Donworth, of Lexington, addressed the board during its May 27 meeting to express concern about the transparency behind the tax proposal.

Dia Davidson-Smith, a spokesperson for FCPS, said in a statement Tuesday afternoon that the school district "is committed to continuous improvement and, above all, student success."

"We are proud of the strategic investments we've made in our schools, which are leading to stronger outcomes, expanded opportunities, and meaningful progress in closing longstanding opportunity gaps," Davidson-Smith added. "The State Auditor has the full authority to conduct a special examination at her discretion, and we welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with her office. We are confident that a fair and thorough review of our operations will af-

firm our commitment to excellence, equity, and transparency in service to our students and community."

Previous audits and financial reports for FCPS are published on the school district's website.

KY United 120-AFT, a teachers' union, said that it was glad the FCPS board paused the tax proposal in a statement Tuesday afternoon. The union encouraged board members and the school district to "work together to create change in the budget process and to be better to each other and the constituents they serve" as well as work with Ball in her upcoming investigation.

"We ask them to work with their rank-and-file staff and finally allow a vote on collective bargaining, as the need for formal staff input is much needed. We ask them to embrace the opportunity to highlight the amazing work our district provides to students but also to embrace any criticism as a call to action on how we improve — not as a political attack," KY United 120-AFT said.

"Trust is easily broken, but even harder to rebuild. As always, we are ready to work and will continue to show up on behalf of our kids, members, and community. FCPS is and can be a beacon for what public education can be when we all work together. Let's thrive together."



Wilmore's Green Gazebo (Photo by Gillian Stawiszynski)

CONCERTS, from 1

Avenue. Free admission but non-perishable food donations and pet food is requested to be donated to the Wilmore-High Bridge Community Center and the Jessamin County An-

imal Shelter.

Tables and chairs are provided or attendees can bring their own. A food truck will be on sight.

These concerts are sponsored by the City of Wilmore, the Jessamine County Fiscal Court, and the Stock Yards Bank. Inc.

ROTARY, from 1

able projects throughout the world," including projects that tackle the previously mentioned six most important quality of life.

Chewning focused on how Rotary International put member donations together to fund its 35-year-long effort to eradicate Polio from the world.

In 1894, the first polio outbreak in the United States occurred in Vermont. This killed nearly 18 people. In 1916, a New York City Polio outbreak killed nearly 2,000 people. Throughout the country, 6,000 total people died from Polio in 1916.

In 1960, the U.S. Gov-

ernment authorized an oral vaccine for Polio. In 1979, Rotary International began its fight against Polio. In 1979, Rotary entered into a multi-year agreement to immunize 6 million children in the Philippines. In 1985, Rotary International launched its first Polio Plus program—the first and largest International, coordinated private sector support of public health, according to Chewning.

By 1988, Rotary International and the World Health Assembly launched the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. At that time, there were estimated to be 350,000 cases of Polio in

125 countries. By 1994, the International Commission announced that Polio had been eliminated from the Americas. In 1995, health workers and volunteers, including Rotarians, immunized 165 million children in China and India within a single week. In 2000, 500 million children, or 10 percent of the world's population, had received the polio vaccine. By 2003, Polio was still active in six countries: Afghanistan, Egypt, Niger, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

In 2009, Bill and Melinda Gates partnered with the Rotary Club and the World Health Organization to support Polio

eradication, contributing \$350 million to the cause.

After 35 years of Rotary International providing volunteer efforts and funding for vaccines, hundreds of millions of dollars raised by members, and Polio cases are now down worldwide by 99 percent. India and the continent

of Africa are both now polio-free.

Rotarian Dave Laythem recalls his childhood and the deep anxiety everyone had about Polio at the time. "I remember as a small boy the panic in my parents about Polio. My mother and father were scared to death that their little boy would

get Polio."

In 2025, there's been two confirmed Polio cases in Afghanistan and 11 confirmed Polio cases in Pakistan.

"What I'm counting on for me personally is Rotary will take my \$50 a month and magnify it," Chewning said.

BARR, from 1

Barr has been representing Kentucky's sixth congressional district since 2013. Currently, he is a senior member of the House Financial Services Committee and chairman of the Financial Institutions and Monetary Policy Subcommittee. He also serves on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Months ago, U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell said he would not be seeking an eighth term, which led Barr to putting his hat in the race.

Barr will be joining former Kentucky attorney general Republican Daniel Cameron in the 2026 primary election for McConnell's Senate seat.

In a speech announcing his candidacy for the U.S. Senate, Barr said "I'm running for the U.S. Senate to help this president save our country. I'm a committed conservative who honors our constitution, believes in individual freedom, and fights every single day for limited government, free enterprise and a strong national defense." Barr continued, "I'm no stranger to fighting the good fight. I first got fired up to run for congress when barrack obama was literally shredding our constitution, empowering the government and the expense of the people and trying to fundamentally change the fiber of our nation. I've been fighting the radical left ever since."

Join us for a fun day with the whole family!

SAFETY

RESOURCE

FAIR



Sponsored by:





Saturday, June 14
11:00 am - 2:00 pm



JCHD Parking Lot
210 E Walnut St, Nich.

newvista

YOUR COMMUNITY

BEHAVIORAL

HEALTH CENTER

New Vista assists individuals and families in the enhancement of their emotional, mental and physical well-being.

Mental Health

Substance Use

Developmental Disabilities

Primary Care

Crisis Services



Best Places to Work

IN KENTUCKY • 2023 WINNER