

# Editorial

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Call: (270) 358-3118  
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Publisher  
publisher@  
laruecountyherald.com  
270-358-3119 or 270-765-9096

### NEWS, COMMUNITY VICTORIA COX

Editor  
editor@laruecountyherald.com  
270-358-0451

**SPORTS**  
**JOSH CLAYWELL**  
Sports writer  
joshuaclaywell85@gmail.com

**RON BENNINGFIELD**  
Correspondent

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#### REGULAR PAY

One Year	\$44.51
Six Months	\$26.49
Three Months	\$15.89

— Effective January 1, 2023

# Tax reduction, affordable housing

BY SENATOR JIMMY  
HIGDON

It's official. House Bill 1 has been signed into law, marking another step forward in delivering tax relief to hardworking Kentuckians. This measure authorizes the next half-percentage reduction in the state's individual income tax, bringing it down from 4% to 3.5 percent. As a result, an estimated \$718 million will remain in the hands of Kentucky families, allowing them to save, invest, and spend as they see fit. This reduction will officially take effect on Jan. 1, 2026, and continue our commitment to a responsible tax policy that benefits individuals and the state's economy.

With this priority completing the legislative process, several other priorities continued during week three of the 2025 Legislative Session ahead of bill filing deadlines next week. The last day to file legislation in the Senate is Tuesday, February 18, and the state House of Representatives deadline is Wednesday, February 19.

In the meantime, lawmakers returned to Frankfort this past week. I'm happy to say **SB 59**



Photo by David Hargis, Photographer, Public Information Office, Legislative Research Commission

**Sen. Jimmy Higdon speaks on legislation in the Senate Chamber on Feb. 7.**

won approval in the Senate this week. As housing costs continue to rise, finding innovative, community-driven solutions has become more critical than ever. That's why I introduced SB 59. This legislation empowers churches and faith-based organizations to develop affordable housing on their existing properties by removing unnecessary regulatory barriers.

**SB 59** designates these projects as permitted uses in residential and commercial zones

while preserving local oversight. To qualify, the religious institution must have owned the property before Jan. 1, 2025. The development must be limited to affordable housing and comply with all relevant building codes and permits.

This bill was inspired by a constituent and further developed through our work on the 2024 Affordable Housing Task Force. I'm incredibly grateful for my Senate colleagues' support and the faith

leaders, like Joy Jensen and the Sisters of Loretto, who inspired this initiative. Churches already do incredible work serving those in need, and this legislation will help them play an even more significant role in addressing our state's housing challenges.

While SB 59 isn't a complete solution to the housing crisis, it's a practical, common-sense step in the right direction. I appreciate the work of Rep. Michael 'Sarge' Pollock, who will carry this bill in the House. I'm confident in his leadership as we continue to expand Kentuckians' access to affordable housing.

**SB 73** strengthens protections against sexual extortion by giving law enforcement better tools to address online exploitation, particularly of minors. The bill emphasizes education to help children recognize and respond to harmful content and provides legal measures to combat the misuse of manipulated images and videos. It aims to protect vulnerable individuals in the digital age and support families navigating online safety

challenges.

**SB 64** strengthens protections for critical infrastructure by expanding legal safeguards to include cable, telephone, and broadband facilities. To enhance public safety and service reliability, it increases penalties for crimes like copper theft, which has caused 911 outages and power failures. The bill includes an emergency clause for immediate enactment upon final passage.

**SB 85** expands the authority of the Auditor's Office and Ombudsman to improve oversight of state agencies. It clarifies roles, enhances confidentiality protections, and mandates software access to resolve data disputes. The bill also requires CHFS to provide contact information for the Ombudsman and supports reporting suspected child abuse while protecting privacy. An emergency clause ensures it takes effect immediately.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you in the Kentucky Senate. Please contact my office at 502-564-8100 or Jimmy.Higdon@kylegislature.gov if you have any questions, concerns, or ideas.

# It's not too late

Amid some of the coldest months of the year, many of us will layer up with our heaviest coats, gloves and blankets. The winter season also calls for us to layer up our immune systems by getting current on various vaccines, including for flu, COVID-19, RSV, shingles and more.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the flu shot as your best protection against influenza, the prevalence of which is currently very high in Kentucky. Nationally, the flu rate is at or near its highest level in 15 years and still rising. Not only that, but the spread of other infectious diseases tends to increase during the winter months, putting you and your loved ones at greater risk of experiencing illness, pain or even hospitalization.

To help prevent that and to stay as healthy as possible during the winter months, here are three strategies to consider:

**Get this year's flu shot.** While flu is most serious for older Americans and individuals with certain chronic conditions, it can affect people of all ages. Younger children, especially those younger than age 2, are at higher

risk of developing serious flu-related complications, according to the CDC. Flu vaccination is



DR. GARY  
GROSE

recommended for everyone ages 6 months and up, other than a few exceptions such as people with severe allergies or individuals who are immunocompromised. Data shows the flu vaccine reduces the risk of the illness by up to 60%. Additionally, flu vaccinations can help protect people around you, especially when the vaccine is well-matched to viruses circulating each year.

**Get this year's COVID-19 shot.** Like the flu, the coronavirus changes from year to year, which means the vaccine is reformulated annually to better target current strains. While almost 50% of the U.S. population received last season's flu vaccine, fewer (29%) got the COVID-19 shot. A near-record-low number of Americans report being concerned about getting COVID-19, despite the fact the coronavirus is deadlier than the flu and carries the added risk of long-term symptoms. If you want protection from both, you can get the flu and COVID-19 shots at the same time, along with additional vaccinations.

**Get vaccinated against RSV and shingles.** Besides the

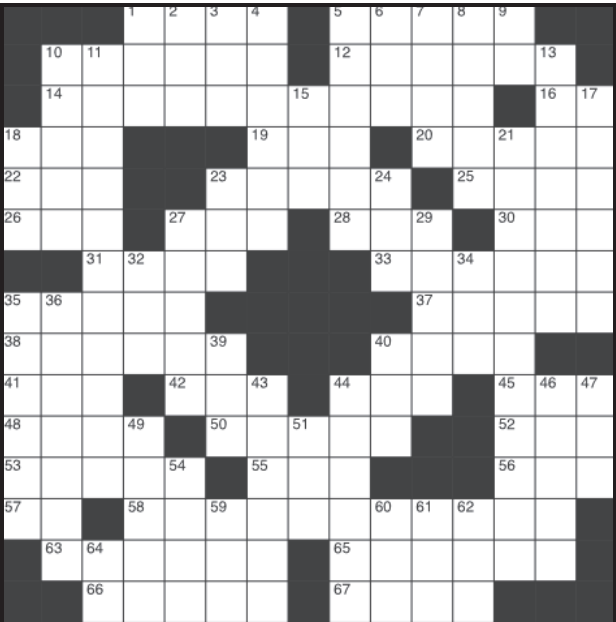
flu and COVID-19, RSV, or respiratory syncytial virus, is another infectious disease that spreads this time of year. While symptoms are often like a common cold, the virus can develop into something more severe, especially for older adults and young children. The CDC recommends an RSV vaccine for people 60 and older, as well as another option, a monoclonal antibody injection, to help protect babies and toddlers up to 2 years old. For people 50 and older, it's important to get the shingles vaccine, something that only 18% of Americans in that age group have done. Shingles, which is caused by the same virus as chickenpox, can result in large, red clusters of fluid-filled shingles blisters that are often as painful as they look. Plus, more serious side effects are possible, including long-term pain or even hearing or vision loss.

If you didn't get vaccinated during the fall, now is the time to get current during the peak of this year's flu season. In most cases, vaccines are covered through employer-sponsored, individual, Medicare and Medicaid health plans, and shots are typically available through primary care physicians, convenience care clinics and most local pharmacies.

To find a flu shot location near you, visit UHCFluLocator.com.

## CLARIFICATION

**CLARIFICATION:** In the article "Fatal juvenile overdose prompts public notice" published in the Dec. 25, 2024, edition of The LaRue County Herald News, it was reported based on statements made at the time by the Elizabethtown Police Department that Brandon Durbin, 36 of Elizabethtown, had been connected to the investigation of a fatal juvenile overdose in Elizabethtown. The Elizabethtown Police Department has recently modified its original statement by stating, "Brandon Durbin's arrest was incidental to a separate narcotic investigation, during which he was present at a scene. His charges however were independent and unrelated to the other investigation." The online story has been updated to reflect EPD's modified statement.



#### CLUES ACROSS

1. Tropical Asian plant
5. Yankees' slugger Judge
10. Helps to preserve food
12. Plant disease
14. One who predicts
16. Equally
18. Burundian franc
19. Pouch
20. Arizona city
22. Surround
23. Hard, heavy timber
25. Witnessed
26. They —
27. French river
28. A way to drink
30. Small constellation
31. Peruse a written work
33. Type of hound
35. Plant of the goosefoot family
37. Evade or escape
38. A way to confine
40. Volcanic crater
41. Weekday
42. Women's service organization (abbr.)
44. Local area network
45. Sensory receptor
48. Posted
50. Tibetan pastry
52. Licensed for Wall Street
53. Very willing
55. Golf score
56. Consume
57. Touchdown
58. Tends to remind
63. In a way, smoothed
65. Poke holes in the ground
66. Herbaceous plants
67. Taiwanese river

#### CLUES DOWN

1. Body art
2. Boxing's GOAT
3. Film for posterity (abbr.)
4. Prayer
5. Calculating machine
6. Keyboard key
7. Outburst
8. Man-eating giants
9. New Hampshire
10. Type of sword
11. Counting
13. Pants style
15. Political action committee
17. U.S. government legislative branch
18. Civil Rights Act component
21. Contractors take one
23. Spanish soldier
24. A person's brother or sister
27. Expressed pleasure
29. Song of praise
32. Shock treatment
34. Patti Hearst's captors
35. Counteract
36. Goes over again
39. Popular Dodge truck
40. Male adult
43. A part of a river where the current is very fast
44. Rope used to lasso
46. Become less intense
47. Subway rodent
49. Lead alloy
51. Japanese honorific title
54. Advise someone
59. Famous NYC museum
60. Ocean
61. Cathode-ray tube
62. Cologne
64. It starts with these two

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