

Beshear talks politics and business at World Economic Forum

By: MCKENNA HORSLEY
The Kentucky Lantern

On stage at the World Economic Forum, Kentucky Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear spoke about economic issues in the state and abroad — including areas that have become heavily politicized, such as diversity policies in the workplace and environmental sustainability.

Beshear joined Arkansas Republican Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders in a Thursday panel about economic issues facing their states, the country and the world at large. Journalist Andrew Sorokin moderated the panel.

The World Economic Forum, which is held annually in Davos, Switzerland, brings together leaders from government and business. Beshear’s office announced in December that he had been invited to speak at the conference.

Beshear, who has previously publicly supported diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, said during the panel that he has “always believed that the private sector is private,” and if businesses

believe having policies for diverse workforces help them, then “the state that you’re working with should support you.”

Republicans in Kentucky have previously attempted to curb DEI policies in the state’s universities, though bills on that failed to pass in the previous legislative session. President Donald Trump, who took office earlier this week, has put federal DEI employees on paid leave and has signaled that private businesses could be investigated over diversity policies.

Trump also issued a flurry of executive orders, including actions aimed at environmental policies, like withdrawing the United States from the Paris climate agreement.

Beshear, however, said Thursday that Kentucky employers he’s talking with have said sustainability “is still one of their goals” as customers and parent companies are demanding it.

“Sustainability is going to be a part of the future. It’s going to be demanded by most companies that are going to locate in different places,” Beshear said. “And I

want people to know that Kentucky is not going to get caught up in national debates about it, but if it’s a need you have as a business, we’re going to meet it for you.”

Both governors also gave their thoughts on the new Trump administration. Beshear, who campaigned against Trump for former Vice President Kamala Harris last year, said establishing an “America First” agenda would depend on “how it’s implemented.”

“If it’s implemented in a way that ensures that the American people have good jobs, quality health care, strong infrastructure, strong public safety, those are good things, but if it questions our alliances — especially our alliances with Europe that are critical to global stability — then it could be a concerning thing for the world and the ultimate reliability and consistency that we need to do global business and ultimately live in as safe of a planet as we can,” Beshear said.

Beshear said Trump won another term in office because the last group of moveable voters “had a gut check” before the November election,

“and they believe that President Trump would make it a little easier to pay the bills at the end of the month.” Beshear said seeing if Trump’s policies raise or lower prices will be “what to watch as we move forward.”

Huckabee Sanders, who stumped for Beshear’s opponent, former Republican Attorney General Daniel Cameron, in 2023, called Trump “the ultimate deal maker” and said he would likely rely on that when making connections on the global stage in a second term.

Trump later addressed the forum via a live video feed and took questions from business executives.

‘In the room with business’

Beshear said both he and Huckabee Sanders were at the World Economic Forum because “foreign direct investment is critical in the United States.” He pointed to Kentucky business investments, like Toyota’s Georgetown plant established in the 1980s.

Beshear said he’s had ample opportunities to speak directly with business executives as part

of the conference.

“So for us, being here is good business,” Beshear said. “There can be lots of other reasons to come but the chance in a short period of time to communicate with, to continue the trust with, to find out the different concerns, to hopefully announce some expansions, that is a real value for governors to be in the room with business.”

Earlier this week, Beshear appeared in a panel about industrial decarbonization. Before the conference, he was also scheduled to meet with company leaders of Acerinox, the parent company of North American Stainless, in Spain, according to his office. North American Stainless has a facility in Carroll County.

However, Beshear’s travel has drawn ire from Republicans back home. Before the current legislative session began, the Republican Party of Kentucky issued a statement criticizing Beshear for “flying to Switzerland on the taxpayer’s dime to discuss the economic accomplishments of Kentucky Republicans”

and argued his time “would be better spent in Frankfort, working with the General Assembly during the short 30-day session to get some help” for Kentucky’s foster care crisis.

Freshman lawmaker Rep. TJ Roberts, R-Burlington, said in a press release Tuesday that he plans to launch an investigation into costs for Beshear’s trip and “will push for a budget cut that will slash that amount by tenfold from the governor’s office budget.”

Roberts also vowed to “introduce legislation that would require Beshear to obtain explicit approval from the State Auditor before using any tax dollars for out-of-state travel.”

“While our commonwealth grapples with real issues, Beshear is using Kentucky tax dollars to network with globalist elites who have no concern for our local problems,” Roberts said. “His presence at the WEF only confirms his priority is himself and his 2028 presidential run rather than the needs of Kentucky.”

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Study looks at benefits and risks to popular weight-loss drugs; Kentucky leads nation in the use of them

By: MELISSA PATRICK AND LIBERTY GILBERT
Kentucky Health News

Whether it is prescribed for diabetes or weight loss, Ozempic and other weight loss drugs have found their home in Kentucky, even though researchers from Washington University in St. Louis say more information is needed on the drug’s impact on the body.

To address this, researchers from the university conducted a study of more than 2 million people looking at the risks and benefits of these drugs, also called GLP-1 or GLP-1RA, across 175 different outcomes. The data for the study came from

a database maintained by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

“Given the drugs’ newness and skyrocketing popularity, it is important to systematically examine their effects on all body systems — leaving no stone unturned — to understand what they do and what they don’t do,” Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly, the study’s senior author, said in a news release.

Using prescription data from PurpleLab Inc., Bloomberg reports that Kentucky, with 41% of its adults considered obese, leads the nation for the highest prescription rates for drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy, with around one of every 15 Kentucky residents, or 6.8%, having a

prescription.

The study, published in Nature Medicine, “found widespread associations with benefits to cognitive and behavioral health, while also revealing increased risks for pancreatitis and kidney conditions, among others,” according to the release.

“GLP-1RA drugs can have broad health benefits,” Al-Aly, a clinical epidemiologist and nephrologist, said in the release. “However, they are not without risks. Our findings underscore the possibility for wider applications for these medications but also highlight important risks that should be carefully monitored in people taking these drugs.”

The study found the

GLP-1 drugs “were associated with significant benefits to neurological and behavioral health, with reduced risks of seizures and addiction to substances such as alcohol, cannabis, stimulants and opioids. People taking the weight-loss drugs also experienced decreased risks of suicidal ideation, self-harm, bulimia and psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia.”

It also showed a decreased risk of neurocognitive disorders such as Alzheimer’s and dementia, according to the release. And, it confirmed past research findings detailing the drugs’ potential to lower the risk of heart attack, stroke and other cardiovascular concerns.

“Interestingly, GLP-1RA drugs act on receptors that are expressed in brain areas involved in impulse control, reward and addiction — potentially explaining their effectiveness in curbing appetite and addiction disorders,” Al-Aly said. “These drugs also reduce inflammation in the brain and result in weight loss; both these factors may improve brain health and explain the reduced risk of conditions like Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.”

The study also confirmed other studies that have found an increased risk of gastrointestinal problems such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and in rare cases paralysis of the stomach.

Further, the study

found that the GLP-1 drugs can negatively affect the pancreas and kidneys. “While these adverse effects are uncommon, they can be very serious; physicians must be vigilant for signs of pancreatitis and monitor kidney function among people taking GLP-1RA medications,” according to the release.

“GLP-1RA drugs can have broad health benefits,” Al-Aly said. “However, they are not without risks. Our findings underscore the possibility for wider applications for these medications but also highlight important risks that should be carefully monitored in people taking these drugs.”

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