

## Last Week at the Capitol

- **Administrative Regulations** – House Bill 6 targets regulatory overreach by state agencies. It will prohibit administrative agencies from imposing rules that have an economic cost of more than \$500,000 over a two-year period. The bill includes some exceptions for public safety emergencies, federal requirements, court orders and regulations for health facilities. The governor vetoed HB 6, but lawmakers overrode the veto.
- **Antisemitism on Campus** – Senate Joint Resolution 55 would direct Kentucky colleges and universities to adopt policies for combating antisemitism. The resolution received final passage.
- **Artificial Intelligence** – Senate Bill 4 will boost oversight and create standards and guidelines for using artificial intelligence in state government and elections. It seeks to protect citizens, foster innovation and address concerns related to AI-generated misinformation in campaigns. SB 4 is the result of a legislative task force that met throughout 2024 to study artificial intelligence. The governor has signed the bill.
- **Cannabis-Infused Beverages** – Senate Bill 202 calls for state regulations on intoxicating drinks derived from cannabis that have begun appearing in gas stations and vape shops. It will grant the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control authority over the licensing, distribution, and retail sale of cannabis-infused beverages, using a three-tier system similar to the one for alcohol. The legislation will also limit the amount of intoxicating cannabinoids in such drinks and prevent anyone under the age of 21 from buying the drinks. SB 202 has been signed by the governor.
- **Cell Phones in Schools** – House Bill 208 calls on school districts to establish a policy for limiting the use of cell phones during instructional time with some exceptions for emergencies and instructional purposes. The legislation has been signed.
- **Chevron Deference** – Under Senate Bill 84, courts can no longer defer to a state agency's interpretation when dealing with ambiguity in statutes, administrative regulations or orders, a practice known as Chevron deference. The governor vetoed this bill, but the veto was overridden.
- **Child Abuse** – Under Senate Bill 120, school coaches will receive training on the duties and procedures for reporting child

abuse. The legislation will add language to sports participation forms telling parents about the right to report abuse and how to make a report. The governor has signed SB 120.

- **College Faculty Performance Reviews** – House Bill 424 calls for presidents and faculty at Kentucky's public universities to undergo performance evaluations at least once every four years. The university boards will establish the evaluation process for each institution. The governor vetoed this bill, but lawmakers overrode the veto.
- **Conversion Therapy** – House Bill 495 nullifies an executive order that the governor issued in September banning the use of state funds on conversion therapy for minors. Another provision prohibits the use of Medicaid funds on hormone treatments or surgeries related to transgender care. The governor vetoed HB 495, but the veto was overridden.
- **Disabilities and Parental Rights** – Senate Bill 26 clarifies that disability alone cannot be used as a basis for denying adoption petitions, terminating parental rights, or determining placement of children. This bill was signed.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** – House Bill 4 seeks to end diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives – known as DEI – at public postsecondary institutions in Kentucky. The legislation forbids differential treatment in hiring, admissions, scholarships and other areas based on religion, race, sex, color or national origin. It will also prevent campuses from requiring or incentivizing students to participate in DEI training, and it prohibits public institutions from using resources on DEI training, offices and initiatives. The governor vetoed HB 4, but lawmakers overrode the veto.
- **Drone Surveillance** – House Bill 19 aims to protect individuals and their property from unauthorized drone surveillance when they have a reasonable expectation of privacy. It will allow a person who is subjected to unauthorized surveillance to initiate a civil action in court. The bill includes some exceptions for aerial mapping, insurance investigations and others. HB 19 has been signed by the governor.
- **Early Literacy** – House Bill 240 will require schools to administer a reading assessment to kindergarten and first grade students within the final 14 days of the academic year. Schools have an op-

tion to require students to repeat kindergarten if they fail to meet grade-level benchmarks. However, the bill stipulates that a first-grader who fails to meet the benchmarks must repeat the year. The governor vetoed the legislation, but the veto was overridden.

- **Environmental Regulations for Waterways** – Senate Bill 89 changes how state law defines waterways in Kentucky to align with recent changes on the federal level. The governor vetoed this bill, but the veto was overridden.
- **Film Industry** – Senate Bill 1 establishes the Kentucky Film Office to administer the state's film incentive program, help market the state to the film industry and develop workforce training. The measure was signed by the governor.
- **Financial Literacy** – House Bill 342 requires high school students to earn one credit in a financial literacy course before graduation. The governor has signed this bill.
- **Foreign Land Purchases** – House Bill 315 prohibits certain hostile foreign entities from acquiring agricultural land in Kentucky. The governor has signed HB 315 into law.
- **Card Scams** – Under Senate Bill 130, individuals who tamper with gift cards to steal the redemption information and drain the card balance can face a class D felony charge. SB 130 has been signed by the governor.
- **Government Efficiency** – Senate Bill 25 aims to improve efficiency in state government. It will establish a Medicaid oversight board to optimize health outcomes in an efficient and effective manner. It also bolsters the authority of the state auditor's office and calls on executive branch agencies to submit biannual reports to the legislature with suggestions for improving efficiency. The governor issued line-item vetoes for this bill, but lawmakers overrode most of them.
- **Income Taxes** – House Bill 1 will cut Kentucky's income tax rate from 4% to 3.5% beginning next year as part of a long-term effort to gradually reduce and eliminate Kentucky's income tax. The governor has signed HB 1.
- **Insurance Fraud** – Senate Bill 24 will expand the definition of property and casualty insurance fraud to help crack down on contractors who charge unnecessary or fraudulent fees to inflate an insurance claim. The governor has signed SB 24.
- **Kentucky History**

Month – House Bill 313 designates June of each year as Kentucky History Month. The legislation has been signed.

- **Learner's Permits** – House Bill 15 reduces the minimum age for getting a learner's permit in Kentucky from 16 to 15 years old. Drivers can obtain an intermediate license at age 16 if they have held a learner's permit for at least 180 days and have completed at least 60 hours of supervised training. The governor has signed this measure into law.
- **Legislative Interference** – House Bill 399 will create criminal penalties for interfering with a legislative proceeding if the intent is to prevent the general assembly from conducting business. Interference in the first degree will be a class A misdemeanor, which escalates to a class D felony for a third or subsequent offense. The governor vetoed this legislation, but it was overrode.
- **Manufactured Housing** – House Bill 160 would prohibit local governments from adopting or enforcing zoning regulations that treat manufactured homes differently from site-built homes in single family residential zones. Manufactured homes would still need to meet strict standards for size, age and foundation. HB 160 won final passage on Friday.
- **Maternal Health** – House Bill 90 creates a regulatory framework for freestanding birthing centers to operate in Kentucky. The final version of the bill also seeks to clarify Kentucky's abortion law to ensure that women experiencing a miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy, or other life-threatening complications can receive care. Another provision calls for hospitals, birthing centers and other obstetric care centers to offer perinatal palliative care to women who receive a prenatal diagnosis of deadly fetal abnormalities. The governor vetoed HB 90, but the veto was overridden.
- **Moments of Silence and Moral Education** – Senate Bill 19 requires public schools to hold a moment of silence and reflection for students at the start of each school day. Under a recent addition to the bill, school districts could excuse students for up to one hour each week to attend moral instruction from approved off-campus programs. The governor vetoed SB 19, but lawmakers overrode the veto.
- **Name, Image and Likeness** – Senate Bill 3 up-

dates Kentucky's name, image and likeness law for college athletes. It will align the law – adopted in 2022 – with national standards, particularly in the aftermath of the House v. NCAA court case, which could open the door to universities directly compensating student athletes. The governor has signed SB 3.

- **Nicotine** – Senate Bill 100 seeks to curb underage nicotine use by licensing nicotine retailers and providing more oversight of nicotine sales. Retailers operating without a license could face a misdemeanor charge, and possibly a felony for a third offense. The governor has signed SB 100.
- **Nuclear Energy Grants** – Senate Bill 179 will establish a nuclear energy grant program under the Kentucky Nuclear Energy Development Authority and set aside millions to support the effort. SB 179 has been signed.
- **Protective Orders** – House Bill 38 creates tougher penalties for people who repeatedly violate protective orders. Offenders could face a class D felony if they violate an order three times within five years and the third violation involves the use or threat of violence. The governor has signed HB 38.
- **School Calendars** – House Bill 241 aims to help school districts that have missed a significant number of days due to severe weather. It will allow districts to change their calendar from 170 instructional days to a variable 1,062 hours, clearing the way for schools to extend their school days with more instructional hours. It also allows the state education commissioner to grant up to five disaster relief days for alternative instruction or waive up to five days for districts unable to achieve 1,062 hours by June 4. HB 241 became law without the governor's signature.
- **School Communications** – Senate Bill 181 calls on school districts to implement traceable communication systems that will serve as the sole means for staff and volunteers to communicate electronically with students. Parents would have access to review communications sent to their child. Another provision of the bill would allow schools to provide students with age-appropriate training to combat child sexual abuse. The bill received final passage Friday.
- **School Innovation** – Senate Bill 207 will create a waiver process for

public school districts to request exemptions from some state laws or regulations – all part of an effort to provide schools with more flexibility to innovate. The governor vetoed the bill, but lawmakers overrode the veto.

- **Sexual Assault Response Training** – House Bill 219 would require medical providers in emergency departments to receive sexual assault response training. HB 219 has been signed by the governor.
- **Sexual Extortion** – Senate Bill 73 seeks to clamp down on sexual extortion by creating tougher penalties for offenders and more legal remedies for victims. It also requires schools and colleges to educate students and parents about the issue and display resources for reporting. The governor has signed the measure into law.
- **Squatting** – House Bill 10 seeks to crack down on squatting by providing a more concrete procedure for property owners and law enforcement to quickly remove unauthorized occupants from private property. It also spells out criminal penalties for squatters who damage property. The governor has signed HB 10.
- **Teacher Maternity Leave** – Senate Bill 9, among several provisions, calls on school districts to provide teachers up to 30 days of paid maternity leave. The bill received final passage on Friday.
- **Ten Commandments** – House Joint Resolution 15 will return a granite monument inscribed with the Ten Commandments to the Capitol grounds for permanent display. It was first gifted to the state in 1971 by the Fraternal Order of Eagles, but was returned to group decades ago following a court ruling. HJR 15 has become law without the governor's signature.
- **Transgender Services in Prison** – Senate Bill 2 prohibits public funds from being spent on certain procedures, treatments and surgeries related to gender transition in Kentucky prisons. The legislation became law without the governor's signature.
- **Workplace Safety** – House Bill 398 aims to align Kentucky's workplace safety and health regulations with federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration rules. It also calls for lim-its on Kentucky policies so that they are no more stringent than those on the federal level. The governor vetoed HB 398, but the legislature overrode the veto.

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