

General Fund receipts grew in December

Tom Latek
Kentucky Today

FRANKFORT, Ky. (KT) – The office of State Budget Director announced on Friday that General Fund receipts in December 2024 increased 4.5 percent from a year ago and are up 1.7 percent year to date for the fiscal year that began July 1, 2024, while Road Fund receipts last month fell 5.4 percent compared to December 2023, but are up 0.2 percent year to date.

December's General Fund receipts totaled \$1,577.2 million. For the first six months of the fiscal year, there have been three months with increases over the prior year and three months with decreases over the prior year. The major business taxes contributed the most to the monthly gain.

The official revenue forecast calls for no General Fund revenue growth in FY25. Based on year-to-date collections, revenues can fall 1.6 percent over the final six months of the fiscal year and still meet the estimate.

State Budget Director John Hicks noted, "In both December and for the first half of the fiscal year, the major business taxes have increased by substantial amounts, 76 percent, to offset the declines in the individual income tax receipts. December presented an example of a month where a 6.1 percent decline in the individual income tax was more than offset by a \$93.0 million increase in major business taxes compared to December 2023. This level of growth in business tax collections is a sign of a business-friendly economy that is experiencing profitable operations."

Road Fund receipts for December totaled \$138.6 million. The official revenue forecast calls for a revenue decline of 2.6 percent for the year. Given the year-to-date collections, receipts can fall 5.4 percent over the remainder of the fiscal year and still meet the estimate.

Among the accounts, motor fuels receipts declined 9.4 percent in December, and are down 5.0 percent for the first six months of the year. Motor vehicle usage revenue rose 5.4 percent in December and increased 6.4 percent year-to-date. License and privilege receipts fell 34.4 percent for the month and dropped 1.9 percent for the year.

Historic investment will launch Louisville Clinical and Translational Research Center at UofL

Tom Latek — Kentucky Today

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (KT) – The University of Louisville announced on Friday that they have secured \$24 million to train the next generation of clinical researchers and drive work that can save and improve lives, marking the single largest investment in clinical research in the university's history.

The funding includes \$11.7 million from the National Institutes of Health's National Institute of General Medical Sciences, matched dollar-for-dollar by UofL.

With this award, UofL will launch the Louisville Clinical and Translational Research Center (LCTRC), a statewide effort that will transform the university's clinical research infrastructure and find meaningful solutions to combat chronic conditions like cardiac disease, stroke and cancer that disproportionately affect Kentuckians in urban and rural areas alike. The goal is to foster the seamless transition of research findings from the laboratory to patient care.

"UofL has a long-standing commitment to improving the lives of Kentuckians," said UofL President Kim Schatzel. "This grant represents significant progress toward that commitment, engaging researchers and community members in developing new treatments and training the next generation of experts who will improve lives for years to come."

LCTRC is funded through the NIH Idea Clinical & Translational Research Development

(CTR-D) Award program, which helps institutions build research expertise and infrastructure to support research on diseases and health challenges faced by the populations they serve. CTR-D grants are considered highly competitive.

"CTR grants are a unique resource that are awarded to only a small number of institutions," said Jon Klein, UofL's interim executive vice president for research and innovation, a Bucks for Brains endowed researcher and LCTRC's principal investigator. "UofL's success in securing this award shows our strength as a research institution and academic medical center, and will drive significant, positive impact throughout the Commonwealth."

LCTRC will enable UofL to launch a series of \$75,000 to \$125,000 research grants aimed at kickstarting new research projects that help early career and established researchers gather the data needed to secure more NIH or other agency investment.

To train highly competitive, next generation clinical and translational researchers, LCTRC will develop two key programs: Dean's Scholars, which will pay medical students to spend a full year doing research, and Presidential Scholars, which buys six months of faculty members' time to do research. These programs will also provide them with additional professional development opportunities, including partnering those researchers with experienced mentors who can help them take their work to the next level.

Univ. of Cumberlands president transitioning out after 10 years

Kentucky Today

WILLIAMSBURG, Ky. (KT) - After a 20-year tenure at the University of the Cumberlands, including a decade as its 10th president, Dr. Larry L. Cockrum has announced his plan to step away from day-to-day operations at the end of the 2024-2025 academic year. He will transition to President Emeritus, focusing on strategic projects to advance the university's growth and innovation.

Under President Cockrum's leadership, the university has experienced unprecedented growth, enhanced its student accessibility, and solidified its financial foundation.

Cockrum has been instrumental in transforming the institution into a leader in affordable education, ensuring that students from all backgrounds have access to quality academic programs tailored to workforce demands.

"As I reflect on UC's remarkable accomplishments and progress, I feel a deep sense of pride and gratitude," said President Cockrum. "Of all that we have accomplished, I am most proud of the way we have remained focused on our students, committed to providing a quality education at an affordable price, and driven to create academic programs matching workforce demands so our students leave Cumberlands with job opportunities in hand."

Scott Thompson, chair of the university's Board of Trustees, expressed gratitude for Cockrum's service, stating, "President Cockrum's visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to Cumberlands have transformed this institution into one of Kentucky's leading universities. His legacy will endure, not just through the milestones he has achieved, but through the countless students, faculty and staff whose lives he has touched. His work has ensured that Cumberlands remains a beacon of opportunity for future generations."

Cockrum announced his plans at the spring faculty and staff meeting, noting his admiration and appreciation for university employees.

No jail time or fines for Trump in sentencing for NY hush money case

Ashley Murray — Kentucky Lantern

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump was sentenced Friday in his New York hush money case just days before his inauguration, making him the only past and future U.S. president with a criminal record.

Trump has faced four criminal prosecutions but the New York state case was the sole one that went to trial. A jury convicted him in May on

34 felonies for falsifying invoices, checks and ledger entries that amounted to a \$130,000 reimbursement to his lawyer for paying off a porn star ahead of the 2016 presidential election.

New York Justice Juan Merchan sentenced the president-elect to an "unconditional discharge," handing down no jail time or fines but cementing a mark on Trump's record 10 days before he takes the oath of office to become the 47th president.

Speaking during the virtual proceeding from his Mar-a-Lago residence, Trump said he was "totally innocent" and defended the description of his payments to his lawyer in business records as "legal expenses." As he has in the past, he accused the federal government of being involved in the New York state case.

"It's been a political witch hunt that was done to damage my reputation so that I'd lose the election, and obviously that didn't work. And the people of our country got to see first hand because they watched the case in your courtroom," the president-elect said, according to audio pub-

lished by C-SPAN. Cameras were not allowed in the courtroom during the trial or sentencing.

The courtroom contains limited space for the public and journalists.

Merchan called the case "extraordinary" but said "The same burden of proof was applied and a jury made up of ordinary citizens delivered a verdict."

After Merchan explained the sentence, he told Trump, "Sir, I wish you Godspeed as you pursue your second term in office."

Trump was represented Friday morning, and at trial, by his personal lawyer Todd Blanche, whom he's chosen to be the nation's next deputy attorney general, the No. 2 position at the U.S. Justice Department.

Trump last-minute attempt

Following months of delays, the sentencing went forth despite Trump's eleventh-hour request that the U.S. Supreme Court halt the proceeding. The justices denied Trump's application late Thursday, though the order noted that Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh would have granted it.

ABC News reported Thursday that Trump had spoken with Alito by phone just hours before submitting the applica-

tion to the court's emergency docket. Alito told the network that the two did not speak about the application.

The sentencing, lasting less than 30 minutes, was a brief disruption in Trump's barreling preparations for his second presidency. The president-elect was set to host members of the House Freedom Caucus, a contingent of far-right House Republicans, at his Florida property later on Friday. Trump huddled with Senate Republicans on Capitol Hill Wednesday and with Republican governors on Thursday.

Trump slammed his sentence on his Truth Social platform as a "scam," "hoax" and "despicable charade" that he will appeal, a process that will likely drag on for years in New York.

"The real Jury, the American People, have spoken, by Re-Electing me with an overwhelming MANDATE in one of the most consequential Elections in History," Trump wrote.

The 12 jurors in New York that convicted Trump were also U.S. citizens, or "American people," as required by law.

Immunity argument
Trump had challenged his New York conviction on the grounds that last summer the Supreme Court ruled that former presidents enjoy criminal

immunity for official acts while in office, and presumptive immunity for acts on the perimeter of their formal duties.

Merchan ultimately denied Trump's immunity argument, saying that the trial and evidence "related entirely to unofficial conduct entitled to no immunity protection."

Trump has also been occupied with another legal battle in recent days as he cheered a court order to block the release of Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith's final report detailing federal criminal charges against Trump for mishandling and hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate after he left office, and for scheming to subvert the 2020 presidential election results.

Smith ended both cases following Trump's election victory, as the Justice Department has a long-standing protocol against prosecuting sitting presidents.

A federal appeals court Friday denied requests to block the report in full, leaving only protections for the portion of the report dealing with the classified documents case following an appeal by Trump's two co-defendants in the case.

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THE LEDGER INDEPENDENT

JENNIFER DONAHUE, Publisher
jdonahue@cmpapers.com, ext. 1240
DANIEL MILLER, Sports Editor
dmiller@cmpapers.com ext. 1273
CHAD SHELTON, Production/IT Manager
cselton@cmpapers.com, ext. 1224

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895 US 68 Maysville, KY 41056
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58 South Main St., Mt. Olivet, KY 41064

Phone:
(606) 759-5663