

FROM PAGE 1A

FCPS BOARD

recently revealed its contingency fund is much smaller than originally expected.

Board member Amanda Ferguson refused to join four other members in supporting the hearing. She rejected both the call for the hearing and any talk of a tax increase, she said.

“I have no interest in setting a public hearing for a tax increase because I have not heard from anyone in the community that supports it,” she said.

Board member Monica Mundy said she had not

heard from anyone who supports the tax increase either. But she did say there was merit in having a meeting where people could talk about the budget and voice their opinion either way — that would be better than not giving them the opportunity.

“I can’t in good faith support it,” Mundy said.

Board member Penny Christian said she doesn’t know what her final vote on the occupational tax increase would be, but,

“We have to be realistic. ... We can’t ignore the option

that may be the most unpopular.”

Raising the occupational license tax rate was a controversial proposal put on hold earlier this summer after some board members and community leaders said district officials tried to push the measure on the community without an extensive discussion.

Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman declared the process was unlawful.

According to Coleman’s opinion, the school board’s 3-2 vote to ask the Fayette Fiscal Court to increase school tax rates on residents and businesses’ net income from

0.5% to 0.75% was improper.

Under state law, school boards must notify the public and hold a formal hearing before voting on new or increased taxes, Coleman said.

This summer, the least popular recommendation of a budget solutions work group composed mainly of community members was to increase the occupational license tax, which officials from Keeneland, the University of Kentucky and Commerce Lex rejected.

“We can’t tax our way out of this process. The reality is that the budget is structurally imbalanced,” representatives from the

University of Kentucky and Commerce Lexington wrote in a July 30 op-ed column submitted to the Herald-Leader.

“Bringing balance to the revenues and expenses is the only way to achieve long-term stability and sustainability.”

On Monday night, Hunter Stout, Keeneland’s chief financial officer, told board members, “There’s no need to rush this tax. It should be the last option.”

It was the budget solutions work group’s recommendation to take money from the district’s contingency fund to solve a \$16 million shortfall that triggered Superintendent Demetrus Liggins’ revelation that the contingency fund’s balance is millions lower than previously thought.

School officials have said on the district’s website the projected increase on the current rate would generate \$27 million to \$32 million per year.

Adoption of this new rate by the fiscal court would go into effect Jan. 1, 2026.

The first rate increase of one-half of a fiscal year (Jan. 1-June 30, 2026) would provide an estimated \$13.5 million to \$16 million, officials have said.

If approved, the average taxpayer is expected to pay an additional \$13 per month, which means an additional \$3.25 per week.

FROM PAGE 1A

CANDIDATE

or about 4% of the country’s estimated 342 million people.

Stan Veuger, an economist at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, called Morris’ idea a “pretty unhinged proposal.”

Veuger co-wrote a paper that estimated a 0.3-to-0.4 percentage point drop in GDP growth due to a reduction in migration projected because of the Trump administration’s actions — namely crack-downs at the border and changes in refugee programs.

A moratorium on all immigration into the country, he said, would have triple that effect, bringing down growth by more than a full percentage point because companies can’t bring in talent from overseas and increased family complications.

“It would be a complete disaster. Tons of businesses would go under. The macro impact would be pretty big,” Veuger said.

“In mixed-status households, there’d (also) be very difficult choices on whether to move the whole family abroad. So, I think the GDP impact, while big, probably underestimates the real impact on people’s wellbeing.”

When asked to contend with the economic concerns over the moratorium, Morris stood by the idea.

“We’re cutting off all immigration until all the illegals go back. That has to happen because we can’t handle anymore. We’re full, and we cannot process the amount of illegals that are in our country today. Our systems can’t handle it, our schools can’t handle it, our hospitals can’t handle it,” Morris said.

The candidate also told the Herald-Leader that he stands by his policy that the moratorium should stay in place until every single one of the millions of undocumented immigrants in America is deported.

“I didn’t stutter,” Morris said. “I said all of them. So, they all gotta go. Now, what I will say is the president’s been very clear, we have to prioritize these different classes of illegals. Obviously the criminals have to go first, and the president’s made that absolutely clear. And of course, I stand by the president 100% on that position.”

He added that he believes the goal is “feasible and practical” because of the increased funding for deportations and border security included in the recently passed Big Beautiful Bill.

Morris said one of the main reasons he is so focused on deportations — his GOP competitors also are hawkish on the matter — is the lower wages undocumented immigrants generally receive. Though the literature is mixed on the subject, Morris argues a bigger undocumented workforce drives down wages for Americans and Kentuckians.



RYAN C. HERMENS rhermens@herald-leader.com

Nate Morris, a candidate for U.S. Senate, speaks to members of the media after arriving at the 145th Annual St. Jerome Fancy Farm Picnic in Fancy Farm, Ky., on Aug. 2.

resources and it would shut down entire industries that depend on the workforce,” Bailey said.

Ken Troske, chair of the economics department at the University of Kentucky, did not offer comment on Morris’ specific proposal, but did bring up some of the same themes as Veuger when talking about the effect of immigration on the economy.

Troske mentioned that immigrants are a key part of the workforce for both high-education job markets and those requiring less education, and a future without new immigration could hurt the economy.

With the current birth rate below the replacement rate, Troske pointed out that a stop on immigration could also mean declining population and therefore a declining workforce to contribute to growing Social Security costs for an aging America.

“It would have an impact on the economy, potentially leading to more inflation, potentially having a negative impact on the deficit, and it would potentially force us to make changes to the existing Social Security system, much sooner than we would otherwise have to,” Troske said.

The population aspect of it led Riedl to predict that economic growth would be cut by a third under an immigration moratorium.

“In order to grow the economy, you need more workers making more stuff. If you start deporting immigrants and not letting in any new ones, you’re contributing to labor force growth heading towards zero. You could lose about a third of annual economic growth,” Riedl said.

Morris’ proposal is not exactly in line with the Trump administration’s actions.

The administration has not put forth any plans to put a stop to immigration, instead focusing on border security, deportations and beefing up the Immigration Customs and Enforcement workforce.

Trump has even floated working with the agriculture sector, which has raised concern over deportations given the estimated 320,000 undocumented farmworkers in the U.S.

“We can’t let our farmers not have anybody,” Trump said in an interview earlier this month.

Morris’ proposal is similar, though, to one forwarded by the Heritage Foundation, a leading conservative Washington think tank best known for its “Project 2025” plan. In a paper published shortly

after Trump’s victory, Lora Ries, director of the Border Security and Immigration Center, wrote that immigration should be “paused” when immigration application backlogs are too long.

So, it’s the same idea but implemented for a different reason.

Ries told the Herald-Leader that the moratorium would be lifted when the backlog, which is now north of 11 million, reaches a more reasonable level — say, 3 million — and is on a downward trajectory.

She added that, while she’s not an economist, she had heard similar economic concern about actions the Trump administration has taken in recent months and has yet to see a serious downturn.

“To just keep repeating the same old lines of ‘the GDP,’ et cetera, et cetera, it’s not holding water,” Ries said.

“... The sky has not fallen in 2025 as this administration has generally halted refugee admissions programs and has halted illegal border crossings across the southern border. So, I don’t think we should just take at face value any more statements from those who favor open borders or more mass immigration.”

Morris made a similar argument when responding to economists’ critiques.

He said that promises of economic prosperity resulting from the North American Free Trade Agreement, which reduced trade barriers between the U.S., Canada and Mexico, went unfulfilled in places like Kentucky.

“If you look at someone like that economist, I don’t know who it is and I can’t speak for him, but that’s that same kind of person and thinking that led to things like NAFTA. Like, ‘We’re going to lose opportunity if we don’t send some of these jobs overseas and expand globally,’” Morris said.

“It didn’t work, and it costs places like Kentucky. It’s destroyed aspects of our culture because we have broken families, we have opioids that have come in, and we’ve had generations of Kentuckians have been out of work because of that thinking.”



Pick Up a Copy of the Magazine

Grab your complimentary copy of the 2025 Best of Lexington magazine from America’s Floor Source while supplies last.



1850 Bryant Road
Lexington, KY 40509
859-269-6371
americasfloorsource.com



©2025 NERUS Strategies LLC & the Lexington Herald-Leader. Best of Lexington and the unique logo is a service mark of the Lexington Herald-Leader and may only be used with express permission. Best of Lexington is powered by Optimum by NERUS.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

The Public Service Commission of Kentucky issued an order of July 31, 2025, scheduling a public comment meeting to be held on September 8, 2025, at 5 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time, at Jefferson Community & Technical College: Hovarth Auditorium, 1000 Community College Dr., Louisville, KY 40272 for the purpose of hearing public comments on Kentucky Utilities Company and Louisville Gas and Electric Company applications for adjustment of its electric and gas rates and approval of certain regulatory and accounting treatments in Case Nos. 2025-00113 and 2025-00114.