

# The Licking Valley Courier

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# Supporting local newspapers puts community first

## HB 368 will harm communities and newspapers

By Jane Ashley Pace, 2024 KPA President

Every county in Kentucky has one local business that has been there longer than any other, most more than a century – while some are even closing in on two centuries. In many of these counties, that business is their local newspaper.

I manage two of those local newspapers. The Oldham Era has been in operation for 149 years and is looking forward to celebrating our 150th next year. The Henry County Local has been publishing 168 proud years and counting. I also assist regionally with 13 other area newspapers with similar tenures.

Newspapers are the heartbeat of every community in Kentucky. We exist to inform, to raise awareness, to build community, to be the voice of those that can’t always speak for themselves, to cover local government and hold local officials accountable, to help local businesses grow, to enact change, to celebrate achievements and to archive our community’s history.

Our founding fathers felt so strongly about the importance of newspapers and the role we play in communities that we are the only profession explicitly named in the Constitution of the United States of America. There are three ways in

which newspapers have effectively carried out some of our most important roles – covering local government, keeping officials accountable, keeping citizens informed and helping transparency exist: public notices, open meetings and open records.

Without these three in place, knowing how your tax dollars are being spent, what bids are available and being rewarded, what decisions your elected officials are making for you, when meetings are being held and what new ordinances are being considered would not be as easily accessible.

There is currently a bill, HB368, that seeks to remove legal notices from newspapers and place them on government websites. Websites that are run by the government themselves. What could go possibly go wrong with that?

When a legal ad is placed in a newspaper, it is placed in the local newspaper, dated and cannot be changed after the fact. In addition, it is placed on a website managed by the Kentucky Press Association where all legal notices in Kentucky can be found easily – kypublicnotices.com.

HB368 seeks to have entities including county and city governments place public notices on their own websites, yet many have only one employee, if any, and can’t even keep

their current websites updated. I found one city website in my area that hadn’t been updated with meetings or ordinances since 2020. Two others had very little information, none of the council members were current and the monthly meeting time listed was listed wrong.

Officials have said they would create their own statewide website for all notices. I would argue that they are going to spend a lot more money creating a website we have already created and maintained successfully. Right now, paid legal notices are currently a very small part of county and city budgets – only 0.16%.

So why change? Is this what is really best for the community?

In counties of 80,000 or more a bill was passed in Kentucky to change the rules of public notices due to the cost of the larger newspapers. Yet, many of those counties, including Boone, Campbell, Fayette, Kenton, Madison and Warren, have decided that newspapers are still the best way to get their notices out and have continued to place them in newspapers despite the change.

Regardless of the county size, public notices should be posted by a third party, and with a newspaper in almost every county (and statewide website already in place) it just makes good, common sense.

Besides the concerns I’ve already addressed, while legal notices are not the only revenue that keep newspapers going – it is a part of it, and some smaller, rural counties will probably lose their local newspaper if this bill is passed. A community without a local newspaper is a community without a heartbeat, and countless studies have shown in news desserts across this country that there will be negative, long-term effects for the community.

No, it is not the job of the legislature to keep newspapers running but why are they so against doing something that maintains transparency and at the same time, would hurt some of the oldest local businesses in this state?

I’m not blind to the criticism of the media and think that cable news networks have hurt our industry as a whole. I was trained that a journalist is to cover the facts and to try

and keep any biases out. I think your local newspapers do a pretty darn good job at still doing that. We have opinion/editorial pages that are open for opinions to be shared and topics to be discussed but they are clearly labeled and kept separate from the news content.

Your local newspaper employees are not pushing an agenda. We are actively involved and serving in our communities. We live, work, play and volunteer right alongside our community members. We take our role very seriously, and that includes publishing your public notices.

Any bill that seeks to change how public notices are handled, or diminishes public meetings or public records, is going to be harmful to the community, and your local newspaper, in the long run. I urge you to stand up with your local newspaper and help us keep these three in place.

Jane Ashley Pace is the publisher of the Oldham Era and Henry County Local, regional advertising manager for Paxton Media and the 2024 president of the Kentucky Press Association.”

## Senior Citizens Menu

- Meals Are Served With Water and Milk
- Thursday, Feb. 27 — Fish Sandwich, Broccoli & Cauliflower, Scalloped Potatoes, Applesauce, 1% Milk.
- Friday, Feb. 28 — Beef Taco Meat, 1 Salad/Cheese, Black Beans/Corn/Tomatoes, Mexican Brown Rice, Fresh Orange, 1% Milk.
- Monday, March 3 — Grilled Chicken Sandwich, Tater Tots, Broccoli and Cheese, Ambrosia Salad, 1% Milk, Chocolate Chip Cookie, Margarine.
- Tuesday, March 4 — Gravy, Roast Turkey, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans, Whole Grain White Roll, Margarine, Clementine Mandarin Frsh, Peanut Butter Cookie.
- Wednesday, March 5 — Chicken-a-la-King, Whole Grain White Roll, Bowtie Pasta, Graham Crackers, Margarine Cup, Banana, 1% Milk.
- Thursday, March 6 — Fish Sandwich, Strawberry Applesauce, Oven Browned Potatoes, RF/RC Creamy Cole Slaw, 1% Milk.

## Available For Adoption



Photos By Kathy Gullett

This is India - an 8 month old female Aussie mix, very sweet dog.

This is Phantom - a 2 year old male Husky mix, currently at EKCC in training.

**For More Information: contact the Morgan County Animal Shelter at 743-2545 or stop by. Shelter Hours are Mon., - Fri. 10:00--2:00**

Donations can be made to Helping Hands for Animals at P.O. Box 309, West Liberty, Ky. 41472 Located at 1854 Hwy. 205, West Liberty, Ky. 41472

## More human remains found in Menifee Co.

FRENCHBURG, Ky. Feb. 22 — More human remains were found on Friday in Menifee County near the site where other skeletal remains were discovered in 2024.

Menifee County Coroner Megan Peck reported Saturday that a human skull was found Friday near U.S. 460 in the Means community and confirmed it was near the same area

where remains were discovered in December.

A search of the area by law enforcement officers and Fish & Wildlife personnel later resulted in the discovery of “a majority of a human’s remains” nearby.

The remains have been transported to the state Medical Examiner’s Office in Frankfort for identification.

No further information had been released at press time.

The case remains under investigation by the Menifee County Sheriff’s Department and the Kentucky State Police

## White files bill to redefine residence law for city voters

FRANKFORT, Ky. — State Representative Richard White is proposing changes to who can vote in citywide elections. White, a Republican serving Elliott, Morgan, and Rowan counties, has introduced House Bill 693 which seeks to amend state law regarding how a voter’s residence is defined. If passed into law, it would allow anyone who owns at least 50% of a property within a city precinct to be considered a resident of that city for voting purposes.

Under current Kentucky

law, voters must cast their ballots based on their primary residence. This means county residents are not eligible to vote in city-specific elections, such as mayoral and city council or commission races.

The bill remains in committee. It could let some county residents vote in city elections.

Thanks For Reading The Licking Valley Courier!!!

# RALLY THE RED

## 2025 CALL TO REORGANIZATION MASS MEETING OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY OF MORGAN COUNTY



**Where:** West Liberty City Council Room  
West Liberty City Hall  
West Liberty, Ky 41472

**When:** Thursday March 6, 2025


**Time:** Registration 5:30 - 6:00 pm

**Meeting called to order at 6:00 pm**

**No one will be allowed to register that was not in line by 6:00 pm**


### Precinct & County Officer Elections

- ☐ Must be registered as a Republican in Morgan County by October 8, 2024, and
- ☐ Must provide a government issued photo ID to be eligible for admission & to participate



## Good Luck to the Cougars in the 62nd District Tournament!

**Girls Championship**  
Thursday, February 27th | 6:30



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