

Arts in Bullitt County/ by Bobbi Buchanan, Salt River Local Arts Collaborative

Share creative work, may win cash

The Salt River Local Arts Collaborative will host its monthly gathering at Cedar Grove Coffee House on Saturday, March 22, from 3 to 5 PM, and attendees who share their creative work will have a chance to win \$50 cash.

GUEST SPEAKER

Our monthly Artists' Social is held to bring together creatives of all kinds to connect, share, and make art in a welcoming, alcohol-free space.

For March, we will welcome actress and costumer Shameca Freeman, who has traveled the world working in theater.

Shameca will share her experiences in community theater, including her time with Bardstown Theatricals, and offer suggestions on how we can build our own theater component within SLAC.

Shameca's work has revolved around community and children's theater in 48 states and seven countries.



An adjunct professor at the University of Northern Colorado, Shameca holds multiple degrees, including a Master of Fine Arts in Film & TV, a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theater, and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology.

EKPHRASTIC WRITING

In addition to our guest speaker, we will engage in an ekphrastic writing activity, led by yours truly.

Ekphrastic writing is the

practice of responding to art with words—poetry, prose, or whatever the moment inspires. We'll use print photos and prints of artwork for this activity, so if you have any favorites, bring prints of them.

No prior writing experience is necessary to participate in this activity. Just bring a notebook, something to write with, and your imagination.

OPEN MIC & CASH PRIZE

At 4 PM, we will also host an open mic to give artists, writers, and performers the chance to share their work in a supportive environment. As an added incentive, we will have a drawing for a \$50 cash prize for one of our open-mic participants.

As I've mentioned in previous columns, the Salt River Local Arts Collaborative (LINK TO SUBSTACK: <https://bobbibuchanan.substack.com/>) is working to establish a dedicated arts

center to provide local artists, writers, and performers with a space to create, showcase, and sell their work.

ARTS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

In addition to the monthly Artists' Socials, I will be launching the Arts Leadership Program this month.

Funded by the Kentucky Foundation for Women and the James Baker Hall Foundation, the ALP is specifically designed to support people in addiction recovery, mental health recovery, and the formerly incarcerated—some of the most underserved people in our community.

The program will provide mentorship and leadership training, and will help participants develop facilitation and event planning skills. There are financial incentives for participating, as well. For example, the culminating task is to lead a workshop at a future Artists' Social. Stu-

dents earn \$100 for leading the workshop and graduate the program.

ALP graduates will help organize exhibits, run workshops, plan activities, promote events, and conduct other operations at the new arts center.

We will hold an orientation for the ALP at the Bullitt County Public Library in Shepherdsville on Saturday, March 15, from 2 to 4 PM. Anyone interested in enrolling in the program should contact me on Substack or by email at bobbibuch@gmail.com.

Bobbi Buchanan is a writer, teacher, and cofounder of the Salt River Local Arts Collaborative (LINK TO SUBSTACK: <https://bobbibuchanan.substack.com/>). She received grants from the Kentucky Foundation for Women and the James Baker Hall Foundation in 2024 to support her therapeutic writing workshops and help people in addiction recovery.

From the Senate/ by Mike Nemes, state senator

Legislators entering the final days

Things are moving quickly, bills are being debated, final votes are happening, and we're working hard to pass legislation that will impact Kentucky families, businesses, and communities.

Last week also brought a great reminder of why this work matters, as students from across the state visited the Capitol for Kentucky Youth Advocacy Week. It's always inspiring to see young Kentuckians engage in the legislative process and share their vision for the future.

Below are several bills we passed in the Senate last week that the Kentucky state House of Representatives may now take up.

I am grateful to my colleagues for their support of my Senate Bill 190 that helps charities generate more revenue for their missions while maintaining oversight and structure by expanding charitable gaming opportunities to support nonprofit fundraising.

It allows volunteers to serve at up to six weekly events or sessions, which builds community engagement. Licensed charitable organizations may now conduct up to three bingo sessions per week, up from two and increase the maximum allowable gaming time from 10 to 15 hours per week, further supporting nonprofit efforts. If it becomes law, these changes take effect on July 1. The bill passed the Senate unanimously and heads to the House for consideration.

Senate Bill 3 updates Kentucky's name, image, and likeness (NIL) laws to align with the expected House v. NCAA settlement and enable the state's universities to remain competitive with schools nationwide. The bill allows student-athletes to enter into agreements with their universities or affiliated organizations for direct compensation, including revenue-sharing if required by law or legal settlements. It establishes fair market standards for NIL deals and prevents schools from restricting athletes' earning potential unless outlined in institutional agreements. The bill also permits universities to sublicense NIL rights through media partners and third-party contracts to expand opportunities for student-athletes.

With an emergency provision for immediate implementation, SB 3 prepares Kentucky's universities for major changes in college athletics while protecting student-athletes and keeping the commonwealth's colleges and universities competitive.

Senate Bill 6 improves transparency in Kentucky's education funding by ensuring that the full cost of public education is accurately reported. The bill requires the Support Education Excellence in Ken-

tucky (SEEK) funding model to include state-paid fringe benefits—such as teacher pensions and health insurance—in per-pupil funding calculations.

Currently, these costs are not factored into state education funding reports, which leaves an incomplete picture of total taxpayer investment. SB 6 does not change how schools receive funding but provides a more accurate representation of the state's financial commitment to public education. The bill's reporting changes take effect on July 1, 2026.

Senate Bill 7, the Right of Publicity Act, prohibits the unauthorized commercial use of unclothed images of individuals, living or deceased, in Kentucky. It allows legal action for misuse, exempts cloud and internet service providers, and preserves First Amendment protections for journalism, art, and entertainment.

Senate Bill 38 allows school bus cameras to enforce stop arm violations, increases fines for offenders, and allocates funds for camera systems. It clarifies stopping rules on divided highways and bans autonomous vehicles for student transportation.

Senate Bill 68 reforms Kentucky public school standards and administrative requirements by emphasizing critical and independent thinking, high academic achievement, and expanding career and technical education within the curriculum. It clarifies that school boards serve as tax-levying authorities and requires district budgets to be published like school financial reports.

Senate Bill 130 creates new criminal offenses to combat gift card fraud by targeting individuals who tamper with, steal, or fraudulently use gift cards. The bill makes it a Class D felony to manipulate a gift card's packaging or security features to access its funds without authorization. It also defines "face value" for prosecution purposes and penalizes gift card theft based on its value. By addressing a growing method of financial fraud, SB 130 strengthens consumer protections and provides law enforcement with clearer tools to prosecute gift card-related crimes.

Senate Bill 132 -- The Health Care Heroes Recruitment and Retention Act, seeks to address Kentucky's health care workforce shortage by protecting medical professionals' rights to decline participation in procedures or services that violate their religious, moral, or ethical beliefs. The bill ensures that federal laws regarding emergency medical treatment and the collection of sexual assault evidence remain intact. It defines key

terms such as "conscience," "discrimination," "health care professional," and "health care institution" to provide clarity in its application. The legislation prohibits retaliation against doctors, nurses, and other providers refusing to participate in certain medical services based on conscience objections.

It shields them from legal liability for refusing to perform services they object to. It prohibits a requirement for any individual to receive a COVID-19 vaccine for student enrollment in any medical program or to receive medical treatment in the commonwealth.

Additionally, it prevents hiring or licensing authorities from penalizing, reprimanding, or denying employment or licensure to those who exercise these rights. The bill also mandates that hiring and licensing authorities provide professionals access to complaints filed against them. To ensure enforcement, it establishes a civil cause of action for individuals who experience retaliation or discrimination for asserting their conscience rights. Given the urgency of Kentucky's health care workforce crisis, the bill includes an emergency clause, making it effective immediately upon passage. These protections align with similar laws in other states and will help attract and retain medical professionals in Kentucky.

Senate Bill 144 prohibits the resale of firearms used in homicides, requiring law enforcement to destroy them within 90 days of a court order. It also allows the Kentucky State Police (KSP) to destroy confiscated firearms that are defaced, contaminated, unsafe to discharge, or requested for destruction by an innocent owner. Currently, state law mandates that seized firearms, including murder weapons, be sold at auction, a practice that has drawn criticism from victims' families and law enforcement. With bipartisan support, SB 144 prioritizes public safety, respects victims' families, and helps bring closure to those impacted by violent crime.

Senate Bill 153 sets standards for prepayment claims review in Medicaid to prevent improper payments, increase oversight, and reduce fraud. It requires compliance with state regulations and federal approval if necessary.

Senate Bill 183 requires proxy advisers working with Kentucky's state-administered retirement systems to prioritize financial outcomes when voting on or recommending shareholder-sponsored proposals. If a proxy adviser votes against a company's board of directors' recommendation, they must provide a detailed economic analysis proving the

decision benefits retirement system members. The bill aims to prevent politically motivated investment decisions, particularly those influenced by environmental, social, and governance (ESG) activism, which has been linked to lower stock returns. It also reduces reliance on proxy advisory firms, which control most of the market and frequently push non-financial agendas. By reinforcing fiduciary responsibility, SB 183 ensures pension funds remain focused solely on economic performance.

Senate Bill 202 establishes regulations for cannabis-infused beverages, treating them similarly to alcohol under the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC). The bill intends to keep intoxicating beverages out of underage reach. The bill as amended removes a previously proposed moratorium and instead sets a 5 mg THC limit per serving for intoxicating cannabis beverages. The University of Kentucky Cannabis Center will study these products and report findings to the Legislative Research Commission by November 1, 2025.

Senate Bill 207, the School Innovation Act, gives Kentucky's public schools greater flexibility to implement innovative educational strategies by establishing a waiver process through the Kentucky Board of Education. Any public school may apply to become a school of innovation, whether seeking to enhance academic offerings, expand specialized programs, or take a fresh approach to improvement. For struggling schools, this provides an opportunity for a reset within the public school system while maintaining district leadership and accountability. The bill sets clear terms and limitations for waivers and requires state approval and oversight with procedures for renewal and rescission when necessary. To streamline the process, it authorizes administrative regulations to support waiver implementation. Additionally, districts may partner with third parties to facilitate innovation with safeguards in place to revoke waivers if mismanagement occurs. Modeled after successful reforms in South Carolina and Indiana, this legislation creates a structured pathway for schools to pursue tailored solutions that best serve their students.

Senate Bill 218 enhances financial transparency by ensuring taxpayers have clear, centralized access to local government spending and tax information. The bill directs the Kentucky Department of Revenue to create an online hub linking to financial reports and tax rates for all local taxing authorities, including

city and county governments, school districts, and special-purpose entities.

If available, local governments must publish financial reports on their websites or submit them to the county library for public access. By 2026, all local governments must notify the Department of Revenue where their reports can be accessed and publish a public notice directing residents to the state's financial reporting hub. The legislation simplifies access to financial data and makes local government spending more transparent and accessible.

Senate Bill 237 exempts experienced out-of-state law enforcement officers from Kentucky's physical agility test for peace officer certification, easing recruitment while maintaining professional standards.

Senate Bill 257 creates the Office of Government Efficiency within the Auditor of Public Accounts to identify waste, improve cost-effectiveness, and enhance transparency. It formalizes the Auditor's structure, authorizes staffing and funding for efficiency initiatives. The bill builds on a decade of legislative efforts to ensure fiscal discipline, strengthen pensions, boost reserves, and lower income taxes.

Senate Bill 266 allows Kentucky State Police officers to take off-duty law enforcement jobs with commissioner approval and department regulations to prevent conflicts of interest. It permits state-owned vehicle use with regular plates and sets policies on uniforms, equipment, and facilities.

House Bill 191 expands eligibility for burial in Kentucky state veterans' cemeteries to include certain National Guard and Reserve service members and their families.

House Bill 219 would require emergency medical providers to receive sexual assault emergency response training. It does not mandate a certificate-type program, only training.

As we push forward, I remain committed to making thoughtful, responsible decisions that move Kentucky forward. Our work here isn't just about passing laws, it's about ensuring a better and brighter future for all of us. I appreciate your support and engagement throughout this process, and I encourage you to stay involved as we wrap up the 2025 Regular Session.

You can track bills and meetings in several ways. Stay updated on legislative proceedings by visiting legislature.ky.gov, or finding the status of legislation by calling 866-840-2835. You can also get legislative meeting information at 800-633-9650 and watch live at KET.org/Legislature

Man indicted for assaulting deputies at judicial center

SHEPHERDSVILLE -- A man who was in the Bullitt County Judicial Center and attacked sheriff's security officers as he tried to leave has been indicted.

The Bullitt County Grand Jury recently indicted Byron Franzell and

he was charged with two counts of assault and fleeing.

The indictment alleges that on Feb. 25, 2025, Franzell attempted to cause injury to a pair of bailiffs at the Bullitt County Judicial Center.

He also tried to flee after causing

injury to bailiff Jerry Nugent.

The most serious offense is a Class D felony, which is punishable by 1-5 years in prison.

Shepherdsville officer Brandon Beatty investigated.

An indictment does not mean guilt or

innocence. Instead, it means that at least nine of the 12 grand jurors felt there was enough evidence to move forward with a criminal trial.