

# Unpaid taxes and cutting Medicaid

BY EMILY BURTON SHERMAN

There is an estimated \$600 billion in unpaid taxes owed to our nation, according to the IRS. Spending just one additional dollar auditing the richest 10 percent of taxpayers in an effort to recover said billions “yields more than \$12 in revenue, while audits of below-median income taxpayers yield \$5,” reported The Quarterly Journal of Economics in November.

Yet such low-hanging fiscal fruitfulness has been left to rot on the vine. For a nation so determined to fight waste and abuse, Trump’s plan to cut the IRS by up to 50 percent--while also decimating Medicaid funding by the billions --smacks of targeted grift with very sharp teeth.

As reported by the Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2024, only an estimated 5.09 percent of paid Medicaid claims were actually fraudulent, and in those cases, the vast majority--close to 98 percent--are committed by providers, not the actual individual being insured.

Add to this fact the numerous state and federal fraud prevention protocols already in place and a stark picture emerges: it is astoundingly perverse for elected officials or talking heads to assert with a straight face that Medicaid is rife with abuse. Or, even more repugnantly, for any elected official to claim millions of working poor Americans must lose Medicaid funding to prevent an uprising of mythical bad actors from cheating the system.

A national fraud rate of 2 percent does not give our representatives carte blanche to casually drown hundreds of thousands of our financially floundering working-class neighbors and

friends. Should these devastating cuts proposed to Kentucky’s Medicaid in the latest Trump budget be allowed to slither into law, it isn’t what we’ve saved that will go down in history. Instead, our nation’s health will be measurably worsened for want of a scalpel instead of a chainsaw during its budget surgery.

The current proposal facing Congress is a \$1.7 billion affront to human decency, the fifth largest cut in any state in the nation according to the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy. To be absolutely clear: the proposed savings to Medicaid funding will not be returned to our communities. A loss of Medicaid and SNAP funding will cost lives and decrease lifespans while potentially reducing states’ GDP by \$113 billion, cut more than a million American jobs, and wipe out a potential \$8.8 billion in tax revenue for state and county governments, as reported by The Commonwealth Fund in March.

Not to be overlooked: these dire cuts to Grandpa’s healthcare will coincide in this budget bill with an additional \$3.8 trillion in growth...to the national deficit. This fact is stated clearly by the Congressional Budget Office itself, in a report on Trump’s proposed budget bill as sent to two House democrats by request last month.

The key take-away of the report was this: “The agency estimates that in general, resources would decrease for households in the lowest decile (tenth) of the income distribution, whereas resources would increase for households in the highest decile.”

The proposed cuts to Medicaid are far from a surgical procedure to snip out fraud and abuse among average

Americans as a path towards national health. No. They are a bomb thrown into the poorhouse wrapped in tissue-paper promises and rhetoric.

When confronted at a recent town hall meeting about the lives that will be lost due to the amputation of crucial Medicaid funding, Iowa Senator Joni Ernst glibly noted, “Well, we are all going to die. For heaven’s sakes, folks.”

She followed this astounding lack of humanity with a social media “apology video” that NPR reported appeared to be shot in a cemetery. In it, she points out her mistake in assuming we knew death came for us all. “But for those that would like to see eternal and everlasting life, I encourage you to embrace my lord and savior, Jesus Christ.”

What Ernst so clearly ignores is the basic principle of humanity that while many would someday like to sit at the feet of God, they’d rather not rush it if a little basic preventative health-care would mean more days contributing to their communities as healthy, hard-working taxpayers and parents.

If Ernst and her congressional ilk are so eager to mock the very real horrors of withering away in poverty from a preventable illness due to political power plays, perhaps they should have the decency to at least hide their glee on social media before proclaiming themselves Christians in the next breath.

Our war on poverty in the Bluegrass cannot be won by allowing illness and medical bankruptcy to swallow our working-class families. In no time in history was greater strife and suffering somehow seen as a moral victory, except in the current White House.

It’s not hard to balance human decency with economic progress when your values place people of all religions, incomes and color above tax breaks for billionaires.

It is certainly not hard to spot it when you don’t.

# Government closing Muhlenberg Job Corps

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On April 25 the department’s Employment and Training Administration released the first-ever Job Corps Transparency Report, which analyzed the financial performance and operational costs of the most recently available metrics of program year 2023.

A summary of the overall findings is listed here, along with:

Average graduation rate (WIOA Definition): 38.6 percent

Average cost per student per year: \$80,284.65

Average total cost per graduate (WIOA Definition): \$155,600.

Post separation, participants earn \$16,695 annually on average.

The total number of serious incident reports for program year 2023: 14,913 infractions.

Inappropriate sexual behavior and sexual assaults reported: 372

Acts of violence reported: 1,764

Breaches of safety or security: 1,167

Reported drug use: 2,702

Total hospital visits: 1,808

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According to the njcaweb.org, the official website of Job Corps, there are many false or misleading statements about Job Corps in recent media coverage regarding U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) decision to shutter Job Corps campuses. Below are corrections and additional context.

**False statement:** Job Corps’ graduation rate is just 38.6 percent.

The “transparency” report examines data from July 1, 2023--June 30, 2024. Job Corps’ current graduation rate is higher.

Like other schools and colleges, enrollment and graduates rates were depressed by COVID-19 policies. Historically, Job Corps graduation rates have been above 60 percent.

Under previous administrations, DOL began requiring students with a high school diploma to participate in remedial academic classrooms until they are “college-ready” regardless of whether that aligns with their career goals. This

leads students to leave out of frustration and has caused a decline in graduation rates.

**False statement:** Job Corps costs as much as \$155,600 per student.

Job Corps costs less than \$50,000 per enrollee according to DOL’s report.

This is an increase from a report during the first Trump administration which indicated the cost per enrollee was \$34,301.

The increase is due almost entirely to COVID-19 restrictions on the number of students Job Corps allowed to serve, some of which are still in place.

**False statement:** Job Corps’ cost per graduate is higher than 4-year colleges.

49 percent of 4-year college students graduate within 4 years. At an average cost of \$38,270, that amounts to a cost per graduate of \$312,408.

A report during the first Trump administration, prior to COVID-19 policies, reported Job Corps’ average cost per graduate to be \$57,312.

**False statement:** Job Corps is no longer achieving its intended outcomes.

Job Corps graduates exceeded the wage goals set by DOL in fiscal year 2023.

**False statement:** Job Corps students are largely hired in minimum-wage positions, earning \$16,695.

Job Corps students were placed in jobs earning an average wage of \$17.13 during FY 2023, more than twice the minimum wage of \$7.25. Graduates earned annualized wages of more than \$31,000.

**Misleading statement:** There are fewer than 25,000 students enrolled.

Job Corps enrollments were greater than 25,000 and increasing in April but have since declined because DOL halted enrollments in March.

**Misleading statement:** There were 14,913 serious incident reports filed in 2023.

Per DOL’s reporting requirements, these “serious” incidents include power outages and inclement weather, athletic injuries that require treatment, and adult students leaving campus without prior approval.

# Obituaries

## Mabel Jenkins Stewart

Mabel Irene Jenkins Stewart, 96, of Henderson, passed away on Sunday, June 1, 2025 under the care of St. Anthony’s Hospice.

She was born Dec. 20, 1928 in Muhlenberg County, to the late Marshall and Offie Jenkins and was a long-time resident of Central City.

Irene was a devoted wife of 56 years to Houston Stewart. She was a faithful and longtime member of Temple Baptist Church in Central City. Her kind and giving spirit that was reflected in her smile was a blessing to all who knew her. Her grandchildren and great-grandchildren meant everything to her and she enjoyed playing with them, cooking for them, and attending all their school and sports activities.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Houston Stewart; infant sons, Benny Stewart and Barry Stewart; sister, Marlene McCormick; and granddaughter, Shirl Stewart.

Irene is survived by her daughter, Kathy (Tony) Cessna; step-son, Arkley (Hazel) Stewart; step-daughter, Barbara Leibfreid; grandchildren, Jordan (Callie) Cessna, Justin (Brianna) Cessna, Benjamin Stewart, and Kara Leibfreid; great-grandchildren, Jace Cessna, Mia Cessna, Elle Cessna, and Natalie Leibfreid; great-great-grandchild, Rhiannon Hutchason; and several nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be Wednesday, June 4 at 12 p.m. at Tucker Funeral Home in Central City with Rev. Leroy Rearden officiating. Burial will be in Rose Hill Cemetery. Visitation will be 9 a.m.-12 p.m. at the funeral home. Pallbearers will be Jordan Cessna, Justin Cessna, Dr. Pat Dorroh, Barry Barnard, Blake Barnard, Ben Gresham, and honorary pallbearers, Jace Cessna and Kenny Stewart. Expressions of sympathy may take the form of contributions to St. Anthony’s Hospice, 2410 S. Green St., Henderson, Ky. 42420.

## Anna Sue Stanley

Anna Sue Stanley, 80, of Graham, died Sunday, May 25, 2025 at Owensboro Health Muhlenberg Community Hospital in Greenville.

She was born Sept. 17, 1944 in Muhlenberg County. She was a member of Orange Grove General Baptist Church and worked at Maple Manor for 10 years. She enjoyed reading, gardening, flowers, quilting, traveling, collecting antiques, and family gatherings.

She was preceded in death by her father, Granville Rolley; mother, Mary Bell Groves; brothers, Jimmy Ray Groves, William Darrell Groves, and Clifford Don Groves; and foster daughter, Barbara Ann (Alfrink) Cobb.

She is survived by her husband, Roy Stanley; four children, Dwight (Tonya) Stanley, Nona McCauley, Derrick (Angela) Stanley, and Carol (Joe) Jarvis; grandchildren, Marissa McCauley, Josh Jarvis, Amanda Cobb, Hylan Stanley, Joseph Stanley, Jacob Jarvis, Lindsey Kirsliis, Cody Cobb, Caleb Cobb, and Colton Cobb; great-grandchildren, Lee Fulkerson, Joel Fulkerson, Allie Cobb, Nora Cobb, and Addison Jarvis; and grand-dogs, Tinker Bell Jarvis, Ginger Jarvis, Milo McCauley, Bullit Stanley, and Buster McCauley.

Funeral services were Friday, May 30 at Tucker Funeral Home in Central City with Bro. Jerry Eades officiating. Burial followed in Stanley Family Cemetery.

## Betty Allen Huff

Betty Allen Huff, 81, of Chattanooga, Tenn., died Saturday, May 24, 2025, at CHI Memorial Hospital in Chattanooga.

She was born May 4, 1944, in Rockport. She was a housekeeper for Community Hospital in Munster, Ind., and of the Pentecostal faith.

She is survived by her sons, Allen Huff and Justin (Kathy) Huff; daughter, Nicole (Zack) Escobedo; grandchildren, Allen Huff Jr., Anthony (Tiffany) Huff, Anna Huff (Robert Castellano), Daisa Huff, Victor Escobedo, Jacob Williams, and Justin Huff Jr.; nine great-grandchildren; sisters, Farley Gunn and Jequita Childers; and brother, Gene Martin.

Funeral services were Saturday, May 31 at Tucker Funeral Home in Central City, with David Anderson officiating. Burial followed in Rose Hill Cemetery.

## Theresa Darlene Eskins

Theresa Darlene Eskins, 65, of Central City, died Sunday, May 31, 2025 at 2:25 a.m. under the care of Hospice of Western Kentucky in Owensboro.

She was born in Chicago, Ill. on June 26, 1959. She was of the Baptist faith and was a homemaker. She enjoyed spending time with her family and friends, going on beach trips, planting flowers, gardening, boating, playing volleyball, swimming, cooking and entertaining. She loved having holiday gatherings at her place. She was a loving mother and wife and lived her life to the fullest.

She was preceded in death by her mother, Margie Jarvis Kirtley; father, Raymond Johnson; step-father, Harold Jarvis; and sister, Judy Stewart.

She is survived by her husband, Harold “Mitch” Eskins; daughter, Aimee (Chris) Gray of Calhoun; siblings, Rose and Greg Smith of Calhoun, Randy and Donna Johnson of Henderson, and Jerry and Debbie Johnson of Central City; and step-father, Dorris Ray Kirtley of Central City.

Funeral services will be Wednesday, June 4 at 1 p.m. at Tucker Funeral Home in Central City with Rev. Kevin Reed officiating. Burial will be private. Visitation will be Wednesday from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at the funeral home.

## Mary Helen Wilcox

Mary Helen Wilcox, 91, of Central City, died surrounded by family at Owensboro Health Regional Hospital on Friday, May 23, 2025.

She was born on July 29, 1933, to Samuel Howard Henry and Ilene Agnes Babb in Powderly.

A respected member of the community, Mary retired from the Muhlenberg County Clerk’s Office and was a member of First Baptist Church where she taught Sunday school well into her later years. She had an interest in history and genealogy and a love of flowers, music, and learning, earning an associate’s degree in Children’s Literature after her first grandchildren were born.

As the matriarch of her family, Mary was steadfast and resilient, yet good humored and open-minded, always serving as a calm voice of reason. In her own words, she stood on her own two feet by leaning on the everlasting arms of God.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brother, Dewey Henry; and sons, Raymond, Steve, and Brad Wilcox.

She is survived by her sister, Carol (H.C.) Mooningham; brother, David Henry; daughter, Kathy (Ken) Rogers; grandchildren, Mark Wilcox, Kallie (Christopher) Snyder, Adrian Wilcox, Karissa Shelton, and Briley, Kadie, and Stuart Wilcox; nephews, Greg Henry, and Sean and Matthew Mooningham; nieces, Natalie Morphew, Sharon Wallace, Erin Mooningham, and Beth Pate; along with 12 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were Friday, May 30 at Tucker Funeral Home in Central City, with Dr. Chase Thompson officiating. Burial followed in Fairmount Cemetery.

## Debora Gay Fugate

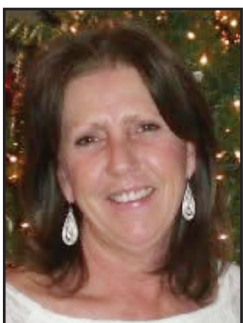
Debora Gay Fugate, 66, of Powderly, passed away peacefully on Monday, May 26, 2025, at the Heartford Hospice House in Owensboro.

She was born on Oct. 23, 1958, in Louisville. She grew up and graduated high school in the Valley Station area. After school, Deb moved back to Muhlenberg County. She worked at SuperValu in Greenville and AutoLiv in Madisonville. Deb was a breast cancer survivor of 12 years and an advocate for the American Cancer Society along with her Relay for Life team, the Fighting Fugates. Deb loved crafting, family functions and Louisville basketball.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Herman and Callistus Fugate; cousins, Brenda McGill, Paula Dixon, and Barry Fugate; and a cherished cousin, Keegan Harvey.

She is survived by a sister, Sharon (Gary) Scott; two nephews, Jesse Scott and Jonathon Scott; a niece, Jennifer Scott; her beloved partner, Thomas Vincent; as well as many aunts, uncles, and cousins. The family would like to extend a special thanks to everyone that cared for, prayed, and made contributions to assist with Debbie’s care. This did not go unnoticed, and we are very grateful to each and every one of you, from the bottom of our hearts.

A celebration of life will take place for family and friends at the Shady Cliff Events Center on Saturday, June 14, from 1-4 p.m.. Tucker Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.



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