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Harlan County Sheriff Deputy Josh Sargent addressed those attending last week's press conference announcing the return of the popular D.A.R.E. program in Harlan County. Judge Executive Dan Mosely said that the county would fund the project with money it receives from the opiod abatement settlement. Harlan County Sheriff Chris Brewer and UNITE Director Tom Vicini also spoke at the news conference held at the courhouse on Friday afternoon.

County Will Use Opiod Settlement Funds To Bring Back D.A.R.E. Program

By: JENNIFER McDANIELS Tri-City News Contributor

During a courthouse press conference held Friday, Harlan County Judge Executive Dan Mosley exclaimed that he's always been a proponent of the saying "If it's not broken, don't fix it." With that in mind, the judge executive made a formal, public announcement Friday that county government is bringing back to life in Harlan an old anti-drug program with new hopes of making more of an impact in the county's war on drugs through prevention.

The purpose of Friday's press conference was to announce that Harlan County Fiscal Court is reviving the D.A.R.E program - a prominent, nationwide drug abuse educational initiative started in the 1980's that, at one point, was being implemented in 75 percent of America's schools. Mosley said that the D.A.R.E. program will be restarted in Harlan County through opioid abatement settlement funds. Harlan County is one of several governmental entities in the nation that received significant dollars from pharmaceutical companies ordered through the courts to pay out billions to states that experienced harm from what the judicial system ruled was misleading marketing of the drugs, downplaying their risks, and not realizing there was a widespread problem with addiction. "I cannot think of a better use of opioid abatement funds than to put the funds into prevention, and that's what I'm telling county judge executives all over our 43 county region that they need to focus on prevention," said Operation UNITE president Tom Vicini, who also took part in the press conference, and committed UNITE's partnering help.

program is returning to Harlan County, but also to name and introduce the county's new D.A.R.E. officer, Harlan County Sheriff's Deputy Josh Sargent.

Sargent, who has served as the School Resource Officer (SRO) for Wallins Elementary School, will now be leading efforts to promote drug prevention with the county's youth through various programming and special events starting on July 5. Vicini, who joined the press conference to pledge UNITE partnership with the preventative education approach to battling the drug program in Harlan County, said Sargent was the perfect fit for the new role. "This is a great day for Harlan County," Vicini said. "Josh will do Great things. Our county judge executive and our sheriff are focused on changing the culture here for young people, and being a Harlan County resident myself, that just makes me feel very good with the people we have in authority here. UNITE is glad to be here and to be a part of this picture." Mosley praised the Harlan County Sherrif's Office for the aggressive work the department has done on drug enforcement, getting several traffickers off the streets and out of local communities in the county's personal attack on the nationwide drug epidemic on the home front. Mosley also praised other groups like UNITE and its community coalition along with the county's ASAP (Agency for Substance Abuse Policy)



Wednesday, July 2, 2025

New State Laws Take Effect Including Directing Schools To Establish Policy For Moment of Silence

A range of new legislation came into effect in Kentucky on Friday, following the recent actions of the Kentucky General Assembly. This legislative session was particularly active, with lawmakers introducing over 1,100 bills and passing approximately 140, excluding Senate and House Resolutions.

On June 27, 11 bills officially become law, addressing various issues including Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and cellphone regulations in schools. Despite vetoes from Governor Andy Beshear (D) on four of these bills, the Republican supermajority successfully overridden his decisions, and one bill passed without his veto or signature.

What's Coming into Effect

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion & Religious Policies

House Bill 4 prohibits Kentucky colleges and universities from allocating funds for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, including the establishment of DEI offices. This measure aligns with a national trend to restrict DEI in higher education. Governor Beshear vetoed this bill, referencing the Civil Rights Movement as justification for his opposition. He expressed concern that it would hinder universities in welcoming students from diverse backgrounds, including those of color, various faiths, women, and the LGBTQ+ community, and limit investigations of bias to narrow circumstances. In his veto message, Beshear cautioned, "To suggest that racism and discrimination no longer exist is disingenuous." He warned that history may view this legislation as part of an anti-civil rights movement, calling for Kentucky to distance itself from such trends. Conversely, Rep. Jennifer Decker (R-Shelbyville), the bill's primary sponsor, argues that it will combat discrimination on campuses: "This measure aims to eliminate discrimination based on religion, race, sex, color, or national origin. We seek to free our universities from misguided DEI policies that increase costs and division."

also allows students to take up to one hour off weekly for "moral instruction," a lesson not sponsored by the school, outside of school grounds.

Governor Beshear vetoed this bill, objecting that it fails to accommodate different faith practices and does not define "moral instruction." However, the Senate, led by Sen. Rick Girdler (R-Somerset), ultimately overrode the veto. Girdler stated, "A seated moment of silence allows students to reflect or pray in a personal way, free from pressure to conform to any specific actions."

Business and Workplace Regulations

Senate Bill 22 legalizes mobile barbershops and salons in Kentucky, with licensing managed by the Kentucky Board of Barbering. It also allows beauty professionals to retake licensing exams an unlimited number of times.

House Bill 398 restricts the Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board and other officials from implementing regulations that are stricter than federal standards. Beshear vetoed this bill, arguing it could compromise workplace safety for state employees. He warned it would eliminate protections unique to Kentucky that go beyond federal regulations. Nonetheless, the House overrode this veto in March. Rep. Walker Thomas (R-Hopkinsville), the bill's sponsor, maintains it will reduce unnecessary barriers to economic growth, asserting, "We must ensure our policies are effective without hindering job growth."

"When they see efforts like this, hopefully that will be a great influence on their counties and how they can use their funding," Vicini added.

The purpose of Friday's press conference was not only to announce that the D.A.R.E.

Continued to Page 2

Senate Bill 19 mandates that K-12 school districts establish a policy for a moment of silence at the start of each school day, requiring students to remain seated and silent. It

Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

House Bill 399 classifies interference with legislative proceedings as a Class A misdemeanor, with repeated offenses escalating to a Class D felony, which carries up to five years in prison. Beshear vetoed this bill, citing that wrongdoing in legislative sessions is already classified under existing laws, and raised concerns about its potential to suppress lawful protest.

Rep. John Blanton (R-Salyersville) defended the measure, stating, "Maintaining order in legislative proceedings allows every voice to be heard while protecting the integrity of the process."

Continued to Page 2

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