

STATE GOVERNMENT NEWS

Senate bill targets Ky. doctor shortage

By Tom Latek
Kentucky Today

FRANKFORT — The state Senate is considering legislation directing the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, and Eastern Kentucky University to coordinate a comprehensive search for actionable solutions to physician and health care shortages and expand health care access in medically underserved areas.

Senate President Robert Stivers, R-Manchester, is the sponsor of Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 116, which he presented to the Senate Health Services Committee on Wednesday. The measure passed without dissent.

“Access to a doctor should not depend on



Senate President Robert Stivers, R-Manchester

LRC PHOTO

your ZIP code,” Stivers told the panel. “By bringing our leading universities and partners together, we are taking a

focused, data-driven approach to ensure more Kentuckians, especially those in unserved and underserved areas, have

access to quality care. Strengthening our physician workforce and other healthcare providers strengthens families,

communities, and the Commonwealth as a whole.”

Under the resolution, the three universities will need to collaborate with community partners, state agencies, professional associations, and other stakeholders, to identify strategies that address workforce shortages, improve physician retention in underserved areas, and expand access through technology and community-based care models.

More than 75 percent of Kentucky physicians practice in urban areas, leaving many rural counties without adequate access to primary and specialty care. As a result, residents in medically underserved communities must often travel long distances for

treatment. This creates financial and transportation barriers that can lead to delayed or foregone care.

“Who is better equipped than our leading universities to solve this healthcare problem?” said Stivers.

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, 57 percent of medical residents continue practicing in the state where they complete their training. Lawmakers say they believe expanding graduate medical education opportunities in underserved regions could significantly improve long-term physician retention.

SJR 116, if passed by both chambers, is just like bills and carries the weight of law. It now heads to the Senate floor.



ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CABINET

The grants help support communities with a history of coal mining to meet economic and community development goals.

Coal communities encouraged to apply for AMLER grant

By Tom Latek
Kentucky Today

FRANKFORT — Gov. Andy Beshear is encouraging communities in Kentucky’s eastern and western coalfield counties to apply for this year’s Abandoned Mine Lands Economic Revitalization (AMLER) grant funding, expected to total \$29.5 million.

The grants help support communities with a history of coal mining to meet economic and community development goals. Applications will be accepted through 4 p.m. (ET) on May 11.

“For a decade, this program has leveraged the strength of our

Appalachian communities to develop innovative projects and economic opportunity for our people,” Beshear said. “This year, that opportunity is being extended to coal communities in Western Kentucky, creating even more good-paying jobs across our commonwealth which our people deserve.”

Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Goodman said the AMLER Program has helped strengthen workforce training, tourism, industrial development and other sectors: “The AMLER Program gives Kentuckians the tools to enact real change in their communities. I’m proud

that our cabinet can be a part of the process.”

U.S. Rep. Harold “Hal” Rogers, R-Somerset, established the AMLER program in 2016 to help the coal-producing states that have helped power our nation transition toward newly emerging industries. Since then, more than \$280 million has been awarded for projects in Kentucky.

Reference to the “Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Economic Development Pilot Program” (AML Pilot Program) changed to the “Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization Program” (AMLER Program) in March 2021 to realign with the language in the appropriation law.

The AMLER name refers to all years of the program (first funded in FY 2016).

Each application must include details of the project’s economic benefit along with a connection to pre-law coal mining (mining that was completed prior to May 18, 1982). Staff with the Division of Abandoned Mine Lands will be available on the following dates to provide potential applicants with virtual or in-person assistance:

- March 19: 100 Bulldog Lane, Suite 100, Hazard.
- March 26: 85 State Police Rd., London.
- April 9: 3149 S. Lake Drive, Suite 5, Prestonsburg.
- April 16: 625 Hospital Drive, Madisonville.

Adams updates voter registration

By Tom Latek
Kentucky Today

FRANKFORT — Kentucky Secretary of State Michael Adams announced Friday that, leading up to the May 19 primary election, most new voters who registered in February rejected the two major parties.

According to Adams, of the 2,606 net new registrants, nearly two-thirds registered under other political affiliations, most as independents.

“Independents are out-registering Republicans and Democrats, leading up to party primaries in which Independents cannot vote,” Adams said. “It’s no wonder that both Republican and Democratic legislators are filing bills to open our primaries to Independents.”

In February, overall registration rose by 6,777 voters, while 4,171 voters were removed from the rolls: 3,476 who were deceased, 327 felony convicts, 237 who moved out of state, 63 adjudged mentally incompetent, 27 who voluntarily de-registered, 23 non-citizens, and 18 duplicate registrations.

Republican registration grew by 1,174 voters, a .07 percent increase from January. Democratic registration accounts for 41 percent of the electorate, with 1,373,995 voters. Democratic registration fell by 261, a .02 percent



decrease.

There are now 376,201 voters registered under other political affiliations (mostly independent), accounting for 11 percent of the electorate. “Other” registration rose by 1,693, a .45 percent increase.

2026 will see the all-important mid-term election, when voters will have plenty of races to choose from.

Among them is the U.S. Senate seat currently held by Republican Mitch McConnell of Louisville. The 83-year-old has been in that office since 1985 and is the longest-serving U.S. senator in Kentucky history. He is not seeking an eighth term.

In addition, Kentucky’s six Congressional seats, all 100 in the Kentucky House, and the even-numbered state Senate districts will also appear on the ballot in 2026. In addition, there will be many city and county races.

While the primary election itself will be May 19, there will be three days of early in-person voting on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday (May 14-16) prior to Election Day.

Attorney general takes on Your Hometown Heroes

By Tom Latek
Kentucky today

FRANKFORT — Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman announced Monday that his Office of Consumer Protection has secured a court order to end unlawful operations for a group claiming to be veterans and soliciting donations.

Franklin Circuit Court Judge Phillip Shepherd ordered Your Hometown Heroes, Inc., operating in Marion County, to end all solicitation efforts and other

operations. In addition to entering a \$421,000 monetary judgment, reflecting \$1,000-per-day contempt fines for 421 days of noncompliance, the court permanently blocked Your Hometown Heroes, Inc. from being a part of any charitable activity or fundraising in the state, vacated the organization’s corporate charter, and revoked or suspended its licenses, permits, and certificates to do business in Kentucky.

Any fines recovered from the fraudulent organization would

be returned to the General Assembly, after the AG’s Office recovers its costs.

“Stealing in the name of those who have sacrificed for our country is not just fraud, it is a betrayal of honor itself,” Coleman stated. “These bad actors preyed on the generosity and patriotism of Kentuckians, and we are proud to shut them down.”

The Office of Consumer Protection opened an investigation into Your Hometown Heroes after individuals asso-

ciated with the organization were arrested in Marion County for allegedly lying to consumers to secure donations. According to arrest documents, they told potential donors that they were veterans, despite never having served in the military. One of the individuals will face criminal charges during a May trial at Marion Circuit Court.

“Veterans earned their benefits through service and sacrifice, and they deserve both protection and respect,” said Nicole Horseman, state com-

mander of the Department of Kentucky VFW. “We fully support thorough investigations and due process, and we appreciate the attorney general’s commitment to holding accountable anyone who exploits veterans. Fraud against those who served will not be tolerated in Kentucky.”

Kentuckians who have concerns or suspect a charity is soliciting for donations illegally should contact the Attorney General’s Office of Consumer Protection.