



Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear waves to the audience Jan. 7 after delivering his State of the Commonwealth address in Frankfort.

# Gov. Beshear nixes GOP education plan

By **Mckenna Horsley**  
*Kentucky Lantern*

Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear has vetoed a GOP-backed bill that would opt Kentucky into a scholarship program for K-12 students promoted by the Trump administration and benefiting from a new federal tax credit.

"Kentuckians have said loud and clear: Public dollars should only be used for public education. The Republican supermajority hasn't listened. I have," Beshear said in a Friday Social media post with his full veto message attached. "Today, I am standing with our people and vetoing House Bill 1."

Though three Democratic lawmakers voted in favor of House Bill 1, members of the party have criticized the program as a voucher system to fund "school choice options" like private and charter schools at the expense of public schools. Republicans have countered that the bill would allow all K-12 students and their families to potentially benefit from education assistance grants funded by a federal tax credit created under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) touted by President Donald Trump — without having to appropriate state tax dollars.

HB 1 would allow Kentucky K-12 students to receive scholarships for private school tuition and other education assistance funded by donations from people receiving the federal tax credit that will become available in 2027 under legislation the OBBBA passed by Congress last year. In addition to tuition, the scholarships may be used for tutoring services, books, internet access and more.

In arguing against the bill, Democrats pointed to rejections of earlier GOP-backed proposals to fund private and charter schools with public dollars from the state Supreme Court and by Kentucky voters. Beshear recalled the vote against the constitutional amendment in 2024 and the recent high court's decision in his veto message.

Beshear wrote that he knows his veto will be "politicized" and some may respond by attacking teachers' unions, "as if

they are malevolent actors, when in reality, they are our neighbors and friends who have taken on critical jobs despite the low pay." He added that they "should be appreciated instead of attacked."

He also had words for those who may say he did not "buck my political party, as if some edict has been sent to all Democrats on this or any issue." Beshear said that when he was Kentucky's attorney general, he filed lawsuits against presidents of both parties as evidence that he has "voiced my criticism and given credit to presidents of both parties."

"I am, quite simply, standing up for my conviction that if we want to ensure every child gets a world-class education the answer is not diverting students and dollars from public education, but providing sufficient resources to fix public education," Beshear wrote. "If you believe a charter school can do better because it has more flexibility, then provide our public schools with more flexibility. Don't hamstring them with requirements you don't put on other schools and then blame them in direct comparisons."

HB 1 is the second bill Beshear has vetoed this year. The first was House Bill 314, which would remove the current executive director of the Kentucky Communications Network Authority, or KCNA, and remake its board. The House and Senate, with Republican supermajorities, easily overrode Beshear's veto on that measure.

During debate on the tax credit bill, Republican lawmakers vowed to override a veto from the governor should he issue one. In the Senate, President Pro Tem David Givens, R-Greensburg, made a direct appeal to Beshear, asking him to either sign the bill or let it lay on his desk as "a positive message to everyone."

"And if you choose to veto, you know it's going to be overridden. That is what it is," Givens said last month. "But I'll ask you to make your \$1,700 contribution, governor, to a Kentucky SGO and help these kids. It's a rare opportunity."

Under the bill, Kentucky may identify eligible scholarship grant-

ing organizations (SGO) for students. An SGO can benefit not only private school students, but public school students as well.

The Education Freedom Tax Credit is up to \$1,700 per year for individuals who donate to SGOs, which would then give most of the money to eligible students through scholarships. The organizations would be able to use 10% of the money for administrative costs. Donors can receive the \$1,700 credit even if they do not live in a state that has opted into the program.

Givens said in a statement Friday afternoon Beshear's veto message "misrepresents" what the bill does and added that the legislation "allows Kentucky to participate in a federal program so that charitable donations supported by a federal tax credit can benefit Kentucky students instead of students in other states."

"Governor Beshear's meandering veto message reminds me of a student who really wishes the teacher had put a different question on the test," Givens said. "Well, we will 'grade' his work next week when we override his veto and start the process of making these federal funds available to Kentucky families."

Republican bill sponsors Reps. Kim Moser, of Taylor Mill, and TJ Roberts, of Burlington, called Beshear's veto "a shameful disservice to Kentucky students and families in public, private, and home school settings" in a statement.

"By blocking this program, the Governor is once again standing in the way of a policy that empowers parents and expands educational opportunities for children — whether through tutoring, school supplies, or other academic resources," Moser and Roberts said. "He's also blocking the possibility of catalyzing schools of innovation and creativity. Instead of supporting families, he doubles down on misinformation in a blatant attempt to score political points."

Kentucky's SGOs would be overseen by the secretary of state, who is currently Republican Michael Adams. His office would report to the U.S. Treasury about the state's participation in the federal tax credit.

# Bardstown soldier killed in Iraq crash

By **Mark Maynard**  
*Kentucky Today*

BARDSTOWN — A soldier from Kentucky has been identified as one of the six U.S. soldiers inside a plane that went down in Iraq on Friday, according to the U.S. Department of War.

Tech. Sgt. Ashley B. Pruitt, 34, was from Bardstown in Nelson County.

The DoW listed the five other airmen who also died in the crash:

- Maj. John A. Klinner, 33, of Auburn, Alabama;

- Capt. Ariana G. Savino, 31, of Covington, Washington;

- Capt. Seth R. Koval, 38, of Mooresville, Indiana;

- Capt. Curtis J. Angst, 30, of Wilmington, Ohio; and

- Tech. Sgt. Tyler H. Simmons, 38, of Columbus, Ohio.

All six airmen were supporting Operation Epic Fury at the time of the crash.

The incident is under investigation. U.S. Central Command said in a post on X early Friday that their KC-135 plane went down at approximately 2 p.m. ET Thursday in western Iraq.

Sgt. Pruitt was assigned to the 6th Air



Ashley Pruitt of Bardstown was among six airmen killed last week during Operation Epic Fury during a refueling crash.

Refueling Wing, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., and was supporting Operation Epic Fury at the time of her death.

Congressman Andy Barr reacted to the death of Tech Sgt. Pruitt on social media.

"Praying for the family and friends of TSgt. Ashley Pruitt of Bardstown. God bless her memory and her ultimate sacrifice in Operation Epic Free-

dom to rid the world of the largest state sponsor of terror. Her legacy will never be forgotten."

Sgt. Pruitt is the second soldier from Kentucky who has been killed during Operation Epic Fury. Sgt. Benjamin Pennington of Glendale was the other.

He died on March 9 after an enemy attack at Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia.



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