

STATE NEWS



LRC PUBLIC INFORMATION

Sen. Jimmy Higdon, R-Lebanon, left, and Alyssa Burns, speak before a legislative committee meeting last year about a proposal to expand Kentucky laws that ban texting while driving. Burns' daughter, Camberleigh, died after a distracted driver rear-ended their vehicle.

'Planting a seed' to make roads safer: KY Senate approves 'phone-down' law

MCKENNA HORSLEY
KENTUCKY LANTERN

A mother whose toddler died in a rear-end collision applauded a bill that cleared the Kentucky Senate Tuesday for "planting a seed" for "better behavior on our roads."

The measure would expand the state's no texting while driving laws as a means to reduce distracted driving.

Alyssa Burns, whose daughter Camberleigh died days before her second birthday in a 2022 crash, told the Lantern, "I just hope that this gives Kentuckians the wake up call that there are people who are tired of you infringing on our right to a safe passage from point A to point B. My daughter's right to life was stolen from her."

Burns said Kentuckians who are driving with distractions, like cell phones and games, should think about potentially endangering others on the road. "I am imploring people: Why are we waiting for it to be someone you love for us to care?"

A Ford F-350 slammed into the back of the vehicle in which Burns and her daughter were traveling on Interstate 71 in Louisville. Burns' daughter was buckled into a child seat in the back. Burns and her fiancé who was driving suffered serious injuries. Louisville police determined the pickup driver was "not properly watching the roadway ahead" and listed driver "inattention" as the only contributing factor, reports WHAS. The driver of the pickup was not charged.

Senate Bill 28, or "the Phone-Down Kentucky

Act," says drivers cannot hold a cell phone while driving to send electronic messages, like texts and emails, or watch moving images, like videos and games.

Drivers who violate the legislation could face \$100 fines starting in late October. Fines assessed under the legislation will be divided among a traumatic brain injury trust fund, the Kentucky trauma care system fund and a veterans' program fund.

The Senate approved the bill Tuesday afternoon, with 31 votes in favor and seven Republicans voting against it. The House must now weigh in on the legislation before it can become law.

The Senate Transportation Committee gave unanimous approval to the bill last week.

The bill's sponsor, Sen. Jimmy Higdon, R-Lebanon, has said the bill is a priority for him to pass in his final legislative session, as he won't be seeking reelection this year.

"This is about saving lives, plain and simple," Higdon said in a press release after the Senate passed the legislation.

"This bill won't bring Camberleigh back, and it won't bring justice to the person responsible for her death, but it is an opportunity for us to honor her, and finally do the right thing by putting the Phone Down Kentucky Act into law."

Burns testified in favor of the bill before an interim legislative committee last year.

Some lawmakers did have questions on the Senate floor about the bill. Sen. Brandon Smith,

R-Hazard, said constituents asked him whether drivers would face an additional fine if police officers pull them over for one infraction, like speeding, and then see a cell phone in the car. Higdon replied that an officer cannot stop a person for violating the bill without having "visually observed" them using their phone behind the wheel. Smith later voted in favor of the bill, but added that he would like to see the bill made clearer later in the legislative process.

Senate Majority Whip Mike Wilson, R-Bowling Green, recalled coming across an accident on his way home where a motorcyclist had been run over by a car. He said the driver of the car had been looking at their phone. Wilson himself has long ridden motorcycles and has heard that most accidents involving motorcycles are not caused by the motorcyclist, but drivers who do not see them.

"I think it's a matter of safety, and especially looking at my motorcycle clubs, my friends, I agree with them, and they've asked for this for a long time, so I'm happy to vote aye," Wilson said.

One of the senators who voted against the bill, Sen. Gex Williams, R-Vero-

na, explained that he was "sympathetic" to Wilson's comments and said he sees collision avoidance technology in autonomous vehicles or cars with driver assistance improving in the future. He noted that distracted driving can include moments when a driver isn't using a phone, but is eating, drinking or talking to another passenger in the car.

Williams said he thinks technology has "the potential to save as many lives as seat belts have saved in the future, because ... the collision avoidance braking system — it never rests," Williams said. "It never is distracted. It's looking on the road."

PUBLIC NOTICE
25-P-236
Estate of: Billie H. Buchanan
Executor: Richard L. Buchanan
Attorney: Shawn M. VanHook
Comes for a final settlement hearing on Thursday, February 5th, 2026
@ 1:00PM in the Pulaski County Judicial Building.

2 BR 2 BA
4 miles West,
½ mile from Fishing
Creek Boat Ramp
\$800 plus deposit
606-305-1179

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

The Pulaski County Conservation District is accepting resumes for a full time Soil Conservationist located in the Somerset office and working eight surrounding counties.

Performs duties in both office and field settings while collaborating with landowners and conservation partners. Competitive pay with benefits. Preferred education is a bachelor's degree in agriculture or natural resources; agriculture experience may substitute for education.

A job description may be requested by emailing

burnett7210@outlook.com

Resumes can be hand delivered or mailed to:

45 Eagle Creek Drive; Somerset, KY 42503;

until submittal deadline of 4:30pm on February 13th.

Kentucky Senate says 'yes' again to limiting governors' pardons around election time

MCKENNA HORSLEY
KENTUCKY LANTERN

The Kentucky Senate once again approved a GOP-backed constitutional amendment that would limit pardon powers of Kentucky governors around election time.

If it makes it through the General Assembly, Senate Bill 10 would ask Kentucky voters in November to block governors from issuing pardons and sentence commutations 60 days before their election through their successor's inauguration in December.

The Kentucky Senate voted 36-0 in favor of the measure Tuesday afternoon. One lawmaker, Senate Minority Caucus Chair Reggie Thomas, D-Lexington, passed on the vote.

Commonwealth Journal

P.O. Box 859, 110-112 East Mt. Vernon St., Somerset, KY 42502-0859

Bill Atkinson, Publisher
Steve Cornelius, Editor

CONTACT US BY TELEPHONE:

Main office (606) 679-8191

Circulation (606) 679-5200

CONTACT US BY FAX:

Editorial Fax (606) 679-9225

Business office (606) 679-6635

Advertising Fax (606) 679-4866

DELIVERY:

If you wish to subscribe, or have a delivery problem, contact the Circulation Department via phone or email during working hours Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Phone calls only can be left on Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon, and Sunday from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m.

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Total Media Access Rate is \$179.40 annually

All subscription prices are subject to a 6 percent Kentucky sales tax.

POSTMASTER:

Please send address changes to:

The Commonwealth Journal
P.O. Box 859
Somerset, Ky 42502-0859

The Commonwealth Journal is published in Somerset, Ky, by CNHI on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, except on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Printed on recycled paper using soy ink.

(USPS-126-020) (ISSN: 0899-1839)

IN THE HOWARD CIRCUIT COURT CAUSE NO. 34C01-2307-CT-001758

STATE OF INDIANA
COUNTY OF HOWARD SS:

SCOTT W. SHIMER, JILL C. SHIMER, and CECILIA SHIMER Plaintiffs,
vs.
WILLIAM R. LYONS, JAMES DERRICK LYONS, and JESSICA ISENBERG Defendants

SUMMONS

This summons is to the defendants named, and to any other person who may be concerned. You are notified that you have been sued in the Circuit Court of Howard County, Indiana, 104 N. Buckeye Street, #310, Kokomo, Indiana 46901 (765-456-2202), in an action entitled Scott W. Shimer, Jill C. Shimer and Cecilia Shimer v. William R. Lyons, James Derrick Lyons, and Jessica Isenberg, Cause Number 34C01-2307-CT-001758, by the persons named above as plaintiffs. This summons by publication is specifically directed to defendant William R. Lyons and to defendant James Derrick Lyons whose whereabouts are unknown.

The named plaintiffs are represented by David A. Cox, Bayliff, Harrigan, Cord, Maugans & Cox, P.C., Bar #4063-34, 319 N. Main Street, Kokomo, Indiana 46901.

The nature of this suit against you is for personal injuries arising from a vehicle collision occurring in Kokomo, Indiana, on or about July 14, 2021 at the intersection of Lincoln Road and Highway 931. Plaintiffs claim injury and damages arising from the negligent driving and negligent entrustment of the defendants.

An answer or other response in writing to the Complaint must be filed either by you or your attorney within 30 days after the third notice of suit is published, and if you fail to do so, judgment by default may be rendered against you for the relief demanded by the plaintiffs.

Dated: 01/16/2026



Debra C. Stewart

Clerk, Howard Circuit Court

Debra C. Stewart

104 N. Buckeye Street, Room 202

Kokomo, Indiana 46901

765-456-2000