

KY Senate president gives unclear response to impeachment halt order

BY MCKENNA HORSLEY
KENTUCKY LANTERN

Senate President Robert Stivers responded Wednesday to a Kentucky Supreme Court ruling ordering lawmakers to halt the impeachment of a Lexington judge, but it's unclear if the Senate will comply with the order or move forward with a trial.

In a press release from the Senate Republican caucus, Stivers said the Senate was aware of the high court's opinion "and is carefully reviewing its implications."

The press release also included a schedule for impeachment proceedings and a trial in the Senate against Fayette Circuit Judge Julie Muth Goodman though it says all dates are "subject to change as determined by the Senate or committee."

The release says: House lawmakers will be able to present their case against Goodman on April 16, 17 and 20. She and her attorneys may present their side



McKenna Horsley | Kentucky Lantern

Republican President Robert Stivers speaks to reporters on the final day of concurrence.

on April 21, 22, and 23. The Senate Impeachment Committee is slated to present its findings to the full Senate on April 24.

The Kentucky Lantern asked for clarification about if the Senate plans to move forward with impeachment proceedings despite the court order, but a Senate GOP spokesperson did not immediately respond.

The state's high court ruled 5-1 earlier this week that the impeachment of

Goodman "encroaches upon the inherent powers of the Judicial Branch" and violates the separation of powers among branches of government. In the majority opinion, Chief Justice Debra Lambert wrote that Kentucky judges "must remain free to exercise the constitutional authority" given to them by voters "without fear that a legally incorrect ruling or even an appellate finding of abuse of discretion will result in the extreme

sanction of impeachment."

The Court said the matter should have been instead referred to the Judicial Conduct Commission, instead of the House. It also said the JCC is reviewing the matter "to consider whether Judge Goodman's conduct warrants action."

Stivers in the release said he was "encouraged that the judicial branch, per the opinion, is now taking a more active role" in reviewing concerns about Goodman's conduct on the bench.

"Over time, I have heard directly from attorneys who have expressed serious hesitation about filing formal complaints against judges. Many fear professional repercussions or believe doing so could negatively impact their ability to effectively represent their clients. That is a troubling dynamic, and it underscores why transparency and trust in the disciplinary process are so important," Stivers said.

He added that the "Senate's focus remains on carrying out its duties as

outlined in the Constitution of Kentucky, that each branch of government operates with integrity and that concerns about judicial conduct can be raised and addressed without fear of retaliation."

The Kentucky House forwarded articles of impeachment against Goodman to the Senate earlier this month. The resolution accuses Goodman of "misdemeanors in office," but House lawmakers did not unanimously agree about Goodman's conduct while debating the petition.

The impeachment petition against Goodman was filed by former Republican state Rep. Killian Timoney, who is seeking reelection to the seat. Some of the cases at the center of Timoney's petition are still pending in courts.

Fayette County voters elected Goodman to the bench in 2019 to fill an unexpired term and reelected her in 2022 for a full eight-year term.

The proceedings against

Goodman have drawn criticism from the legal community. The Kentucky Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (KACDL) filed a brief in Goodman's case before the Supreme Court, saying that "Attorneys must now wonder if judges will be able to rule fairly on suppression motions or take other justified actions favorable to the defense if judges have to look over their shoulder to see if an impeachment is in their future."

Meanwhile, some family members of victims that have disagreed with Goodman's sentences have spoken out in support of removing Goodman from the bench. The widower of Tammy Botkin, a woman who died in a 2020 hit-and-run in Lexington gave brief testimony during the House committee's public hearing on Goodman's petition. He said that he and other family members were shocked when Goodman dismissed charges in the case and an appeals court later reinstated them.

Fish and Wildlife seeking game warden candidates

BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

FRANKFORT, Ky. — The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources is accepting applications for game warden positions in multiple counties, according to a release.

Applications will be accepted through May 7. Applicants must be at least 21 years old and possess a valid driver's license. Applications must be completed online through the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet careers website.

Candidates who meet initial screening requirements must complete a series of evaluations, including a physical fitness test, swim test, oral interview, psychological and drug screening, polygraph, background check and medical evaluation.

Applicants are encouraged to monitor their email, including spam or junk folders, after the posting closes. Initial notifications will include time-sensitive information and response

deadlines, as well as scheduling details for fitness and swim testing.

Selected applicants who are not already Peace Officer Professional Standards certified will complete 20 weeks of basic training at the Department of Criminal Justice Training in Richmond. They will also undergo an additional 14 weeks of training at the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Academy, followed by 12 weeks of field training with an officer.

Kentucky's game wardens are sworn law enforcement officers with statewide jurisdiction who enforce laws across the commonwealth, with a primary focus on hunting, fishing and boating regulations, as well as public safety.

Upon completion of training, new game wardens are expected to be assigned to Allen, Barren, Bourbon, Breckinridge, Carter, Greenup, Henderson, Jefferson, Logan, Meade, Monroe and Morgan counties, the release said.

KSP investigating stabbing of officer at state prison

BY THE MESSENGER STAFF

EDDYVILLE, Ky. — Detectives with Kentucky State Police Post 1 are investigating a reported assault involving an inmate at the Kentucky State Penitentiary, according to a release.

Troopers received a call

at 4:58 p.m. on April 2 from the penitentiary reporting that an inmate had stabbed a lieutenant, who was transported to a local hospital. Troopers and detectives responded to both the prison and the hospital to investigate.

Preliminary findings indicate that Sean Noakes,

57, of Florence, stabbed Lt. Zabulon Pierre with a sharp object. Pierre was treated for minor injuries and later released, the release said.

Noakes is currently incarcerated at the Kentucky State Penitentiary on a murder conviction out of Boone

County. While incarcerated, he has also been convicted of three additional felony assault charges stemming from incidents at the facility.

The investigation remains ongoing and will be presented to a Lyon County grand jury, according to the release.

Cartel co-founder with 'El Mencho' pleads guilty in US

BY MICHAEL KUNZELMAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — A California man who co-founded one of Mexico's most powerful and violent drug cartels pleaded guilty on Tuesday in the U.S. to a federal narcotics conspiracy charge.

Erick Valencia Salazar formed the Jalisco New Generation Cartel with Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, the drug lord known as "El Mencho" who was killed by the Mexican army in February.

Valencia Salazar, 49, of Santa Clara, California, faces a mandatory-minimum prison sentence of 10 years and a maximum of life in prison after pleading guilty in Washington, D.C., to one count of conspiring to distribute cocaine for U.S. importation. Chief Judge James Boasberg is scheduled to sentence him on July 31.

Valencia Salazar was a member of the Milenio Cartel

before he and Oseguera Cervantes founded the Jalisco cartel, which is known by its Spanish-language acronym CJNG. Hundreds of CJNG members reported to Valencia Salazar, whose duties included recruitment and obtaining information about cartel rivals, prosecutors said.

Valencia Salazar, also known as "El 85," formed his own cartel, La Nueva Plaza, after parting ways with "El Mencho," who led the CJNG until his death.

A. Tysen Duva, the assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's criminal division, said the CJNG has inflicted "immeasurable damage" on the U.S.

"Valencia Salazar was also responsible for furthering the rampant violence in Mexico, at the expense of people's lives and the safety of communities, that helped destabilize the region and allow crime to flourish," Duva said in a statement.

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