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The Edmonson News

# OPINION

FEBRUARY 18, 2026

## VETERANS CORNER



Written by DAV Members  
Chapter 32, Brownsville, KY

### VA INCREASES EXPENDITURE CAP FOR COMPLEX HEALTH CONDITIONS

VA has increased the cap for in-home and community services for veterans with complex medical conditions such as spinal cord injuries, ALS, and other complex conditions. VA will pay 100% of the cost, as compared to similar care in the VA Community Living Center, which is an increase from 65%.

Veterans interested should contact their VA Social Worker or Primary Care team to be referred to the skilled home health care program for these services.

### RULES

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it modernizes the Kentucky public notice infrastructure.

Jeff Jobe, the behind-the-scenes co-chair of the press association, said the agreement reflects roughly a year of work and began with conversations at the local level.

"This is an agreement that has been an entire year of working toward," Jobe said. "We began by listening to the county judge-executives and mayors in the region our newspapers serve. I made notes of their needs, and we then met with their organizations' leadership, JD Chaney and Jim Henderson. The press association knew we were going to have to evolve if we were going to keep Kentucky legal notices in our weekly newspapers."

Jobe said the negotiations addressed concerns raised throughout the process.

"As Nolan said in the Feb. 11 meeting, there were some thorny issues, and I'm pleased that we addressed every issue brought before our combined meetings," he said.

He also credited the bill's sponsor for initiating the effort.

"He asked me to try to establish a consensus with the organizations we have had to fight for 20 years on this issue, something I would never have attempted if he didn't ask me to try," Jobe said.

Sponsor Senate President Pro Tempore David Givens said lawmakers have long balanced two priorities: ensuring public transparency and controlling taxpayer costs.

"We have a need for transparency so that all the voters can understand how their tax money is being spent," Givens said. "But we also have a need to minimize the amount of tax money we spend doing that."

The legislation clarifies current law by defining a published statement of ownership, updating standards for which newspapers qualify to publish required legal notices, and requiring that public agencies be charged fair and reasonable rates.

It also incorporates language allowing online publication of legal notices.

Nolan said the bill would provide continuous statewide digital access to public

**RULES** | CONTINUED ON PAGE SIX



## State Report Tallies Tens of Millions in Media, Travel and Event Costs

JOBnews.com

Kentucky executive branch agencies spent more than \$39 million on advertising and communications and millions more on travel, conferences and contracted services in the 2025 fiscal year, according to a report released by Allison Ball, Kentucky Auditor of Public Accounts, on Feb. 10.

Governor Andy Beshear disputed some of the findings a day after the report was released in a Team Kentucky update after a press member asked about the findings, likening it to a "political attack."

The report lists \$39,055,133.96 in advertising expenditures and notes that every executive branch entity maintains some form of communications staff. Payments included \$2,488,789.77 to marketing firm Red7e.

The report details \$7,438,490 in out-of-state travel, including nearly \$930,000 by the Kentucky Department of Education and \$183,575.87 by Kentucky State Police while providing security for Gov. Andy Beshear and staff. Expenses included international flights, resort lodging, and conference travel.

In-state travel totaled \$23,278,869, much of it tied to education-related conferences and seminars.

Agencies also reported \$16,693,103.32 in spending on trainings, conferences, food, and trade shows. The report cites Derby-related payments totaling \$338,452.10 by the Tourism Cabinet and Governor's Office, six-figure annual conference costs by the Department of Public Advocacy and a \$34,392 banquet by the Department of Medicaid Services.

Beyond travel and events, the report lists \$69.8 million in "temporary manpower services," nearly \$8 million by the Division of Driver Licensing, \$51.8 million in services categorized as "not otherwise classified," \$118.4 million in "other" expenses and \$3.98 million for travel by non-state employees.

The Cabinet for Health and Family



▲ PHOTO | KENTUCKY AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS  
State Auditor Allison Ball presents a recent review of executive branch spending to the House Appropriations and Revenue Committee on Feb. 10.

Services' Office of the Secretary and Office of Medical Cannabis paid a single vendor \$339,365.90 for services that included video production and consulting, editing, branding graphics, introductory materials, and digital formatting. The contract also covered development and implementation of a social media strategy representing the cabinet and its agencies, as well as management of digital communications channels. The auditor's report states it appears the competitive bidding process was not used to obtain the services.

Beshear responded to this finding, noting that false information was given under oath. "They spent \$93,000 to create training and educational videos for the public. The videos were for prospective medical cannabis licenses. They were for law enforcement about what's legal and what's not. They were for patients, providers, and for local government officials."

He also denied the claim that the bidding didn't go through a competitive process.

The report also highlights more than \$34.3 million in IT-related services at CHFS despite the cabinet having internal IT resources, and raises concerns about billing practices tied to certain contracted services within the Department for Community Based Services.

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services paid \$249,950 for a campaign that included messaging

encouraging COVID-19 vaccinations. The Kentucky Historical Society paid \$83,500 for digital media and professional services.

CHFS offices also paid a vendor \$339,365.90 for video production, branding and social media strategy services. The auditor's report states that it appears the competitive bidding process was not used to obtain those services.

The Council on Postsecondary Education paid \$300,000 to promote the value of postsecondary education. CHFS's Department for Aging and Independent Living spent \$198,000 on a media campaign for the Senior Meals Program, despite previously citing a program shortfall, and \$17,275 on promotional items. The Department for Community Based Services spent \$45,635.20 on promotional products.

Beshear said the \$198,000 for the Department of Aging and Independent Living was the membership fee paid to be included in a federally required public education program.

The auditor's findings summarize extensive spending across multiple categories and call attention to procurement practices, oversight and internal controls within state government.

Ball told members of the Kentucky House Appropriations and Revenue Committee this week that some executive branch agencies are spending taxpayer dollars excessively, citing examples of travel, conference and event expenses.

"It is clear that some executive branch agencies are spending tax dollars extravagantly and this needs to stop," Ball said in her presentation. "Public servants should be safeguarding money as if it was coming from their own pockets, rather than doling it out on extravagant travel and other unnecessary expenses."

The Auditor's Office reviewed executive branch spending data in the state's eMARS accounting system, focusing on categories it identified as prone to wasteful or excessive spending, including out-of-state travel and advertising.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

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