Election 2026
From Front

that the 2026 general election will be held Tuesday, Nov. 3. The deadline to register for the election is Oct. 5 at 4 p.m. local time.

At the top of the Garrard County ballot is the U.S. Senate contest between Republican Andy Barr, Democrat Charles Booker and Kentucky Party candidate Christopher Campbell, along with a write-in option.

The 6th Congressional District race lists Republican Ralph Alvarado, Democrat Zach Dembo, independent candidate Jaya Bowman and Kentucky Party candidate Pete Lynch.

Two Kentucky General Assembly contests also appear on the published ballot. Republican Donald R. Douglas is listed for the 22nd Senate District. In the 80th House District, Republican David Meade faces Democrat Mary Russell.

Garrard County voters will also select a number of county officials. Republican Bethany Denny is listed for circuit clerk, an unexpired-term contest. Republican Brian Swinney appears for property valuation administrator, while Republican Chris "Roo" Elleman is listed for county judge/executive. Republican Chris A. Whitworth is listed for county attorney, and Republican Kevin C. Montgomery appears for county clerk.

The sheriff's contest lists Republican Willie Skeens. Republican Kevin Middleton is listed for jailer and Republican Sterling Shane Young for coroner. The county surveyor contest provides a write-in line without a candidate printed on the notice.

Magisterial and constable races depend on where a voter lives. The 1st Magisterial District lists Republican Chris Davis for magistrate and Republican Michael Bain for constable. The 2nd District lists Republican Colby Reik for magistrate and Republican Casey Carpenter for constable. Republican Glendan Barker is listed for 3rd District magistrate, with Republican Donald Stephens for constable.

In the 4th Magisterial District, Republican Billy "BuckeyBill" Moore is listed for magistrate, while the constable contest has a write-in option. Republican Wayne Day is listed for 5th District magistrate, and Republican Andrew Hounshell appears for 5th District constable.

Several nonpartisan judicial races are also included. Debra Hembree Lambert is listed for justice of the Kentucky Supreme Court in the 3rd Supreme Court District. Greg Lay is listed for the Kentucky Court of Appeals, 3rd Appellate District, 2nd Division. Robert L. Gullett III appears for 13th Judicial District judge, 1st Division, and Janet C. Booth is listed for the district's 2nd Division. The Kentucky Secretary of State's statewide candidate database confirms that the 2026 election includes contests for Supreme Court, Court of Appeals and district judges.

School board races also differ according to voters' districts. Steve Morris Sr. is listed for the Garrard County Board of Education's 1st Educational District. In the 5th Educational District, the ballot lists Connie Lamb and Doty Clifford.

Lancaster voters will have additional nonpartisan city contests. Marshall Norton and Michael Gaffney are listed in the mayoral race. The City Council contest, in which voters may select up to six candidates, lists Brandon C. McGlone, Lanny Ray, Mary Ezaijaz Jarboe, Emmilee Dawn Tudor, Meagen C. Baxley, Joe Naylor, Michelle Ballew and Marc Smith.

The ballot notice also identifies which precinct groups receive particular district races. Among the geographic groupings printed on the notice are Boones Creek, Bourne and Marksbury; Gilberts Creek, Elkin and Pleasant Retreat; Bryantsville and Buena Vista; Buckeye, Sugar Creek, Poor House and Mt. Hebron; and Paint Lick and Cartersville.

Every Garrard County precinct will also vote on Constitutional Amendment 1, a proposal concerning a Kentucky governor's pardon and commutation powers around gubernatorial elections.

The proposal would amend Section 77 of the Kentucky Constitution to prohibit the governor from granting pardons or commuting sentences during a defined period beginning 60 days before a gubernatorial election and ending the fifth Tuesday after the election. The official Secretary of State's description says the amendment would retain the governor's general authority to remit fines and forfeitures, commute sentences and grant reprieves and pardons, subject to the existing impeachment exception and the proposed election-period restriction.

The proposed constitutional language would also continue requirements involving public statements explaining pardon decisions and provisions governing treason cases. Voters will mark either "Yes" or "No" on the amendment. The Kentucky Secretary of State says its constitutional-amendment information is provided to present the proposal's language and that the office does not interpret or give guidance on the amendment.

Voters who will not cast ballots at the polls on Election Day have several alternatives. Kentucky's online portal for requesting a mail-in absentee ballot opened Sept. 19 and closes Oct. 20 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern time. Eligible voters may use excused in-person absentee voting Oct. 21-23 and Oct. 26-28, while no-excuse in-person absentee voting is scheduled for Oct. 29-31. Mail-in absentee ballots must be received by 6 p.m. local time on Election Day to be counted.

The State Board of Elections also advises voters that they have the right to review a sample ballot before voting and to ask questions about election procedures. Kentucky's general election rules allow voters to choose candidates regardless of party affiliation, unlike the state's partisan primary elections.

The Nov. 3 ballot therefore gives Garrard County voters decisions at nearly every level of government, with the precise combination of local, magisterial, school and city races determined by the precinct in which each voter is registered.

Identification
From Front

Kentucky law no longer allows a Social Security card or certain public-benefit cards that do not contain a photograph to serve as alternative identification for a voter who cannot present the photo identification ordinarily required at the polls. The legislation also eliminated the provision that allowed an election officer to affirm a voter's identity simply because the voter was personally known to that election officer.

Most legislation passed during Kentucky's 2026 regular session without another specified effective date took effect July 15, 2026. The Legislative Research Commission identifies July 15 as the normal effective date for legislation from the 2026 regular session.

Kentucky generally requires voters to present qualifying photo identification before signing the poll book and casting a ballot. Acceptable identification can include a Kentucky driver's license or state identification card, a U.S. passport, military identification, qualifying college identification and other government-issued photo identification meeting the requirements of state law. The identification must contain the voter's name and photograph.

The distinction is particularly important for voters who previously relied on alternative identification. Under the 2026 change, Social Security cards and SNAP, EBT or other public-benefit cards without a photograph are no longer among the alternative documents permitted under the affected provision of Kentucky law.

Kentucky law still provides a procedure for voters who cannot obtain the required photo identification because of a qualifying impediment. The statutory affirmation process includes circumstances such as lack of transportation, difficulty obtaining underlying documents, a work schedule, lost or stolen identification, disability or illness, family responsibilities, an identification card that has been applied for but not yet received, or a religious objection to being photographed. The voter must satisfy the applicable affirmation and alternative-identification requirements.

Voters should therefore check their identification before Election Day rather than assume that a document accepted under an earlier version of Kentucky's election law will still qualify.

Amendment
From Front

the language published by the Kentucky Secretary of State.

The proposal would amend Section 77 of the Kentucky Constitution. Under the current constitution, the governor has authority to remit fines and forfeitures, commute sentences, and grant reprieves and pardons, except in cases of impeachment. The constitution also contains separate provisions concerning treason and requires records associated with pardon applications and the governor's reasons for decisions to remain available for public inspection.

If the amendment is approved, the governor would additionally be prohibited from granting pardons or commuting sentences beginning 60 days before a gubernatorial election and continuing through the fifth Tuesday following that election. The ballot's introductory language describes that period as ending when the governor is sworn in for the new term.

A "Yes" vote would approve the proposed change to Section 77 and establish the new restriction on pardons and commutations. A "No" vote would reject the proposed amendment, leaving the constitution without that additional election-period restriction.

The proposal reached the ballot through Senate Bill 10 during the Kentucky General Assembly's 2026 Regular Session. The legislation was delivered to the Secretary of State on April 1 and became Acts Chapter 12. The General Assembly's official summary describes the measure as a proposal to restrict the governor's ability to grant pardons and commute sentences beginning 60 days before a gubernatorial election and ending at the gubernatorial inauguration.

Voters seeking information before Election Day can review the complete amendment through the Kentucky Secretary of State. The Secretary of State's constitutional-amendments page specifically notes that its office provides the language of the amendment but "cannot interpret, nor give guidance" on the proposal.

That distinction is also important at the polls. Kentucky voters have the right to ask election officials questions about election procedures and to review a sample ballot before voting. The State Board of Elections also states that voters have a right to be informed about candidates and issues on their ballots. Voters should therefore research the substance of Constitutional Amendment 1 before arriving at their polling location rather than relying on precinct workers for advice about how to vote.

Polls for Kentucky's 2026 general election will be open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. local time on Tuesday, Nov. 3. Anyone in line by 6 p.m. will be permitted to vote.

The General Election is scheduled for Tuesday, November 3, 2026. Kentucky election regulations specifically identify that date as the state's next general election.

Voters with questions about whether a particular form of identification will be accepted should contact their county clerk or consult official Kentucky election information before voting. The Kentucky Secretary of State's election materials provide additional information about the state's photo-identification requirements and voting procedures.

Chili Cookoff and Dinner Fundraiser

Go Getters Homemakers is hosting a chili dinner fundraiser on Monday, October 19th at 6:00 p.m. at the Garrard County Extension Office. Cost is $10 per person and includes chili, sandwich, a dessert, and a drink. All proceeds to benefit Go Getters Homemakers and Garrard County Animal Shelter. If you have any questions, call the extension office at 859-792-3026.

Life On The Ridge

Its a warm and sunny day up here on The Ridge. The tropical storm didn't give us much rain when it came through. We were all hoping for more than we got, but we didn't even get a measurable amount on the rain gage. Maybe next time we will get some relief from our drought.

We have been enjoying these warm fall days. Its been nice weather to ride horses and I have been doing a lot of walking on the trails out back. The leaves are turning pretty fall colors which is nice to look at, but it's a sure sign winter is right around the corner.

The two fillies that we weaned a while back are growing like weeds. They have explored their pasture, but spend most of their time by the gate begging for grain. Typical horses!

Have a good week, folks, and God Bless.

Debby Jo

2026 Search for the Largest Living Tree in Garrad County

Garrard County residents are being encouraged to keep their eyes on the landscape this fall as the Garrard County Conservation District once again searches for the largest living tree in the county — and potentially another tree worthy of statewide recognition.

The district's 2026 Largest Tree in Garrard County Contest invites residents to locate an exceptionally large tree, obtain the landowner's permission to measure it and submit its trunk circumference for consideration. Entries must be received by Friday, Oct. 16.

Interest in this year's contest follows an impressive discovery during last year's search. According to information provided by the Garrard County Conservation District, a silver maple with a trunk circumference of 245 inches was discovered and subsequently declared the largest of its kind in Kentucky.

The contest is open to all Garrard County residents. To qualify, an entry must be a living, single-trunk tree located within Garrard County. The contest form asks participants to measure the tree's circumference four feet above the ground and provide the location of the tree and its species, if known.

The winning tree will be verified by a member of the Garrard County Conservation District Board, and prizes will be awarded for the largest tree found in Garrard County.

Completed entry forms may be delivered to the Garrard County Conservation District at 166 Precision Court in Lancaster or emailed to Kathy.Simpson@ky.nacdnet.net. Photocopies of the form are also accepted. Questions about the contest may be directed to the district at 859-792-2620.

Animal Shelter
From Front

a development that would leave just one kennel available for future arrivals.

The situation is further complicated by six dogs currently housed at the facility that must remain in its care and are not yet eligible to leave. Those animals occupy kennel spaces that cannot be made available in the immediate future, limiting the shelter's ability to accommodate additional dogs.

Shelter officials emphasized that the overcrowding crisis is creating an urgent need for adoptions and assistance from rescue organizations willing to accept animals into their programs.

"We cannot keep taking dogs in without having somewhere safe for them to go," the shelter stated in its public appeal. "Strays will continue to come in, and we never know what the next call will bring."

The shelter is encouraging residents who have been considering adopting a dog to act as soon as possible. Several dogs currently awaiting homes have fully sponsored adoption fees, meaning approved adopters may be able to welcome a new pet without paying the standard adoption fee.

Officials hope the sponsored adoptions will help eliminate one potential financial barrier for families interested in providing permanent homes.

The shelter also highlighted the variety of dogs available for adoption, including animals described as friendly with other dogs, suitable for families with children, and eager to find companionship.

Some of the dogs have reportedly been waiting an extended period for adoption, making the current overcrowding situation especially concerning for animals that have already spent considerable time in kennels.

While adoption remains a primary focus, the shelter is also seeking help from established animal rescue organizations that may have the resources to transfer dogs into foster care or other facilities.

Residents who cannot adopt permanently are encouraged to explore fostering opportunities through rescue organizations or assist those organizations in arranging transfers from the shelter.

The shelter's appeal underscores a broader challenge faced by animal care facilities that must balance limited housing space with the unpredictable arrival of stray animals. Unlike scheduled animal admissions, stray pickups can occur without warning, making it difficult for facilities operating near capacity to maintain available kennel space.

When shelters experience severe overcrowding, the shortage of space can place additional pressure on staff, volunteers, and resources needed to provide daily animal care.

In addition to seeking homes for dogs, the Garrard County Animal Shelter is requesting donations of cleaning supplies and dog cots. These items are essential for maintaining sanitary conditions and providing comfortable resting areas for animals housed at the facility.

The request for supplies comes as the shelter works to manage its existing animal population while preparing for the possibility of additional arrivals.

Shelter officials are also asking residents who cannot adopt, foster, or donate to help by sharing the shelter's public appeal on social media. Increased visibility could connect available dogs with prospective adopters or rescue organizations outside the immediate community.

"One share could be the reason a dog gets out of a kennel and into a loving home," the shelter wrote.

The appeal reflects the urgency of finding solutions before the facility exhausts its remaining available space. With six kennels occupied by dogs that cannot yet leave and additional stray animals potentially arriving at any time, officials say community participation is critical.

The shelter has not announced what measures would be necessary if all available kennels become occupied. However, its statement makes clear that officials are concerned about reaching a point where additional animals cannot be accommodated safely.

For residents considering adding a pet to their household, the shelter is urging them to explore the dogs currently available for adoption, particularly those whose adoption fees have already been sponsored.

Rescue organizations with available foster homes or kennel space are likewise encouraged to contact the shelter about assisting with animal placements.

The Garrard County Animal Shelter's message to the community is straightforward; the facility needs immediate assistance to create space for incoming animals while giving the dogs already in its care an opportunity to find permanent homes.

With only one kennel expected to remain available following the latest stray intake, shelter officials say every adoption, rescue transfer, donation, and shared message could make a meaningful difference.

Residents interested in adopting, assisting with rescue placements, or donating cleaning supplies and dog cots are encouraged to contact the Garrard County Animal Shelter directly for current needs and availability.

Blue Grass Community Action Partnership
Helping People. Changing Lives.

SOLICITATION FOR VENDORS

Blue Grass Community Action Partnership (BGCAP) Is Seeking Heating Vendors For The Subsidy And Crisis Components Of The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Vendors Are Needed For:

FIREWOOD ..... per CORD (4x4x8)
COAL ..... per TON
KEROSENE ..... per GALLON
FUEL OIL ..... per GALLON
PROPANE ..... per GALLON

TIME FRAME FOR DELIVERY DURING LIHEAP CRISIS:

Household In Life-Threatening Situation - 18 Hours
Household In Non-Life Threatening Situation - 48 Hours

INTERESTED VENDORS SHOULD CONTACT JESALYN BRADFORD, GARRARD COUNTY LIHEAP LEAD, AT 859-792-3422

This project is funded, in part, under a contract with the KY Cabinet for Health and Family Services with funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

