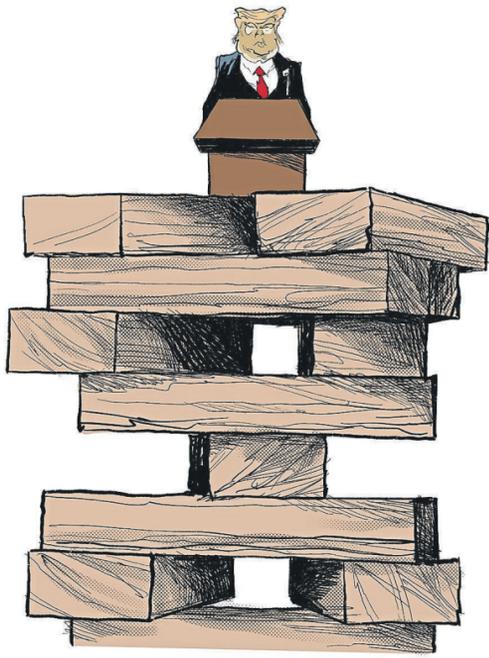


Viewpoints

SHENEMAN TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY



THE STATE OF THE UNION

Read Across America Week 2026

BY THE CITY OF CLARKSON

Sunday, March 1 through Saturday, March 7 marks the 24th annual “Read Across America Week” sponsored by the National Education Association. Across the United States, thousands of schools, libraries, community centers, civic groups, and numerous other organizations will participate by promoting the power of reading. Focusing on motivating children to read and master basic reading skills, the NEA’s “Read Across America” works to unite children and books,

and demonstrate the many benefits of reading. In addition, this year’s celebration also marks the 122nd birthday of author Dr. Seuss on March 2.

In commemoration of the event, Mayor Bonnie Henderson and the Clarkson City Commission have signed a proclamation declaring the week of Sunday, March 1 through Saturday, March 7, 2026 as “Read Across America Week” in the city of Clarkson. The Commission urges all parents, teachers, and other adults within our community to set aside time on those dates to read to your child

and allow them to read aloud to you. The Clarkson City Commission challenges the teachers of Clarkson Elementary, and of all schools in Grayson County, to teach children the foundations of reading and assist them in mastering basic reading skills. All adults are encouraged to provide a safe reading environment for the children within their care, and explain that reading is an essential building block to a proper education.

Reading is the first step in creating a bright and successful future for the children of our community and nation. It is the key

that will open many doors throughout a child’s academic career. So read to your child, and let them read to you. Demonstrate to them that reading leads to knowledge and understanding. And above all remember that children learn best by example. Teach them the true value of reading by checking out a book at the local library and sitting down beside your child and reading together. And remember that proper reading skills can be taught all throughout the year, and not just on March 1 - 7. For more information, visit nea.org.

The passing of the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr.

The Kentucky Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission mourns the passing of the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. — a towering civil rights leader, a courageous public servant, and an ordained Baptist minister whose life’s work helped bend our nation toward justice.

Rev. Jackson stood in the long shadow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and carried forward the movement’s moral clarity with fearless conviction. He gave voice to those too often ignored — Black and Brown commu-

nities, the disenfranchised, working families, and the poor — and demanded that America confronts inequality not as a talking point, but as a moral emergency. Through decades of advocacy, organizing, and leadership, he challenged systems that excluded and diminished, while building coalitions that made room for hope, dignity, and opportunity.

As an activist and organizer, Rev. Jackson insisted that civil rights and human rights belong to everyone. As a political leader, he expanded what

was possible — bringing the concerns of everyday people into the center of national conversation and opening doors for generations of leaders who followed. As a minister, he reminded the nation that justice is not only a policy issue, but a spiritual calling — one that requires courage, compassion, and action.

We extend our deepest condolences to the Jackson family, to all who labored beside him, and to the countless individuals who found strength in his voice and vision. May we honor his legacy not

only with words, but with continued work — serving our neighbors, protecting the right to vote, standing with the marginalized, and advancing the beloved community Dr. King called us to build.

Rev. Jesse Jackson’s life moved the plight of the oppressed forward. His legacy will continue to challenge and inspire us to keep pushing, keep organizing, and keep hope alive.

**Kevin L. Russell, Chair
Martin Luther King, Jr.
State Commission (KY)**

House Bill 52

Dear Editor,
What is House Bill 52, also known as the Success Sequence? Who does it affect? This bill encourages students to follow a specific rule in life, such as graduating high school, getting a full-time job, and waiting until marriage to have children. If the bill passes, the students in 7th and 10th grade will learn about this three-step Success Sequence. Lawmakers say following these steps adolescents will be more likely to live a successful life, which will also help children to have a better childhood.

We believe this a good opportunity for students to learn, and prepare to come of age. However, success does not look the same for everyone, and not everyone will follow the same pathway. Teaching this as a standard could make some students feel judged or excluded. This will also help reverse some of the more negative things that

have slowly become more normalized in our generation.

A better way to handle this is to teach multiple pathways instead of just one. Schools could focus more on life skills like managing money, choosing a career, and taking care of mental health. Then students could be made aware of the Success Sequence with assemblies or in extra periods throughout the year. Since some teenagers will ignore advice that comes off as forced, if it is encouraging they will be more likely to listen and remember this advice while coming of age.

**Mrs. D. Lasley’s class:
B. Aebersold, B. Aubrey, R. Hart, C. Higdon, A. Huff, F. Jaimis, Z. Liindsey, A. Linton, L. Lush, J. Perkins, M. Ray, L. Scott, J. Seibert, S. Skaggs, and L. Woolsley**

ECTC Foundation announces Champions Circle

SUBMITTED

The Elizabethtown Community and Technical College Foundation has announced the launch of the Champions Circle, a philanthropic leadership program uniting community partners dedicated to advancing education.

The Champions Circle invites donors to join with an annual commitment of \$10,000, providing essential unrestricted funding to respond to ECTC’s greatest needs. Members receive unique benefits, such as recognition across campuses and opportunities to participate in special events. “The Champions Circle

allows us to respond quickly to student needs, pilot innovative programs, and expand opportunities that change students’ lives,” said ECTC Foundation Executive Director Chrissie Angell. “We are grateful to the founding leaders who recognize the value of this investment.”

Inaugural leadership gifts from Family Scholar House President & CEO Cathe Dykstra, Swope Family of Dealerships and Diane Logsdon will create a strong foundation for the Champions Circle and set an inspiring example of philanthropic vision and community leadership, Angell said.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“The individual is capable of both great compassion and great indifference. He has it within his

means to nourish the former and outgrow the latter.”

- Norman Cousins

Week seven of the 2026 Regular Session

Editor’s Note: This legislative update was submitted on Friday, Feb. 20.

As we reach the halfway point of

the 2026 Legislative Session, I want to provide a clear and thoughtful update on where we stand and what lies ahead.

With more than 30 of the 60 legislative days complete, the Senate has remained focused on steady, deliberate progress. At this stage, nine of the Senate Majority’s 10 top-priority bills have been filed and passed the Senate. That work reflects months of preparation during the interim and careful review in committee and on the Senate floor.

I have also heard from many of you regarding the early budget proposal filed in the House of Representatives. Budget discussions are important because they directly affect Kentucky families, public employees, and long-term fiscal stability. I appreciate those who have reached out with questions and concerns.

It is important to clarify where we are in the process. The state budget traditionally begins in the House. The current House proposal has not yet passed that chamber and remains subject to revision before it ever reaches the Senate.

To be clear, no final budget decisions have been made.

When the House sends its proposal to the Senate, we will carefully review it, evaluate any changes, and make adjustments where necessary. That is the Senate’s constitutional responsibility, and we take that role seriously.

Questions surrounding health insurance costs, benefit stability, and long-term affordability deserve disciplined, data-driven review. As we move forward, our guiding principles remain consistent: maintaining a structurally balanced budget, using one-time dollars responsibly, and making transparent decisions that protect both taxpayers and public employees.

This week, the Senate also welcomed military families from across the commonwealth for our annual Military Kids Day at the Capitol. This event recognizes the children and grandchildren of those who serve in our armed forces. While we often focus on the sacrifices of those in uniform, their families share that burden. Military children adapt to frequent moves, new schools, and long periods without a parent at home. Their resilience is remarkable. Despite construction limiting space this year, the event reached full capacity — a testament to how meaningful this tradition has become. It was an honor to recognize these young Kentuckians and thank their families for their service.

Here are several bills that passed the Senate this week:

SB 9 supports housing development by streamlining regulations and expanding financing tools for local communities. The goal is to increase housing supply, strengthen local economies, and help more Kentuckians access affordable homes.

SB 47 expands state death benefits and tuition

waivers to include search and rescue personnel who lose their lives in the line of duty, ensuring their families receive the same support as other emergency responders.

SB 69 creates the Autism Spectrum Disorder Trust Fund and allows voluntary state tax refund contributions to support autism research, services, and workforce development across Kentucky.

SJR 74 directs the creation of a statewide fiscal map of substance use disorder programs and funding to improve transparency, coordination, and accountability in prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts.

SB 85 allows public pension benefits to be placed in a Special Needs Trust for disabled beneficiaries, helping families protect long-term care while preserving eligibility for essential support programs.

SB 104 establishes a 25-foot safety zone around first responders and creates penalties for those who intentionally interfere or threaten them, while protecting constitutional rights to observe and record.

SB 141 modernizes public notice laws by updating requirements, expanding digital access, and helping control costs while maintaining transparency for taxpayers.

SB 152 strengthens school leadership by affirming principals’ final decision-making authority while maintaining structured input from teachers and parents.

SB 159 improves Kentucky’s response to missing persons cases by requiring timely reporting and stronger coordination across state and federal databases.

Each of these measures now advances to the House for further consideration.

As we move into the second half of the session, deadlines are approaching, committees remain active, and coordination between chambers will continue. My focus remains on responsible governance, long-term stability, and policies that strengthen Kentucky families and communities.

Thank you for staying engaged. Thoughtful input from constituents strengthens the legislative process, and I encourage you to continue sharing your perspective as we move forward.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you. I look forward to keeping you updated as the work of the 2026 Regular Session continues. If you have questions or ideas, feel free to contact my office at 502-564-8100 or email me at Stephen.Meredith@kylegislature.gov. You can learn more about bills, committees, and other updates from the Kentucky General Assembly at www.legislature.ky.gov.

Sen. Stephen Meredith, R-Leitchfield, represents the 5th Senate District, encompassing Breckinridge, Butler, Grayson, Ohio, and Meade counties. Meredith serves as chair of the Senate Health Services Committee and co-chair of the Government Contract Review Committee. He is also a member of the Senate Committees on Education; Families and Children; and Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection.



STEPHEN MEREDITH