

Life is easier when we work together

It looks like we've made it through our snow and ice for the season. The ice this past winter was some of the worst I've seen in many years. Our maintenance crews worked diligently to do the best they could with it, so I applaud them for their efforts. The first day of Spring is just around the corner, with warmer days and Spring showers. With the



JIM PHELPS

beauty of Spring, it also brings a chance of bad weather. We need to stay vigilant of fast-moving storms this time of the year. We've worked with Judge Durrett and the County to acquire several storm sirens. Our first one will go up in a couple of weeks at the First Baptist Church. Three more will follow as soon as they are available. Recently, Hodgenville

was named Kentucky's 31st Trail Town. Many individuals worked very hard to get this designation. Thanks to Knob Creek Conservancy and the Joe and Linda Pearman family, we now have Pearman Pass that connects the McDougal lake trails with Pearman Forrest Conservation area. We now have several miles of hiking and biking trails for outdoor recreation. The City and County has completed a joint project

of renovation at the LaRue County Parks and Recreation facility. The City has recently completed a re-rate project at our wastewater treatment plant. We are using a one-million-dollar EPA grant to do flow monitoring and assessment of our collection system (sewer lines). We had \$49,000 left from painting the Industrial Park water tower that has been converted to a project to model our water distribution system

(water lines). Last fall we paved two major streets in the city and will pave more as money becomes available. Improving our utility infrastructure is always a priority. 2026 is the 250th birthday of our Great Nation. There will be several events this year to honor our Country. There will be more veteran flags going up around Memorial Day, a special naturalization ceremony at the Lincoln Birthplace on July 4, our huge fireworks show

on the night of July 4, a special storyteller/music event in September at the Birthplace and of course Lincoln Days. Before I close, I want to thank our dedicated City employees and City Council members. They work hard to make Hodgenville a wonderful and safe place to raise our families. I also want to thank Judge Durrett for the continued support that we get from the County. Life is so much easier when we all work together!

A strong budget and responsible use of taxpayer dollars

Please allow me this opportunity to speak directly to the citizens of LaRue County through this edition of the LaRue County Herald News. One of the most important responsibilities of county government is maintaining a strong, stable budget while ensuring taxpayer dollars are used responsibly. I am proud to report that LaRue County's finances remain in excellent shape, thanks to disciplined budgeting and careful oversight by Fiscal Court.



BLAKE DURRETT

with a report outlining priorities across the eight counties in our region: Breckinridge, Grayson, Hardin, Marion, Meade, Nelson, LaRue, and Washington. The report also evaluates how effectively counties leverage investments to generate broader returns through infrastructure and regional development projects. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, LTADD calculated the return on investment generated per citizen for projects completed across the region. While LaRue County is smaller than several neighboring counties in population and government budget, the results demonstrate how effectively our county multiplies the impact of local investments.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Per Citizen—
Breckinridge-\$1,736.19-Grayson-\$587.15-Hardin-\$1,670.32-Marion-\$714.79-Meade-(\$433.29)-Nelson \$723.69 LaRue-\$3,750.74 Washington.
As the data shows, LaRue County leads the region in return on investment per citizen. This reflects Fiscal Court's commitment to ensuring local tax dollars are used wisely and solely for the benefit of the citizens of LaRue County. Maintaining a strong county budget while delivering real results for taxpayers will always remain our priority, and Fiscal Court will continue working to ensure LaRue County remains financially stable and well-positioned for the future.

Every taxpayer dollar represents the trust placed in county government by our citizens. Fiscal Court works to ensure those dollars are used for the benefit of the people of LaRue County, supporting public infrastructure, essential services, and investments that strengthen our community. Our goal is simple: protect the county's financial stability while making thoughtful decisions that serve our residents. Through careful planning and strong partnerships, the county works to maximize the impact of local tax dollars. By leveraging grants, regional collaboration, and outside funding opportunities, we are able to stretch each local dollar further and deliver greater results for our community. Each legislative session, the Lincoln Trail Area Development District (LTADD) provides our state legislative delegation

Week nine: Balancing 2026 state budget

Before I get into this week's legislative update, I want to take a moment to share a personal update. My wife Jane is doing very well and is in great spirits after being involved in a traffic accident this week. It was a scary moment, and I'm grateful for the outpouring of love and support from friends and colleagues. Jane will remain at the University of Kentucky through the weekend and then plans to spend about a week in rehab as she continues her recovery. We are incredibly thankful for the progress she has made, and doctors expect a full recovery.



SEN. JIMMY HIGDON

I also want to thank everyone who has reached out with prayers, encouragement and support. It has meant a great deal to both of us. Moments like this are powerful reminders that God is good and that He truly does answer prayers. This experience has also reinforced two things I would encourage everyone to remember. First, please always wear your seatbelt. They truly do save lives. Second, take a moment to appreciate our first responders. Too often we don't think about them until the moment we need them most. When difficult situations happen, they are the ones who show up to help. We are truly blessed by their courage and dedication.

This week reminded me partly why I have decided to allow 2026 to be my final in office as your state Senator. Time with those we love is precious and we need to do all we can when life blesses us with the opportunity to make the most of our time together.

With that, I want to provide an update on the work happening in Frankfort this week.

As the Kentucky General Assembly wrapped up week nine of the 2026 legislative session, the Senate continued moving legislation forward while beginning a closer review of the state budget. With only a few weeks remaining in the 60-day session, lawmakers are working to finish important legislation while also focusing on one of our most important responsibilities—passing a balanced state budget. I remain engaged in efforts related to the state road plan.

Earlier this week marked the final deadlines for filing legislation this year. About 350 bills were filed

in the Senate and more than 900 in the House. As those bills move through the legislative process, our focus remains on policies that strengthen our communities, support Kentucky families and use taxpayer dollars responsibly. Several bills received Senate approval this week. I was out of the chamber for many of these bills due to the accident, but I will record votes on these bills once I return.

Senate Bill (SB) 8, is a priority bill that modernizes the structure and operations of the Kentucky Public Service Commission to strengthen oversight of utilities serving Kentuckians and ensure the commission has the expertise needed to review complex utility cases.

SB 245 is a bill I co-sponsored that clarifies Kentucky's licensing system for retailers selling tobacco, nicotine, and vapor products. It's a bit of a clean-up from my bill from last year that gave some teeth to regulation of vaping and other nicotine products negatively impacting our young people. SB 245 establishes standardized application requirements, clear approval timelines, and batch licensing options for businesses with multiple locations. It also strengthens enforcement by requiring proper licensing, enhancing compliance checks, and allowing confiscation of products from unlicensed retailers.

SB 11 creates a rebate program to help homeowners build FEMA-compliant storm shelters that can also be opened to neighbors during severe weather emergencies.

SB 50 modernizes Kentucky probate, estate and trust laws by streamlining inheritance procedures and allowing electronic estate planning documents.

SB 57 establishes the Nuclear Reactor Site Readiness Pilot Program to help position Kentucky as a leader in advanced nuclear energy development.

SB 59 strengthens protections against the misuse of taxpayer dollars in elections by prohibiting the use of public funds or government resources to advocate for or against ballot measures.

SB 94 ensures motor vehicle dealers are fairly compensated for warranty and recall repairs.

SB 125 strengthens Kentucky's response to youth in the juvenile justice system with serious behavioral health needs by creating

a clearer process for identifying and treating high-acuity youth.

SB 137 creates a provisional medical license designed to help attract experienced international physicians to practice in medically underserved areas of Kentucky.

SB 156 strengthens Kentucky's ban on child marriage by clearly prohibiting marriage for anyone under the age of 18.

SB 173 establishes a legislative review process for Medicaid state plan submissions and amendments to strengthen oversight of program changes and costs.

SB 177 updates licensing standards for speech-language pathologists and assistants to align with modern professional practices.

SB 189 creates a regulatory framework for virtual currency kiosks, commonly known as crypto ATMs, to strengthen consumer protections.

SB 191 creates a performance-based child care incentive pilot program designed to improve kindergarten readiness.

SB 192 reduces regulatory burdens on small cities by allowing simplified accounting methods while maintaining financial transparency and oversight.

SB 193 clarifies court authority in cases involving probation or supervision violations.

SB 197 creates a tiered county system to better target economic development incentives toward distressed communities.

SB 199 aligns Kentucky pesticide labeling standards with federal law while maintaining liability protections for safety violations.

In addition, **SB 145** received final approval after passing the House and was delivered to the governor. The bill updates statutes governing the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, including modernizing catering license provisions and strengthening licensing oversight for tobacco, nicotine and vapor retailers.

As we move into the final weeks of the session, the Senate will continue reviewing legislation while also working toward passing a balanced state budget that supports Kentucky families and communities.

If you have questions or concerns about legislation or state government, please do not hesitate to contact my office. You can reach my office at 502-564-8100 or email me at Jimmy.Higdon@kylegislature.gov.

Fighting for increased affordability in health care

One of the most common concerns I hear from Kentuckians in our district is about the cost of health care since the signing of the Affordable Care Act. As the Chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, my Committee has jurisdiction over most health care policy in Congress.



BRETT GUTHRIE
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE,
DISTRICT 2

Over the past 14 months, Republicans in Congress have worked alongside President Trump to deliver positive results for Americans, especially those that address the cost of health care. For example, in December, the House Republicans passed the *Lower Health Care Premiums for All Americans Act*, which included

provisions that would lower insurance premiums by an average 11%.

But our work hasn't stopped there. Take a look at more highlights below!

IDENTIFYING THE CAUSE OF SKYROCKETING PRICES

Investigating why prices continue to rise is a critical part of the legislative process.

That's why our Committee has been holding hearings as part of our Health Care Affordability Series, which brings health care stakeholders, from health insurance CEOs to the drug supply chain to providers, to answer tough questions and present solutions about affordability in health care.

A common theme of these hearings is the extent that vertical integration plays in the health care marketplace. Health insurance companies and pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) continue to vertically integrate, meaning in addition to operating their primary business, they also control pharmacies, providers, and other components of the health care supply chain. This consolidation results in Americans being forced to navigate a health care system without fair market competition and choice. We need price transparency in health care.

PBM REFORMS

In addition to our recent hearing, Congress took action to enact meaningful bipartisan PBM reform, which was recently signed into law by President

Trump. These reforms reduce the influence of the middleman in the pharmaceutical supply chain, lowering costs for consumers. Specifically, these reforms require PBMs to pass savings along to beneficiaries, empower employers to make the best decisions for their employees' health benefits, and expand pharmacy options for seniors. These reforms have been years in the making, and I'm glad to see these cost-saving proposals signed into law.

RURAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM

Last summer, President Trump signed the Working Families Tax Cuts into law, which secured the largest investment in rural health programs in history. Kentucky was awarded nearly \$213 million

to transform health care systems so that we can help assure the long-term sustainability of our rural providers for years to come. I'm excited to see these resources positively boost health care delivery throughout rural America.

Congress also took action to pass the *Mikaela Naylor Give Kids a Chance Act* to accelerate drug research and development for children facing rare diseases, and my *SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act* to provide resources to help people battling substance use disorders get access to treatment.

Thank you for the privilege of allowing me to serve you in Washington. I am committed to continuing to work to improve access to affordable health care for all Kentuckians.