FIRST AMENDMENT

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Opinion

laruecountyherald.com

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Let us know in a Letter to the Editor!

Letters are limited to 300 words, with a deadline of Friday noon prior to publication and must include a first and last name and phone number for consideration.

Email letters to **Editor@LaRueCountyHerald.com**

Government contracts, regulations, cybersecurity



RYAN **BIVENS**

From protecting taxpayer dollars and strengthening cybersecurity to supporting Kentucky businesses and preserving the Commonwealth's musical heritage, lawmakers tackled a wide range of issues during this week's interim committee meetings. Members heard from state agencies, industry representatives, and community organizations as they gathered information and discussed policy considerations ahead of the 2027 Regular Session.

Government Contract Review Committee: Members reviewed contracts from several Kentucky agencies and organizations, questioning how taxpayer dollars would be used to support programs and services across the Commonwealth. The committee heard testimony on contracts to fund veterans service officers, provide legal services for the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, and support leadership training for student leaders at Kentucky State University. Members also questioned agency representatives about the purpose, costs, and specific uses of the contracts, emphasizing the importance of oversight and accountability in state spending.

Administrative Regulation Review Subcommittee: Lawmakers reviewed regulations related to statewide voter registration, leave for merit and non-merit state employees, Kentucky licensing boards, fish and wildlife, the Kentucky Film Office, parole eligibility, and the Kentucky Family Caregiver Program. The regulations on leave for merit and non-merit state employees, which would increase the amount of annual leave they can carry forward, prompted questions about the potential costs. All regulations will now move to the committees of jurisdiction.

Information Technology Oversight Committee: Legislators heard from the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security, Commonwealth Office of Technology, and Kentucky National Guard about cybersecurity reporting, preparedness, and response. Presentations covered cyberterrorism prevention, agency response roles, and the Cyberbluegrass program, which strengthens coordination among cyber defenders to protect critical infrastructure. The discussion emphasized the importance of interagency collaboration in protecting Kentuckians from cyber threats and crime.

Capital Projects & Bond Oversight Committee: Members reviewed state capital project updates, agency reports, university and school district projects, emergency repairs, and debt issuances. Members also considered infrastructure loans and grants for water and sewer improvements, economic development funding, postsecondary construction plans, and military facility renovations. Additional items included reports on outstanding bonds, asset preservation allocations, and project updates required under the 2026 state budget.

IJC on Economic Development & Workforce Investment: Lawmakers heard from the Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council about proposals to eliminate the unemployment insurance waiting period. Lawmakers also discussed a potential path to encourage the transition to employee ownership when the owners of Kentucky businesses decide to sell their interests in a company.

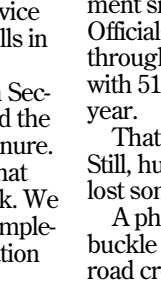
IJC on Licensing, Occupations, & Administrative Regulations: Members first discussed proposed legislation that would establish a licensing framework for lactation consultants in Kentucky. Members then heard from the Kentucky Hemp Association and Cornbread Hemp about current federal and state laws and regulations governing the hemp industry, as well as proposed licensing and regulatory changes intended to support the industry's growth and competitiveness and protect public health and safety.

IJC on Tourism, Small Business, & Information Technology: Legislators heard a presentation on the Commonwealth Initiative, a program focused on preserving Kentucky's musical heritage through education and community engagement, featuring representatives from the Commonwealth Initiative and Sandy Knipp Legacy of Strings Foundation. The committee also received an agency update from the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

Committee meetings will continue next week, with the IJC on Local Government; IJC on State Government; IJC on Health Services; and IJC on Families and Children among those scheduled to meet.

As always, I can be reached anytime through the toll-free message line in Frankfort at 1-800-372-7181. You can also contact me via email at Ryan.Bivens@kylegislature.gov and keep track through the Kentucky legislature's website at legislature.ky.gov.

Following through on veterans' benefits, improving licensing, protecting our roads



JIMMY **HIGDON**

The cooler weather is a reminder that fall is here, and the 2026 legislative interim is winding down. My time as your state senator will also end at the end of the year. Until then, there's work to do. Passing a law doesn't finish the job. We have to follow up and see whether it's doing what we intended. The interim gives us time to ask those questions and work through ideas before the next session.

Recent transportation meetings have given us plenty to examine, from a delayed benefit for veterans to shorter licensing waits and the rising cost of bridge repairs.

VETERANS SHOULDN'T HAVE TO WAIT ON PAPERWORK

The administration's September 29 announcement of a commercial driver's license waiver for eligible military applicants sounded like good news. But the General Assembly authorized that benefit in 2024. At our October 6 Transportation Committee meeting, I asked why implementation took more than two years.

I sponsored Senate Bill (SB) 199, which expanded an existing military skills-test waiver to include the written knowledge test for qualifying applicants. It recognizes military driving experience and helps service members apply those skills in civilian jobs.

Deputy Transportation Secretary Jeremy Slinker said the delay began before his tenure. He agreed to look into what happened and report back. We also discussed delays in implementing other transportation laws.

I'm glad the regulation is finally moving forward. Veterans who qualify for this benefit shouldn't have had to wait so long. The legislature sets public policy, and the executive branch carries it out. Both have a responsibility to make sure people receive the benefits the law provides.

MAKING DRIVER'S LICENSING MORE CONVENIENT

The Transportation Cabinet had better news about its new driver's licensing system, which launched in June. Average walk-in wait times dropped from 19 minutes that month to eight minutes in September. Appointment waits also declined, and more services are available online.

KYTC deserves credit for those improvements. Most people have better things to do than spend their day waiting to renew a license.

Young drivers still face another hurdle. Getting to permit and road testing can mean a long trip and missed school. I raised the need to make testing available closer to home, easing the burden on students and their parents.

We also reviewed a regulation that would allow qualified businesses and nonprofit organizations to provide certain licensing services. Providers must meet training, equipment and security requirements before participating. New locations won't appear overnight, but this could give Kentuckians more options.

KEEPING BRIDGES IN SERVICE

Kentucky's bridges are getting older, and repairs are getting more expensive.

At the October 7 Budget Review Subcommittee on Transportation meeting, cabinet officials estimated that maintaining, repairing and replacing state-owned bridges requires about $600 million a year. Projected investment averages $360 million annually over the next decade.

That leaves a sizable gap.

Our bridges average 52 years old. About one-quarter of state-owned bridges have weight restrictions, which can force farmers, school buses and emergency vehicles to take longer routes.

The cabinet considers bridge condition, detour distances and emergency access when setting priorities. Officials also described repair methods that could keep existing bridges in service longer.

We'll have to make difficult decisions about how to meet these needs. Timely maintenance can save money by preventing a manageable repair from becoming a full replacement.

KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD

The latest highway fatality figures show some improvement since my last update. Officials reported 506 deaths through October 2, compared with 519 at the same point last year.

That decline is welcome. Still, hundreds of families have lost someone.

A phone can wait. Please buckle up, drive sober and give road crews and emergency responders room to work. Keeping your attention on the road is one way to protect yourself and everyone around you.

PROTECTING RETIREES' HEALTH COVERAGE

Before closing, I want to follow up on a concern I raised last month about health insurance enrollment. The 2027 policy put retired state and school employees at risk of losing coverage if they missed the open enrollment period. I asked Gov. Beshear and the Personnel Cabinet to reconsider. An overlooked notice or family emergency shouldn't cost a retiree their health insurance.

The Kentucky Education Association now reports that the governor has assured it that retirees will not involuntarily lose coverage during the upcoming enrollment process. That is welcome news for those who depend on these benefits, particularly retirees who aren't yet eligible for Medicare.

Please still complete your enrollment, follow your retirement system's instructions and keep confirmation. If you need help, contact your retirement system. Don't assume the reported safeguards mean you can skip enrollment.

GENERAL ELECTION INFO

As you fill the calendar with festivals, football, community events and family activities, remember one more important date.

Election Day is Tuesday, November 3. Polls are open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. local time.

Kentucky voters have several options for casting their ballots:

October 20 at 11:59 p.m. ET: Deadline to request a mail-in absentee ballot.

October 21–23 and October 26–28: In-person excused absentee voting.

October 29–31: Early in-person voting. No excuse required.

Mail-in absentee ballots must be received by 6 p.m. local time on Election Day to be counted. For voter registration information, absentee ballot requests and voting locations, visit GoVoteKY. Whether you vote early, absentee or on Election Day, make a plan and make your voice heard.

STAY ENGAGED

Committee schedules are available at legislature.ky.gov, and KET provides coverage of legislative meetings.

You can leave a message at 1-800-372-7181 or contact legislative offices at 502-564-8100. Follow the Senate Majority Caucus on social media or visit KYSenateRepublicans.com for news and updates.

Please keep sharing your questions and concerns as we finish the interim. Hearing how these issues affect you helps us do our job.

TAX

FROM **PAGE A1**

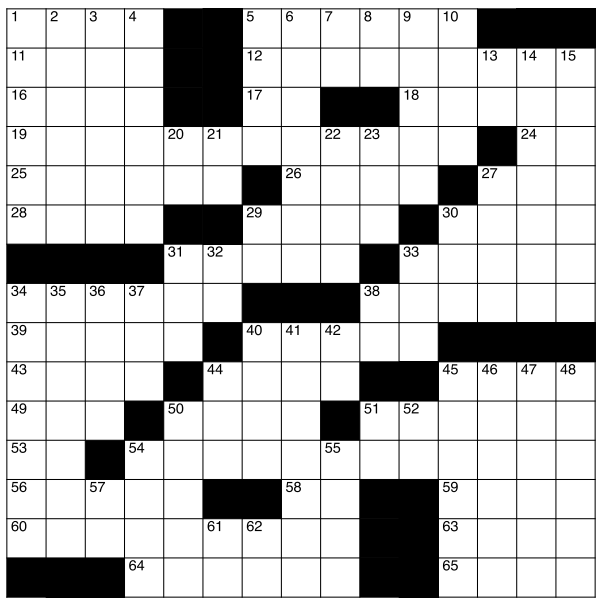
problem" that should not cause the petition as a whole to be rejected and, even if the two pages were to be removed, the petition would still have enough signatures to be put on a ballot. Attorneys for the Board, on the other hand, contend that the law requires uniformity without exception and the committee cannot ask the court to simply remove the two nonuniform pages so they are in compliance with the statute.

The case returned back to the courtroom on Monday, Oct. 19 on the Board's motion to voluntarily dismiss a portion of its counterclaim which accused the petition committee of fraud, forgery and violations of state law during and after the signature process. According to Board attorney Grant Chenoweth in the motion, "The Board concedes it was unable at trial to proffer evidence to demonstrate fraud by any Plaintiff." Because of this failure, he asked the court to voluntarily dismiss only that portion of the counterclaim.

In the courtroom, little discussion was about the motion to dismiss. Instead, the conversation surrounded a motion submitted by Southworth under Rule 11, which states that every pleading or motion must be "well grounded in fact and warranted by existing law or a good faith argument for the extension, modification or reversal of existing law." If a document is signed in violation of this rule, the court shall impose "appropriate sanctions" on the filing attorney, which may include an order to pay to the other party or parties the amount of the reasonable expenses incurred because of the filing, including a reasonable attorney's fee. A copy of this motion was not readily available to *The LaRue County Herald News* as of press time; however, the preliminary understanding of the matter is that Southworth is seeking sanctions against the Board for the time she spent preparing a defense against the fraud, forgery and violation accusations that are now being voluntarily dismissed.

Judge Simms did not make a ruling on either motion. Instead, he stated that he expected to have a ruling on the petition committee's original litigation, as well as the Board's counterclaim, entered by the end of the week of Oct. 19.

All attorneys other than Southworth requested the court enter its ruling before continuing with the sanction's motion. Because of this, all parties will return to the courtroom on Monday, Dec. 7 at 1 p.m. for a review. No further information is currently available.



CLUES ACROSS
1. Nocturnal rodent
5. Requesting
11. Give temporarily
12. Frivolousness
16. Military arm
17. "Westworld" actor Harris
18. Persian Gulf port city
19. Air hostesses
24. Partner to "Pa"
25. Percussion instrument
26. Raincoats
27. Lower the light
28. Asian mountain range
29. Every one of two or more
30. Lack of difficulty
31. A public announcement of a proposed marriage
33. Reduces in size
34. Make an impact
38. Serviceman
39. A French river
40. Prehistoric people
43. Messenger ribonucleic acid
44. "Layla" singer Clapton
45. Ancient Greek sophist
49. Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
50. "Top Gun: Maverick" actor Powell
51. A way to disentangle
53. Atomic #93
54. Manifesting approval
56. Indigo bush
58. Larry and Curly's pal
59. Off-Broadway theater award
60. Fencers
63. Masses of fish eggs
64. Passerine birds
65. Arrange systematically

CLUES DOWN
1. Colorless part of blood
2. Of a main artery
3. Photog's tool
4. Blues Traveler hit "But __"
5. Grew older
6. Not the leader
7. __ Lang: country singer
8. A driver's license is one
9. Nests of pheasants
10. Antelopes
13. One quintillion bytes
14. Japanese lute
15. A type of cat
20. It cools your home
21. Dorm official
22. Pouches
23. German trigraph
27. Form of Persian
29. __ route
30. Upper body part
31. Bridge building degree
32. Indicates position
33. Political action committee
34. Edible nuts
35. Front part of a quadruped
36. Locate
37. Geological time
38. Of I
40. Northern Utah city
41. They work in the trenches
42. Hammer is one
44. Tall deciduous tree
45. Performers
46. Slang for mistake
47. More open
48. Most slick
50. Provokes
51. Home of the NCAA's Flyers
52. Sodium
54. Large fish of the mackerel family
55. Not one
57. __ and behold
61. Atomic #21
62. "The Great Lakes State"

KPA

THE LARUE COUNTY HERALD NEWS
Established 1885
www.laruecountyherald.com

HOW TO CONTACT US
Call: (270) 358-3118
Fax: (270) 358-4852

ADVERTISING,OBITUARIES, SUBSCRIPTIONS
ALLISON SHEPHERD, Publisher
publisher@laruecountyherald.com
270-358-3118 ext # 1

NEWS, COMMUNITY
VICTORIA COX, Editor
editor@laruecountyherald.com
270-358-3118 ext # 2

SPORTS
JOSH CLAYWELL, Sports Writer
joshuaclaywell85@gmail.com

(USPS 241-220)
Published Wednesday by the LaRue County Herald News, 40 Shawnee Dr., Hodgenville, KY, 42748.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
LARUE COUNTY AND SURROUNDING TOWNS
One Year.....$44.51
Six Months.....$26.49
Three Months.....$15.89

Out of county rates (with tax):
One Year.....$90.10
Six Months.....$45.05
Three Months.....$22.53

Out of State (no tax):
One Year.....$85.00
Six Months.....$42.50
Three Months.....$24.99

ONLINE ACCESS ONLY
One Year.....$44.51
Six Months.....$26.49
Three Months.....$15.89

Effective August 1, 2025

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

Periodicals postage paid at Hodgenville Post Office, Hodgenville, KY, 42748

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
THE LARUE COUNTY HERALD NEWS
40 SHAWNEE DR.
HODGENVILLE, KY 42748