

Legislative Update

State Representative Patrick Flannery



Healthcare, first responder, education measures clear House

As the 2026 Kentucky General Assembly wrapped up its third week, lawmakers left Frankfort with an eye on the massive winter storm expected to hit the Commonwealth over the weekend.

However, the week began with the House reaching one of the session's first major procedural milestones as the House Speaker appointed a special committee to review three separate citizen-filed impeachment petitions. This step is required by law when such petitions are submitted. Committee members will consider allegations against a state supreme court justice, a jailer, and a family court judge. The committee met early in the week to adopt rules and begin processing the filings. Impeachments are rare in Kentucky. Consideration begins in the House and, if House members find cause,

it is then tried in the Senate. The legislature did impeach, convict, and remove from office a sitting commonwealth's attorney in 2023 after finding him guilty of using his elected position for personal gain. All documents are available under the Special Committees section at legislature.ky.gov and all meetings are livestreamed and recorded on the legislature's YouTube channel, LRCCommittee Meetings.

HB 34 would add hematologic cancers, commonly known as blood cancers, including leukemia, lymphoma, and multiple myeloma, to those eligible for death benefits paid to public safety and service personnel under existing statute. Under existing law, covered individuals include police officers, jailers, correctional officers, firefighters (paid and volunteer), EMS personnel, and certain National Guard and Reserve members.

HB 96 aims to improve the workgroup that oversees performance-based higher education funding. The measure would update the membership of the performance-based funding workgroup to include five members from the House, five from the Senate, the nine public university presidents, the president of the Council on Postsecondary Education, and an appointee from the governor's office.

HB 176 would require health insurance providers to establish a clear, consistent framework to exempt certain health care providers - including behavioral health providers - from prior authorization requirements. Prior authorization is a costly, time-intensive process requiring providers to seek advance approval from insurers before delivering care, often delaying treatment and adding unnecessary administrative burden. By creating a path for qualified providers to be ex-

empt, HB 176 would streamline care delivery, reduce red tape, and ensure patients can access healthcare.

HB 178 would make it easier for Kentuckians to access timely mental health care by supporting a collaborative care model that brings primary care providers, care managers, and consulting psychologists together as a team. Under this approach, patients can receive mental health treatment directly in their primary care office, improving coordination and continuity of care. By leveraging existing providers and integrating services, the model expands access and capacity while avoiding additional workforce costs.

HB 184 ensures that health insurance plans in Kentucky can remain eligible for health savings accounts under federal law, preserving important tax benefits for individuals and families. The bill clarifies

that if a state-imposed cost-sharing requirement - like deductibles and copayments - would cause a plan to lose its HSA-qualified status, that requirement would only apply after the enrollee meets the minimum federal deductible for high-deductible health plans.

HB 265 would create a process for solvent workers' compensation self-insurance pools to follow in order to dissolve. This option would only be available to solvent companies that are not the subject of delinquency proceedings. The measure also prevents authorization of new groups.

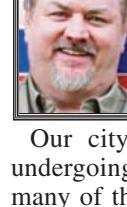
HB 280 would grant the Kentucky Board of Nursing the authority to investigate the licenses of nurses holding credentials from other states and ensure that any nurse practicing in Kentucky under an out-of-state license meets the same standards and requirements as Kentucky-licensed nurses. The bill also modernizes

school health policies by updating rules related to prescribed rescue medications, including rescue inhalers, nebulizers, glucagon, and epinephrine, helping ensure schools are better prepared to respond to student health emergencies.

HB 312 would allow Kentucky adults between the ages of 18 and 20 to obtain a provisional concealed carry license, which has the same requirements as Kentucky's standard concealed carry license: a background check, training, and proficiency in handling and operating a firearm.

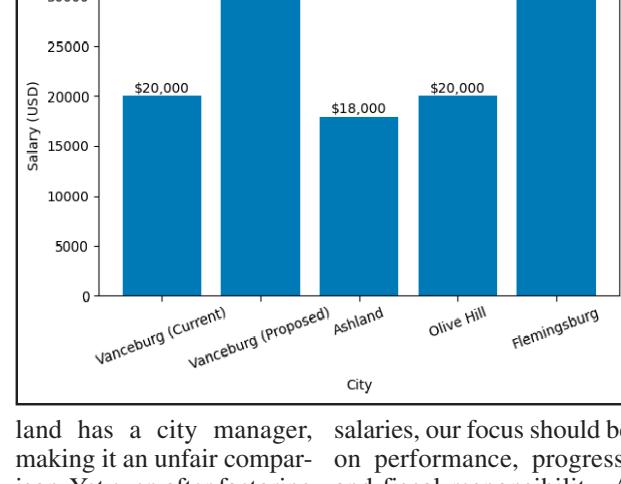
As always, I can be reached anytime through the toll-free message line in Frankfort at 1-800-372-7181. You can also contact me via email at Patrick.Flannery@kylegislature.gov and keep track through the Kentucky legislature's website at legislature.ky.gov.

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Councilman's Corner

John Grabill



Our city government is undergoing change – and many of those changes are positive ones. City council meetings have become more open and civil, allowing greater public participation and more thoughtful dialogue among council members. The atmosphere is calmer, discussions are unhurried, and there is a genuine effort to work together constructively. These shifts represent a solid step forward in how we conduct city business.

Although the tone of government has improved, the city itself has not yet turned a corner. Progress on that front will take time. Still, an important matter coming before the council deserves the public's close attention: an ordinance proposing to raise the salary of our part-time (20-hour-per-week) mayor from its current \$20,000 per year.

If performance and results were the main criteria, it would be difficult to justify such an increase. The city has struggled with a continued loss of businesses, higher taxes on items such as liquor, and the departure of several valued employees. The mayor has stepped in to perform extra duties outside the position's formal description, and that volunteerism deserves appreciation.

However, volunteer work, by definition, is not grounds for permanent pay increases. A higher salary should be tied to measurable city improvement, not to additional hours offered voluntarily.

When examining comparable salaries in nearby cities, it becomes clear that Vanceburg is already near or above the regional norm. The mayor of Ashland, KY, earns \$18,000 annually, serving a city of about 22,000 residents with nearly 1,100 businesses and a median household income of \$53,800 – a strong tax base supporting that community. Some have argued that Ash-

land has a city manager, making it an unfair comparison. Yet even after factoring that in, Ashland's vastly larger size and revenue make the contrast worth noting.

The city of Olive Hill offers an even closer comparison. Its mayor earns about the same as Vanceburg's \$20,000 salary, but Olive Hill has a similar population, more businesses, and a median household income of \$32,500. These figures show that Vanceburg, with its population of roughly 1,330, limited business base, and median household income of just \$26,369, already compensates its mayor well above what its tax base can reasonably support.

The comparison to Flemingsburg – often cited as

justification for raising our mayor's salary to \$30,000 – simply does not hold up under scrutiny. Flemingsburg supports approximately 250 businesses, has a population near 3,000, and a median income of \$32,500. Its mayor earns \$32,500, but that figure is sustained by a tax base more than double Vanceburg's, both in population and business activity.

Applying Flemingsburg's rate of compensation to Vanceburg ignores our city's markedly smaller economy and revenue capacity. In plain terms, it's not just a weak comparison – it is financially reckless.

Before increasing any

salaries, our focus should be on performance, progress, and fiscal responsibility. A raise should come only after the city demonstrates growth – through economic development, better financial stability, and improved public services. Anything less puts additional strain on a community already working hard to make ends meet.

I strongly encourage every resident to attend the upcoming city council meeting this Monday and follow the discussion. How your representatives vote will say a great deal about their priorities. Accountability in local government begins with an informed public – and it's up to us to make sure our city stays on the path of responsibility and transparency.

* In the accompanying graph, the Flemingsburg comparison fails because that city has 2.2 times Vanceburg's population - 25 times more businesses - Same per-capita income but a much larger tax base.

The Bottom Line: Pay

raises must follow results – business growth, financial stability, and better services.

Not volunteer hours.

There are important lessons for us here. The Lord hears the prayers of Christians and answers them – sometimes yes, sometimes no, and sometimes later. We must wait, have patience, and trust in the Lord. "Fear not, believe only" (Luke 8:50). Pray in faith, believing – faith as small as a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20). Wait on your blessings.

Jesus can stop and still be right on time. He responds to faith whenever He finds it. Delay is not denial. When

and \$625 million for state priority projects. It also includes funding for major bi-state projects such as the Brent Spence Bridge Corridor in Northern Kentucky and the I-69 Ohio River Crossing in western Kentucky.

Many of these projects are classified as State Priority Projects, meaning they will compete with projects from other counties for available funding and may be adjusted based on state revenues and construction costs.

Statewide Investment

The recommended plan

includes \$6.4 billion in

federal funds, \$1.4 billion

in state matching funds,

State officials noted that rising construction costs and limited funding mean not every project can move forward immediately, but the plan provides a framework for long-term progress.

Public Access

The full 2026 Recommended Highway Plan, including detailed project listings and funding schedules, is available online at:

<https://transportation.ky.gov/Program-Management/Pages/default.aspx>

The General Assembly is expected to enact the final version of the highway plan by April 15.

"For five consecutive years, we have awarded more than \$1 billion each year in construction contracts to maintain and expand our transportation network," Gray said.

Wait on Your Blessings

By Freddie Stamm

I want to reflect on two passages of Scripture from the Gospels: Luke 8:41–56 and John 11, the story of Lazarus. Luke 8 tells of a man named Jairus and his daughter, who was dying but was raised from the dead by Jesus. When Jesus said she was not dead but sleeping, the people laughed at Him.

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to faith whenever He finds

it. Delay is not denial. When

it comes to our prayers, Jesus may seem late from our point of view, but He is always on time.

I would like to offer a

personal, practical application.

I am thinking about the

situation involving the tariff

rebate. Since February

2025, I have been praying

for the passage of the bill. I

could have used it during

2025, but God's timing is

not my timing. Delay is not

denial.

I did not receive the

\$1,400 economic stimulus

payment, though I know

others did, but I will not get

into politics at this time.

Things happen for a reason,

and I will leave it at that.

During times of bad winter

weather and periods of sickness, I did have a few people

check on me, and I am

thankful for them.

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