

GOP lawmaker files petition to remove Fayette County school board chair

BY VALARIE HONEYCUTT SPEARS
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A Kentucky Republican lawmaker has filed a petition to have Fayette County school board chair Tyler Murphy removed from office.

Rep. Matt Lockett’s Jan. 30 petition, in part, says Murphy failed to provide adequate oversight of FCPS finances in violation of state law.

Republicans and Democrats in the General Assembly have criticized Fayette County School officials, including Murphy and Superintendent Demetrus Liggins, for their handling of FCPS’ budget problems.

Murphy in a Friday evening response said the petition lacks merit “and is sadly the latest of recent politically motivated attacks.”

Lockett, in a Facebook post Friday, said he filed a petition “based on serious concerns I have about Mr. Murphy’s financial mismanagement, failure to provide appropriate oversight in fiscal matters, and failure to follow public notice laws prior to increasing taxes.”

Lockett said the chair “holds a critical responsibility to ensure lawful conduct, sound stewardship of taxpayer resources, and the transparency that students, families, and educators expect.”

“The petition I filed today seeks accountability and a thorough examination of conduct that has undermined public trust in the Fayette County Public Schools,” he wrote. “It should come as no surprise as I have publicly called for Mr. Murphy’s resignation. The students



Tyler Murphy, the board chair, speaks during a school board meeting on Monday, Aug. 18, 2025, at Fayette County Public Schools Central Office in Lexington.

and families of FCPS deserve better. This situation is a disservice to them and a distraction to the work of our teachers and staff.”

Lockett said the statement would be his only public comment on the removal petition until it has been resolved.

Laura Leigh Goins, spokesperson for the House GOP, said Kentucky law provides two mechanisms for addressing official misconduct: a petition for impeachment, and a petition for removal by address. They are different in name, but both types must be referred to a committee for review.

Impeachment petitions have also been filed this legislative session, including against Kentucky Supreme Court Justice Pamela Goodwine and Fayette Circuit Judge Julie Goodman.

Lockett, in his petition

for removal, asks the House of Representatives to begin proceedings to remove Murphy.

“Removal from office is warranted because Mr. Murphy breached the public trust and engaged in a variety of inappropriate acts, any one of which constitutes a misdemeanor” under the state constitution, said the petition from Lockett, who is from Nicholasville and represents part of Fayette County.

“Any one of these actions alone qualifies as misdemeanor in office under the Kentucky Constitution. When taken together, the result is clear: Tyler Murphy must be removed from office. I respectfully request the House of Representatives begin proceedings to do so,” Lockett’s petition said.

The petition for removal

includes numerous allegations and reasons why Lockett believes Murphy has committed impeachable offenses including:

- Murphy failed to provide adequate oversight of Liggins’ expenses.
- For a period of several months in early 2025, Murphy knew about a \$16 million budget deficit and failed to inform some of his fellow members of the school board. (The deficit was projected and has been resolved, Liggins has said.)
- In May 2025, Murphy voted to certify a multi-million dollar increase in the occupational and licensing taxes that are imposed on Fayette County residents’ incomes without complying with the statutory notice requirements.
- Murphy caused or

allowed FCPS to enter into a lobbying contract for the purpose of supporting a multi-million dollar increase in the occupational and licensing taxes already imposed on Fayette County residents’ incomes without first informing some of his fellow school board members.

- Murphy voted and encouraged other members of the board to vote to hire a Texas-based audit firm to review FCPS’ financial records even though Auditor Allison Ball already announced her office would conduct a similar review.
- Murphy was responsible for a failed policy proposal that would prohibit a member who voted against an adopted measure from speaking with reporters about that measure. (It was unclear from public meetings who proposed the measure.)
- Murphy failed to inform his fellow members of the Fayette County Board Education and members of the public about FCPS’s perilous financial situation, in violation of his duties.
- Murphy allowed or approved of a massive increase in spending on non-teaching activities in recent years.

MURPHY RESPONDS

“I am a career classroom educator who’s been elected by our local community to prioritize the needs of Fayette County’s students,” Murphy said. “Every decision I’ve made as a school board member has put the needs and interests of students first. “Murphy said no board chair acts in isolation and no policy or financial decision is the result of one individual. In every deliberation, board members take into account the diverse voices of the community they serve, “ensuring that the needs of our students remain the heartbeat of our work.”

“The effectiveness of our board’s collective decision making is proven by the historic academic gains our district continues to celebrate,” Murphy said.

The evidence shows that Fayette County Public Schools should be viewed as a model for student-centered progress, Murphy said.

Murphy said FCPS outperformed the state average in every subject at every level, graduation rates have reached a 10-year-high, and for the second year in a row no schools in FCPS were identified for low achievement among Black students or economically disadvantaged students. “Reasonable people can disagree about policy and priorities—and that debate in a democracy is both healthy and necessary,” Murphy said. “I’ve offered to meet with the representative behind this petition on multiple occasions to discuss education priorities and have been met with silence.

“I will be visiting Frankfort soon and would be happy to meet with him and any legislator while I’m there. This is the very type of dialogue our constituents expect and deserve from their elected officials. “

The Fayette County Education Association criticized Lockett’s action.

“Democracy and the education of our students should not be placed at risk by political stunts that serve no constructive purpose,” a group statement said.

Editor’s note: This story was updated to reflect the type of petition Matt Lockett filed against Tyler Murphy. It is a petition for removal, not an impeachment petition.

Trump’s Fed pick was on KY Senate candidate Nate Morris’ company advisory board

BY AUSTIN HORN
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President Donald Trump’s pick to chair the U.S. Federal Reserve has a connection to one of the leading candidates for the GOP nomination to U.S. Senate in Kentucky.

Kevin Warsh, who was announced as Trump’s selection to chair the independent central banking system Friday, served on the advisory board of a company run by Nate Morris, a Lexington entrepreneur who is running for the Republican nomination to fill Sen. Mitch McConnell’s seat this year against former Attorney General Daniel Cameron and Rep. Andy Barr.

Warsh was on the advisory board of Rubicon Global for several years, according to a 2016 Vanity

Fair article and Morris’ campaign.

The company, which hailed itself as an “Uber for trash,” sought to disrupt the incumbent-driven waste business, focusing on a model akin to ride-share app Uber and sustainability.

Rubicon hit highs and lows before Morris’ departure.

Morris founded Rubicon in 2008, shepherding it to a public offering valuation of \$1.7 billion. The company faced serious issues when it went public, with stocks plummeting from \$7.55 per share to about \$1 in just two months; Morris stepped down as CEO at that time with a \$40 million compensation package. He left the board in June 2023.

Warsh was quoted in the Vanity Fair article speaking highly of Morris’

ability to cut through political debate.

“In the political sphere, the left and the right might have disagreements over climate change and global warming and the immediacy of those challenges,” board member Kevin Warsh said. “But Nate persuaded me that the immediate issue was increasing amounts of waste, uses of landfills that were counterproductive, and to communities and the broader environment.”

Warsh, a bank executive and financier praised by Trump, was on the U.S. Federal Reserve Board of Governors from 2006 to 2011. According to the New York Times, he was something of a liaison to Wall Street during the global financial crisis of 2008.

He would need to be



Former US Federal Reserve official Kevin Warsh speaking to the media about his independent report at the Bank of England in London.

confirmed by the U.S. Senate to replace the current chair Jerome Powell. Trump has continually clashed with Powell and tried to fire him.

Another quote from that Vanity Fair article came from David Plouffe, the famed campaign manager for former Democratic President Barack Obama.

Plouffe, who, along with famous actor Leonardo DiCaprio, was a member of Rubicon’s board of directors, lauded Morris’ passion for the environment and “understanding of Middle America.”

“It’s so fascinating where he comes from.

He’s a Kentucky Republican. He’s one of the most compelling people I’ve heard talk recently about the environment. He brings a practicality to it. I think he’s very grounded—he’s got a very innate understanding of Middle America,” Plouffe said.

Morris has used the story of Rubicon on the campaign trail. He launched his run to replace McConnell with an ad pledging to “take out the trash,” riding in a garbage truck and throwing a cardboard cutout of McConnell into the truck.

Warsh is not the only connection Morris has to

Trump world.

Earlier this month, news broke that Elon Musk, the entrepreneur and richest man in the world, gave \$10 million to a political action committee supporting Morris. He was also the last candidate for U.S. Senate to be endorsed by the late conservative activist Charlie Kirk, who helped Morris launch his campaign.

Morris’ official campaign has been primarily fueled by the candidate himself thus far. As of Sep. 30, when the last public financial records are available, Morris had loaned his campaign more than \$3 million.

Morris is also close with Vice President JD Vance, whom he calls a friend, and has appeared multiple times on a podcast hosted by the president’s son, Donald Trump, Jr.

According to the latest publicly available polling, Morris — who has never held elected office — is in a distant third place among Kentucky Republicans, trailing Cameron in first and Barr in second. Every public poll has pegged Cameron as the leader, though Cameron is fundraising significantly less than both of the others.

Eastern Kentucky school destroyed in ‘devastating’ fire, officials say

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A fire destroyed Dessie Scott School in Wolfe County Thursday night, school district officials said in a Friday social media post.

No one was in the building and district officials

were not aware of any injuries, the Wolfe County Board of Education said.

“We are sorry to pass on the news of a fire that happened last night at the Dessie Scott School and gym,” district officials said in a Facebook post.

“The fire was devastating and has resulted in a total loss of the building,” the post said. “We

are thankful that nobody was in the building at the time of the travesty and as far as we know no one was injured.”

Among its students are those who live at the Dessie Scott residential treatment facility.

District officials said firefighters contained “the fire in extremely adverse conditions with the ice

and temperatures.”

School staff will begin meeting Friday with their partners at the Dessie Scott Campus to make plans “to get our school back on its feet,” school officials said.

“As everyone in this community knows, Dessie Scott Children’s Home is a staple for our county and has a decades long com-

mitment to serving children in need from ... Kentucky and all parts of the United States,” the post said.

School officials could not immediately be reached Friday morning.

‘THE CHILDREN AND THEIR HOMES ARE SAFE’

Patty Wilder, an official with the residential facility, told the Herald-Leader Friday morning that only the school building, where 24 children attend, was lost in the fire.

“The children and their homes are safe,” said Wilder, Chief Operations Officer for Buckhorn Children and Family Services.

The community reached out with compassion, school and facility officials said.

“This unfortunate incident has deeply affected our school community. As we support our students through the loss and help them adjust to a new routine, we ask for continued thoughts and prayers,” said Wilder.