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KY lawmakers trim broad and costly crime bill to focus on Ronald Exantus case

BY JOHN CHEVES
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Kentucky lawmakers on Thursday scaled back an expensive anti-crime bill to focus narrowly on the controversial criminal case of Ronald Exantus, who stabbed 6-year-old Logan Tipton to death in Versailles in 2015.

"There's nothing we can do about Logan," Dean Tipton, the boy's father, told the Senate Judiciary Committee, "but this is about protecting the next family from going through the heartache that we've been through over the last 10 or 11 years.

"No family should ever have to walk down the street and fear seeing their child's murderer on the sidewalk. This law will help protect families across Kentucky," he continued.

The Senate committee unanimously approved a substitute version of House Bill 422 and sent it to the full Senate. The bill would be called "Logan's Law."

As passed by the House on Feb. 24, the 28-page bill was a sprawling measure that would have — among other things — lengthened prison sentences for many hundreds of people serving time for serious crimes. But the cost of the bill, estimated by the state Department of Corrections, would have been hundreds of millions of



Ronald Exantus in Fayette Circuit Court during his trial in 2018.

dollars over coming years. Kentucky spends more than \$830 million a year on its Department of Corrections.

The much simpler six-page bill approved by the Senate committee Thursday focuses on two objectives.

It further restricts who's eligible for the state's mandatory reentry supervision program, eliminating repeat violent offenders and those sent back to prison for previous violations of early release. It also instructs the corrections department to publish an annual report on the early release program.

Additionally, it sets new rules for insanity pleas in criminal cases, establishing that a jury can't find a person was sane for one part of a criminal act but insane for a different part. It also allows for the involuntary hospitalization in a

psychiatric facility of a person, once their sentence ends, if they were found guilty but mentally ill and a treating physician decides they need further treatment.

Both of these changes refer to how Exantus, a dialysis nurse from Indiana, moved through the court system after he killed Logan Tipton.

A Fayette Circuit Court jury found Exantus not guilty by reason of insanity on a murder charge in Logan's death, absolving him of criminal responsibility, but guilty of second- and fourth-degree assault in his attack on other family members in the Tipton home.

The split verdict was appealed to the Kentucky Supreme Court, which upheld it.

Further outraging the community in Woodford County, where Logan

lived, Exantus was released from prison last October on mandatory reentry supervision after serving less than half of his 20-year sentence. He was arrested in Florida 12 days later for violating the terms of his release by failing to register as a convicted felon.

Mandatory reentry supervision is reserved for inmates who are — like Exantus — denied discretionary parole by the state Parole Board. When lawmakers created the program 15 years ago, they said they wanted these inmates to have some supervision and guidance when they return to the community rather than just walk free.

"The purpose of House Bill 422 is to bring some sanity to the insanity statutes, to build on the Safer Kentucky Act passed in 2024, to put guardrails on mandatory early release statutes, disallow juries from splitting the insanity defense, as it did in this case, and protect our citizens by getting those suffering from mental illness the help they needed," the bill's sponsor, state Rep. Daniel Fister, R-Versailles, told the Senate committee.

Voting for the bill, state Sen. Phillip Wheeler, R-Pikeville, said the split verdict in the Exantus case has always sounded like a procedural error to him.

"As an attorney, I struggle with how a person could be found to have the *mens rea* (guilty mind) intent to commit assault but not to commit murder," Wheeler told Dean Tipton, sitting at the witness table. "It sounds like maybe that some (jury) instructions weren't given properly or something. But that's clearly an injustice done to your son's memory."

in both parties had already agreed to in January, including money for body cameras for immigration enforcement officers — but no requirement that they be worn.

It omits entirely the other restrictions that Democrats demanded after federal immigration officers killed two American citizens in Minneapolis in January, including barring ICE agents from wearing masks and requiring that they obtain judicial warrants to enter private homes.

And the deal does not reflect narrow concessions that the White House agreed to in talks with Democrats last week, including requirements that officers display visible identification and limits on immigration enforcement at "sensitive areas" like hospitals and schools.

Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., the minority leader, said Democrats would continue to push for those changes. But it will be all but impossible to win them without broad GOP support, and Senate Republicans said this week that Democrats could not expect to impose restrictions on an agency that they were not funding.

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., the majority leader, on Friday criticized what he called a "piecemeal" approach to funding.

Oil prices top \$111 despite Trump claim of Iran talks

BY JOE FISHER
World News - UPI.com

Brent crude oil reached \$111.41 per barrel Friday morning after two Chinese ships were blocked from passing through the Strait of Hormuz.

Oil prices have steadily climbed since Monday despite President Donald Trumpbacking off his plan to bomb Iran's energy infrastructure. Friday's price hike follows a 5.7% jump on Thursday.

Trump said he is postponing his plan to attack Iran's infrastructure for 10 days amid positive talks with Iran; talks that Iran denies having. The president maintained that negotiations are continuing, posting on social media Thursday that they are "going very well."

Iran informed the United Nations earlier this week that it would allow non-hostile vessels to pass through the strait. China is an ally of Iran.

China Ocean Shipping Company had two container vessels seek passage through the Strait of Hormuz overnight before being turned away. The company said in a social

media post that this suggests "the situation in the Strait of Hormuz remains highly unstable."

Trump told his cabinet on Thursday that Iran has granted passage to 10 oil tankers this week. He called it a "present" to the United States.

"They said, 'To show you the fact that we're real and solid and we're there, we're going to let you have eight boats of oil -- and they'll sail up tomorrow,'" Trump said. "They then apologized for something they said, and they said, 'We're going to send two more boats.'"

Global markets have continued a downward trend since the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran on Feb. 28.

The S&P 500 is showing losses for the fifth consecutive week. It is the first time it has done so in four years. European, South Korean and Taiwanese market indexes also slid on Friday.

The national average for a gallon of gas in the United States is \$3.98, while diesel prices are 43% higher than they were before the war, reaching \$5.38 per gallon.

Senate votes to fund most of DHS in bid to end partial shutdown

BY MICHAEL GOLD AND JOHN YOON
NYT News Service/Syndicate Stories

WASHINGTON

The Senate voted early Friday to fund the Department of Homeland Security except for its immigration enforcement and deportation operations, raising the prospect of an end to a weeklong partial shutdown that has strained federal workers and caused long waits at airports.

The measure does not include funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement or Border Patrol, nor does it contain provisions that Democrats had demanded for weeks to rein in President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown as a condition of funding the department.

After weeks of haggling over such restrictions and failed efforts by lawmakers in both parties to pass legislation that would reopen the Homeland Security Department, the

measure was quietly approved before dawn in Washington by a voice vote. It came hours after Trump said he would go around Congress to pay Transportation Security Administration agents, who have worked without pay since funding for the department lapsed Feb. 14.

The bill must still be considered by the House, which could vote on it as soon as Friday. It was unclear whether the measure would pass that chamber, where Speaker Mike Johnson holds a narrow Republican majority. A number of hard-right Republicans have criticized the Senate's approach and oppose a funding bill that does not include new money for immigration enforcement, arguing that they should not give in to Democrats who have refused to provide any.

Should the House approve the measure and Trump sign it, the deal would end a negotiating standoff that has caused

the longest partial government shutdown on record.

Though several agencies have gone without funding, the shutdown has most visibly affected airport security workers and passengers. Hundreds of TSA agents quit or called out of work, leading to staggeringly long lines at some of the busiest airports in the country. The growing crisis increased pressure on senators to try to find a deal, especially before a scheduled two-week recess.

Even after Trump's announcement Thursday, senators had suggested that their negotiations were ongoing. But his intervention appeared to sap what little will there had been to find a deal that would fund the department while including new curbs on immigration agents that would be agreeable to both Senate Democrats and the White House.

The measure that the Senate approved around 2:20 a.m. contains modest provisions that lawmakers



Mike Coppola/Getty Images

Meghan Markle and Prince Harry.

PEOPLE

Prince Harry, Meghan praise ruling against Meta, Google

Us Weekly

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle are speaking out after a Los Angeles jury ruled against Google and Meta in a landmark case regarding social media addiction.

On Wednesday, the two tech giants were ordered to pay \$6 million in compensatory and punitive damages to a young woman who alleged that Meta-owned Instagram and Google-owned YouTube were designed to be addictive, causing detriment to her mental health as a minor.

"This verdict is a reckoning," the Duke and Duchess of Sussex said in a statement to People on Wednesday. "For too long, families have paid the price for platforms built with total dis-

regard for the children they reach. We stand with every parent and young person who refused to be silenced. Today, the truth has been heard and precedent has been set."

The woman identified only as K.G.M., now 20, sued Google, Meta, and other tech companies in 2023, alleging that features on social media applications were designed to be addictive. She said she began using social media platforms at age 6.

A jury said Meta must pay K.G.M. \$4.2 million in combined compensatory and punitive damages. YouTube owner Google was ordered to pay \$1.8 million.

Both Meta and Google said they disagreed with the verdict and plan to appeal.

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