

Week in review

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Our best-read local news stories



OFFICE OF KENTUCKY GOV. ANDY BESHEAR Office of Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear
Rocky Adkins, pictured in this 2021 file photo, has served as Gov. Andy Beshear's senior adviser. He was in the Kentucky House of Representatives from 1987 to 2019.

Rocky Adkins departs senior adviser role under Beshear

Rocky Adkins has stepped down as senior adviser to Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear, with his last day being July 17, according to a press release. Beshear praised Adkins for his leadership through the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple natural disasters, calling him “an invaluable part of Team Kentucky.” Adkins, who was appointed to the role in 2019, served in the Kentucky House of Representatives from 1987 to 2019, holding positions including House Majority Leader and Minority Floor Leader. The press release did not specify why Adkins is leaving or his next destination. Ray Perry, deputy secretary of Beshear’s executive cabinet, will assume the senior adviser

role. Adkins ran against Beshear in the 2019 gubernatorial primary and has not ruled out a 2027 run, saying in April he was “thinking carefully about what comes next.”

Reported by Hannah Pinski, published July 13

FCPS board chair denies settlement offer to Liggins

Fayette County Board of Education chair Tyler Murphy firmly denied on July 13 that any settlement offer was made to suspended Superintendent Demetrus Liggins. Liggins, on paid administrative leave since June 10, had claimed through his attorney that he agreed in principle to a

settlement. Murphy called that claim false, stating neither the board nor any member made or accepted an offer. The dispute has continued for over a month, with Liggins’ lawyer previously noting four failed settlement attempts. Liggins’ base salary was \$350,000 in 2024-25. The district faces financial strain after discovering its books were misstated for decades, requiring over \$20 million in budget cuts from its \$711.3 million general fund. Liggins has led the roughly 42,000-student district since 2021 and was named 2026 Kentucky Superintendent of the Year.

Reported by Beth Musgrave and Valarie Honeycutt Spears, published July 13

Lexington’s Mileta named a top US restaurant

Mileta, a popular Italian-inspired fine dining restaurant located at Fayette Mall in Lexington, has been named one of FSR Magazine’s Top 50 Independent Restaurants in America. Now in its fourth year, the FSR (Full-Service Restaurant) list celebrates independent owners and teams crafting unique dining experiences. The magazine praised Mileta for pairing craft with genuine warmth. The restaurant, opened in 2024 by owners Dallas Rose and Alex Green, is known for its housemade pastas, seasonal menus featuring local ingredients, craft cocktails, and award-winning decor. In a social media post, Mileta called the recognition “a privilege we don’t take lightly,” expressing gratitude to its employees and guests. Mileta is located at 3565 Nicholasville Road, Suite 932.

Reported by Brian Simms, published July 14

Lexington officer pleads guilty, resigns from the force

A Lexington police officer has pleaded guilty to amended charges and resigned following allegations of sending explicit content to a minor. Nathaniel Schickler, 26, was originally charged May 20 with distributing obscene materials to a 17-year-old and tampering with physical evidence, a Class D felony. Under a plea deal

with the Fayette County Attorney’s office, the obscene materials charge was dismissed with prejudice and the tampering charge was reduced to attempted evidence tampering, a misdemeanor. Schickler agreed to resign, have no contact with the victim, and surrender his law enforcement certification, barring him from future employment in law enforcement. Authorities say he knowingly sent sexually explicit messages and images to the teen and allegedly attempted to destroy evidence from his phone during the investigation.

Reported by Taylor Six, published July 13

DartPoints plans \$1B+ investment in Lexington data center

DartPoints, the data center company that acquired a former Lexmark campus on New Circle Road in mid-May, plans to invest approximately \$1.05 billion at the Lexington facility over time, according to a June 2 email obtained by the Herald-Leader through a public records request. DartPoints President and CEO Scott Willis wrote that the company seeks to build a strong partnership with the city and explore available incentives. The \$29 million property spans roughly 343,000 square feet and could scale power capacity from 30 to 70 megawatts. Mayor Linda Gorton’s office has said it will not support public incentives but does support tight

controls. A moratorium on data center development passed June 9 pauses permits until at least Oct. 31, and DartPoints has not yet applied for required approvals to operate. The city’s Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on a proposed zoning amendment at a July 30 meeting.

Reported by Piper Hansen, published July 10

Lexington Philharmonic’s George Zack dies at 90

George Zack, the Lexington Philharmonic’s conductor and music director for 37 seasons, died July 12 at the age of 90. Zack joined the orchestra for its 1972-73 season, when it operated on a \$55,000 budget with just five concerts. Over his tenure, he grew the organization to a \$1.4 million budget with more than 40 annual performances. Everett McCorvey, director of the Opera Theatre program at the University of Kentucky, called Zack one of the most impactful conductors Lexington has ever had, crediting him with making the arts approachable to all. Zack conducted 1,385 concerts during his time in Lexington. He received honors including the Kentucky Governor’s Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts and the Kentucky Arts Council’s Lifetime Achievement Award. He is survived by his sister, two daughters, their husbands, and four grandchildren.

Reported by Brian Simms, published July 13



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CJ GUNTHER Reuters

A woman looks at a makeshift street-side memorial on Tuesday, a day after a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents fatally shot a driver in Biddeford, Maine.

Trump reverses ICE traffic stop suspension after shootings

President Donald Trump directed federal immigration agents to resume traffic stops on July 15, overruling top administration officials who had suspended the tactic following the fatal shootings of two drivers by ICE officers in Texas and Maine within days of each other. White House border czar Tom Homan had announced the temporary suspension to review procedures, but Trump countermanded him after criticism from conservative allies. Federal authorities have offered no evidence that either

man posed a threat justifying lethal force. At least seven people have been shot dead during federal immigration enforcement operations since January 2025, and 53 people have died in ICE custody during the same period.

Reported by Reuters, published July 15

US strikes Iran again as Tehran warns of ‘existential war’

The United States struck Iran’s coastal defenses and missile sites on July 15

after reimposing a naval blockade of its ports, while Iran threatened to shut off more regional energy exports. U.S. Central Command said strikes targeted coastal defense systems and cruise missile storage and launch sites on Iran’s Greater Tunb Island, with a second wave reported nine hours later. Iran’s top negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf declared, “We are in an essential and existential war with America.” The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said it struck U.S. military targets in Bahrain, Kuwait, and

Jordan. Kuwait said its forces intercepted four missiles and 21 drones, with no reported injuries. President Donald Trump said Iran wants to “settle so badly” and predicted Iran would be “defeated very soon.” Brent crude closed at a one-month high of \$84.95 a barrel on July 15 amid ongoing disruptions to the Strait of Hormuz, which carried about a fifth of global oil and gas shipments before the conflict began.

Reported by Reuters, published July 15

Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool drained again for repairs

The Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool in Washington, D.C., has been drained again as President Donald Trump says damage allegedly caused by vandals is being repaired. More than \$14 million has been spent on renovating the pool since a project began in April. The Justice Department has charged four people with allegedly vandalizing the pool since Trump had it painted “American Flag blue.” U.S. Olympian David Hearn is among those charged and pleaded not guilty this month. The National Park Service said the pool was damaged by a sharp knife, though neither the service nor the president has shared evidence to support the claim.

Reported by UPI, published July 14

Obamacare premiums facing double-digit hikes in 2027

Millions of Americans enrolled in Affordable Care Act plans could face another round of steep premium increases in 2027, with health insurers seeking a median rate hike of 14%, according to a preliminary KFF analysis. The nonprofit examined filings from 77 plans across 16 states and Washington, DC, finding nearly half of insurers seeking increases of 10% to 15%. Insurers cite rising hospital, doctor, and prescription drug costs — including GLP-1 anti-obesity drugs — alongside the expiration of enhanced premium tax credits, which caused healthier enrollees to drop coverage, leaving a sicker, costlier pool. KFF’s Cynthia Cox called it a “triple hit” for consumers without subsidies. ACA enrollment stood at approximately 19.2 million as of February, down from 23.1 million sign-ups recorded in January.

Reported by USA TODAY Network via Reuters Connect, published July 10

McConnell unable to return to Senate amid recovery

U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell announced July 12 that he will not return to the Senate when it reconvenes this week, still recovering from a fall and pneumonia. In his first public statement since his hospitalization last month, McConnell, 84, said he suffered a fall in mid-June that left him

briefly unconscious. “As much as it frustrates me, this process takes time, and on the advice of my doctors, I won’t be able to return to the Senate floor to vote quite yet.” He developed pneumonia while hospitalized and was treated with antibiotics. He is now at a rehabilitation center focusing on physical therapy and strategies to reduce his risk of future falls. The Kentucky Republican, who chairs the Senate Rules Committee, has remained in contact with staff and colleagues.

Reported by Reuters, published July 12

Europe’s late-June heatwave linked to 10,000+ deaths

Data from EuroMOMO, a network backed by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and the World Health Organization, show more than 10,000 excess deaths were recorded across 27 European countries during the record-breaking heatwave that peaked the week of June 22-28. More than 9,000 of those deaths were among people aged 65 and older. Scientists say the spike — the highest in a single week — cannot be explained by any factor other than the extreme heat, which they say would have been “virtually impossible” without human-caused climate change. France and Belgium were the only countries to log “very high excess” mortality during that period.

Reported by Reuters, published July 13