

SOAR joins UK's Advancing Kentucky Together Network

Special to Appalachian Newspapers

Shaping Our Appalachian Region became the latest Kentucky organization to join the University of Kentucky's Advancing Kentucky Together Network at the SOAR Summit on Oct. 8, in Corbin, UK announced in a statement.

This formalized relationship, the statement said, will create a more intentional connection between UK's statewide education, research, healthcare and outreach missions and SOAR's regional programs, partnerships, convening capacity and implementation infrastructure.

"The partnership is designed

to move beyond periodic collaboration," said Reed Adkins, executive director of SOAR. "It will establish a framework through which UK and SOAR can identify challenges together, connect the right people and resources, develop solutions, and create measurable opportunities for Eastern Kentuckians and their communities."

As part of the agreement, according to the statement, SOAR and UK have partnered to co-create solutions that expand opportunity and strengthen opportunities throughout Appalachian Kentucky, including:

- Co-promote SOAR's innovative talent-attraction initiative — EKY Remote — to UK alum-

ni, students and other UK-connected audiences who may be interested in building their lives and careers in Eastern Kentucky. EKY Remote is designed to recruit remote workers, entrepreneurs and families to live in Eastern Kentucky.

- Collaborate to convene at least two strategic meetings annually focused on issues of significant importance to Eastern Kentucky. SOAR and UK will work with appropriate UK representatives, including faculty, researchers, UK Cooperative Extension staff and members of the AKT Network to identify topics based on regional priorities and emerging needs.

- Explore opportunities to connect students and alumni

with the region through career awareness, internships, entrepreneurship, community engagement, research, leadership development and service.

- Connect the breadth of UK's knowledge and expertise with SOAR's regional infrastructure. SOAR regularly works with local governments, employers, nonprofits, education providers, entrepreneurs, workforce organizations, health-care organizations, economic development professionals and community leaders throughout Appalachian Kentucky. SOAR and UK will collaborate to bring expertise across disciplines that intersect directly with many of the challenges and opportunities facing partners and commu-

nities.

Joining the AKT Network is a natural extension of the years-long UK and SOAR relationship. UK HealthCare was the first SOAR sponsor and has continued to support the organization throughout the years.

"We are honored to welcome SOAR into the AKT Network," said Dave Melanson, executive director for external relations at the University of Kentucky. "Both of our organizations are committed to partnering and engaging in communities across Kentucky. We look forward to working together to identify opportunities and developing solutions that ultimately lead to a stronger, healthier and competitive Commonwealth."

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Continued from Page 5A

education programs and the role of the Transportation Operations Center and incident management coordinators in monitoring and responding to roadway incidents. Members also received updates on driver licensing regional offices and the implementation of the new driver licensing system, KINDL. Finally, members approved a proposed regulation concerning third-party issuance of identity documents.

Education Assessment and

Accountability Review Subcommittee: Lawmakers received an update on K-3 literacy in Kentucky, including third-grade reading proficiency, challenges facing educators and differences in literacy practices and retention policies across districts. The committee also reviewed recommendations from the Office of Education Accountability to make reading assessments, decisions about whether students should repeat a grade and communication with parents clearer and more consistent. Members also discussed ways to provide additional support to

Kentucky's lowest-performing schools.

Tobacco Settlement Agreement Fund Oversight Committee: Members recently received an update from the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy on efforts to combat substance use, support recovery and protect communities from the effects of addiction. The committee also heard from the Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy about projects being considered for funding by the Agricultural Development Board. These investments can help strengthen Kentucky's agricul-

tural economy, support farmers and create new opportunities in rural communities across the Commonwealth.

Legislative Oversight and Investigations Committee: Lawmakers recently examined Kentucky's child abuse intake process, reviewing staff research and hearing from the Department for Community Based Services about how reports are received, assessed and referred for investigation. Members also discussed opportunities to strengthen the system and better protect vulnerable children. The committee also received an

update on Kentucky's State Veterans' Centers, including services provided to veterans and ongoing efforts to meet their needs. These discussions reflect the legislature's continued focus on protecting children and honoring our commitment to Kentucky's veterans.

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, Bobby.McCool@kylegislature.gov, and keep track through the Kentucky legislature's website at, legislature.ky.gov.

WHITAKER

Continued from Page 5A

date of the gubernatorial election and ending the fifth Tuesday succeeding the election.

(2) The Governor shall file with each application therefor a statement of the reasons for his or her decision thereon, which application and statement shall always be open to public inspection.

(3) In cases of treason, the Governor shall have power to grant reprieves until the end of the next session of the General Assembly, in which the

power of pardoning shall be vested; but he or she shall have no power to remit the fees of the Clerk, Sheriff or Commonwealth's Attorney in penal or criminal cases.

Under Kentucky's constitution, the governor has broad clemency powers. A pardon can forgive the legal consequences of a conviction, while a commutation can reduce a person's sentence. These powers are separate from the judicial process and can affect decisions made by law enforcement, prosecutors, juries and judges.

The proposed amend-

ment is intended to establish a constitutional restriction on when those powers may be exercised. It would apply to every governor going forward. The proposed amendment does not eliminate the governor's authority to grant pardons or commute sentences. Instead, it places limits on when that authority may be exercised, raising a practical question about timing.

The issue has received increased attention because of the use of executive clemency near the end of gubernatorial administrations. In Decem-

ber 2019, then-Gov. Matt Bevin issued more than 600 pardons and commutations shortly before leaving office. Several of those decisions — as well as the decision-making process itself — generated significant public controversy and scrutiny. In the final days of his administration in December 2015, Gov. Steve Beshear issued 197 pardons and commuted six sentences, far more than he had issued earlier in his administration. And, in December 2007, Gov. Ernie Fletcher issued 101 pardons and commutations as he was

leaving office.

Interestingly enough, when Governor Paul Patton was leaving office in 2003, he and his staff reportedly determined that almost 200 pardon applications were justified. However, he told a reporter with the Louisville Courier Journal that he chose not to grant them out of caution that it might appear like political favoritism if any were campaign donors.

The proposal has also been considered over multiple legislative sessions. The sponsor of the legislation that placed it on the ballot has pursued changes for several years. The amendment ultimately received bipartisan support in the General Assembly

before being placed before voters.

As with any constitutional amendment, the decision ultimately rests with Kentucky voters. The question on the ballot gives voters the opportunity to determine whether these additional constitutional restrictions should become part of the governor's clemency authority.

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Something To Think About

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Purpose of Embalming

Embalming is required by law in cases where the deceased had one of a few specific contagious diseases or if the body is to be transported a great distance. However, embalming is almost always routinely done as soon as possible after the death.

There are various reasons for this. The primary purpose of embalming is to preserve the body for the period of time of the visitation and funeral. If the family wishes to have the body present at the funeral, embal-

ing would be necessary. At the same time, restoration procedures would be followed. This involves shaping and cosmetology work to make the deceased appear as life-like as possible.

I should emphasize that although embalming is not require by law in all circumstances, it is, however, the best method of preparation of the deceased for the family desiring a visitation period followed by a traditional funeral service and burial.

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