

Kentucky's switch to the SAT violates public trust; it may also violate state law

BY RICHARD G. INNES

Kentucky appears to be breaking its own education law. The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 is meant to guarantee a stable, trustworthy assessment system for parents and lawmakers. Yet the state is now moving to dismantle the only reliable measure of high-school performance it has ever had: the ACT. The alternative the education establishment has chosen does not meet Kentucky’s legal requirements. For nearly two decades, every Kentucky junior has taken the ACT. It is the sole long-term trend line the state possesses, the one measure that has remained consistent through four different state-assessment regimes. It has revealed something uncomfortable but important: since 2016-17, Kentucky’s ACT scores in reading, math and science have declined. Over the past 33 years, Kentucky has struggled to maintain a dependable statewide testing program of its own. KIRIS, CATS and KPREP each came and went. The current Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA) is only three years old and already shows signs of the same instability. Every time the system changes, Kentucky loses trend lines, transparency and the ability to measure progress over time. KERA was written to end exactly that kind of chaos—yet chaos is precisely what we have now. Kentucky’s KSA reports rising proficiency in reading, math and science—the very subjects where the ACT shows worsening results. Two tests that are supposed to measure similar skills should not tell opposite stories. When they do, parents deserve to know why. Instead of answering those questions, the Kentucky Department of

Education has decided to scrap the ACT entirely and switch to the SAT beginning in 2026. This is not a harmless administrative choice. It destroys the only continuous source of college-readiness data Kentucky has, eliminates the one metric that cannot be curved or inflated by the state, and violates both the structure and the requirements of state law. Kentucky law is clear: the statewide college-readiness exam must assess English, reading, mathematics and science. The SAT lacks a separate English section and includes no science component; it therefore does not satisfy KRS 158.6453. A statewide exam that fails to meet statutory requirements cannot lawfully serve as Kentucky’s college-readiness test. Yet KDE is moving ahead despite the conflict with the law, the loss of accountability, and the apparent lack of any visible approval from the Kentucky Board of Education. That last point matters. State statute places the Kentucky Board of Education in charge of the statewide assessment system. There is no record of a board vote to replace the ACT with the SAT, and it was KDE—not the board—that signed the SAT contract. If the shift was made administratively, it suggests a serious breakdown in how Kentucky’s education laws are being applied. Parents already face an assessment system that cannot provide consistent or comparable data. Now they are being asked to accept the removal of the one tool that has held steady for nearly 20 years. Legislators should not allow that to happen. The General Assembly has both the authority and the responsibility to intervene. Kentucky’s Supreme Court made clear in the Rose deci-

sion that the legislature is ultimately responsible for ensuring an efficient system of education. Four immediate steps lawmakers should take: Restore the ACT as Kentucky’s statewide college-readiness exam. Reaffirm in statute that the statewide exam must include separate assessments in English, reading, mathematics and science, exactly as KRS 158.6453 requires—thereby ruling out the SAT. Require an open, public vote by the Kentucky Board of Education on any statewide-assessment contract, in keeping with KERA’s governance structure. Enact a stability provision that prevents KDE from constantly replacing statewide assessments before they can produce meaningful trend lines. Kentucky’s families deserve an assessment system that tells the truth about learning, not one that resets itself every few years and discards inconvenient data. If legislators want to uphold KERA and restore public trust, they must act now—before the state’s last remaining thread of real accountability is permanently cut. Richard G. Innes is an education policy analyst at the Bluegrass Institute. About the Bluegrass Institute The Bluegrass Institute is a donor-supported nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to transforming the commonwealth into a beacon of freedom and opportunity for all Kentuckians. The institute’s mission is to work with Kentuckians, pro-liberty coalitions, grassroots organizations and business owners to advance freedom and prosperity by promoting individual liberty, limited and transparent government, and free markets.

Agricultural Economic Updates, Part 3

We’re continuing our look back at the ups and downs of the economics of agricultural production for 2025. Lower log prices and fewer markets continue to impact forestry sector Kentucky’s forestry industry continued to struggle in 2025 as log prices fell across all species due to global trade disruptions and low domestic demand. Despite an estimated \$20 billion total economic impact, timber sales are expected to generate only \$552 million for loggers and landowners this year, with similar trends expected for 2026. “Prices for grade lumber logs remain generally lower than last year,” said Chad Niman, UK forest products specialist, noting that increased wages and contributions mask underlying market weakness. “Since 2022, at least 72 sawmill or wood manufacturing facilities have closed statewide.” Niman said white oak saw the steepest price decline, down about 20% across all log grades, driven by reduced stave log competition and lower lumber demand. In contrast, railway tie log prices have stabilized, he said. “This is a market that consumes a lot of red oak, and some large companies are investing in equipment upgrades, signaling cautious optimism for recovery by mid-2026,” Niman said. Looking for another bright spot, Niman said he sees industry investment as a positive sign that markets will begin to improve. He emphasized the importance of developing outlets for low-grade and residue wood to sustain forest health and expand lumber markets, especially as paper mills and sawmills have closed. “We need all wood markets in general, but there is a need for more markets for lumber, where we have such a strong lumber production system,” Niman said. “One emerging opportunity is hardwood cross-laminated timber (CLT) for construction, which could be used to build schools, public buildings, low and high-rise projects, if pro-

duction facilities are established in Kentucky.” Looking to 2026 Snell said livestock and row crop farmers will head into 2026 with considerably different financial outlooks. “Row crop producers will likely continue to face tight margins evolving from excessive supplies, volatile export markets and potentially declining government payments,” Snell said. As the livestock sector remains relatively strong, coupled with some potentially modest recovery in grain prices, Kentucky’s agricultural cash receipts could approach \$8.5 billion in 2026. Yet economists caution that trade and monetary policy decisions, along with unpredictable weather, remain wild cards. “Adding to the financial stress of many Kentucky farms, input costs - driven by the outcome of interest rates and tariffs on imported farm inputs - may continue to rise,” Snell said. “But we expect input prices to increase at a slower pace in the coming year.” Snell concluded that Kentucky agriculture will continue to benefit from a very diversified farm economy, unlike the many states that depend on just a few agricultural enterprises. For regular industry updates and news from the UK Department of Agricultural Economics, visit <https://age-con.ca.uky.edu/econ-policy-updates>. Feel free to contact me at your Spencer County Cooperative Extension Service at 477-2217 or you can email me at broberts@uky.edu. You can visit the Spencer County Extension Services’ website at www.spencerextension.com. Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.



BRYCE ROBERTS

BBB Consumer Education Fund announces recipients of Inaugural Lifeline Grant

SUBMITTED

The Better Business Bureau’s Consumer Education Fund (CEF) is pleased to announce the recipients of the inaugural Lifeline Grant. Out of ninety applications, four recipients were chosen by a panel of community leaders. A grand total of \$10,000 was awarded in grant funds. The selected organizations are: Centro Latino of Shelbyville - \$2,500 Central Louisville Community Ministries - \$2,500 ChooseWell Communities - \$2,500

· Sowing Seeds with Faith - \$2,500 In order to qualify for the Lifeline Grant, applicants were required to be current BBB Charity Seal Holders in good standing with BBB. BBB Charity Seal Holders are nonprofits that have met all 20 BBB Standards for Charity Accountability and signed up to license the BBB Charity Seal for use in their marketing materials—an initiative that supports the Consumer Education Fund’s programs, including the Lifeline Grant. “BBB CEF created the Lifeline Grant because our charity seal holders needed flexible funding to help keep their

missions moving,” said BBB President & CEO Reanna Smith-Hamblin. “To me, it’s a promise that we will stand with our nonprofits when they need us most. We want to make sure no mission falls through the cracks.” The leadership team at BBB is pleased with the success of the Lifeline Grant’s first year and plans to continue the program for years to come. To learn more about the Lifeline Grant and other Consumer Education Fund programming, visit www.bbb.org/local/0402/bbb-consumer-education-fund-1.


Local veterans committee spreads Christmas cheer

SUBMITTED

On Dec. 21, the Taylorsville Veterans Committee visited Signature Healthcare to deliver gifts to those who selflessly served our country. The committee was accompanied by Santa himself and one of his helper elves. They proceeded to carol through the halls, and cheer was visibly brought to our elders just before this Christmas holiday.

The committee waved to all as they made their way to the exit, although the night was not yet over. The committee escorted Santa to Hometown Pizza, bringing joy to the local EMS and firefighters who were there to enjoy their meal. All was bright the night the Taylorsville Veterans Committee served the community with joy and gifts! *All photos submitted.*





LEGAL NOTICE

City of Taylorsville, Kentucky
Invitation to Bid for Combination Vehicle /Vacuum–Sewer Cleaner

The City of Taylorsville, Kentucky is accepting sealed bids for a Combination Vehicle /Vacuum–Sewer Cleaner for use by the City Public Works Department.

Vehicle: Medium-duty Truck (non-CDL), equivalent or superior to Freightliner M2-106.

Vacuum System: Three Yard (3 YD) Hydro-Evacuation and Sewer Cleaning System equivalent or superior to Vac-Con Model: PD2130H/500

Other Items as are complementary to, and/or necessary for the operation of the above-described system. Items provide detailed listing and description.

Additional information and all questions concerning bid specifications should be directed to David Bollinger, City Public Works Director at 502-477-3235. All sealed bids shall be delivered to Marcia Finley, City Clerk, 70 Taylorsville Road, Taylorsville, Kentucky 40071, before 12:00 P.M., local time on January 6th, 2026 at which time the bids will be publicly opened and read aloud. All bids shall be in a sealed envelope and clearly marked "Combination Vehicle /Vacuum–Sewer Cleaner Bid" in the bottom left corner. The City of Taylorsville is not responsible for the premature opening of or failure to open a sealed bid that is not properly addressed or identified. All information on the bid form shall be typed, written, or printed in ink. Please do not use whiteout or correction tape on the bid form. Doing so may result in the rejection of the bid. The City of Taylorsville reserves the right to reject all bids and waive all formalities in the award of the bid.

METHOD OF AWARD The City of Taylorsville will award the contract on basis of "LOWEST EVALUATED PRICE" and reserves the right to reject all bids and waive all formalities in the award of the bid.

The bids shall be evaluated based on the following criteria:
1. Total Combination Vehicle /Vacuum–Sewer Cleaner
2. Availability of Service
3. Vehicle options & equipment
4. Delivery date of Vehicle

This invitation is subject to Reciprocal Preference for Resident Bidders pursuant to KRS 45A.494. Published on the City website December 23, 2025. City of Taylorsville,