

Kentucky Association of Counties

LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP —2026—



Stronger Counties. Stronger Kentucky.

Thank you!

As the voice of counties in Frankfort, KACo works year-round to share the needs and perspectives of county governments from every corner of the Commonwealth. The success of our association in advocating for meaningful legislation is built on the dedication of you, our members. Your calls, emails and meetings with legislators help tell the county story.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement!



KACo President Adam O'Nan, right, and Executive Director Jim Henderson presented 2026 legislative priorities to the Interim Joint Committee on Local Government.



Rep. Michael Meredith (third from left) with jailers Justin Hall of Nelson County, Eric Vaughn of Simpson County, Jody Perry of LaRue County, Joshua Toomey of Logan County and Stephen Harmon of Warren County.



Hardin County Judge/Executive Keith Taul and Grant County Magistrate Jacquelyn Riley spoke about county jails during the legislative interim.



KACo President-elect Michael Logsdon (left) with Rep. Jason Nemes.



Johnson County Judge/Executive Mark McKenzie and Rep. Bobby McCool.

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up

CONTENTS

KACo Executive Committee.....	1
KACo Board of Directors	2
KACo Advocacy Team	3
Executive Director’s Message.....	4
BUDGET	
FY27-FY28 Executive Branch Budget – HB 500	5
FY27-FY28 Transportation Cabinet Budget – HB 501	6
FY27-FY28 Judicial Branch Budget – HB 504.....	7
One-Time Funding Bill – HB 900	8
Budget Updates – SB 197	8
TAX POLICY	
Revenue Bill – HB 757.....	9
Revenue Bill Updates – HB 869	9
Online Occupational Tax Payment and Filing – HB 518.....	10
Delinquent Property Taxes – HB 600.....	10
COUNTY OPERATIONS	
Public Notices – HB 869.....	11
Procurement Threshold – HB 392.....	11
Procurement of Used Vehicles and Equipment – SB 20	11
Cash Payments – HB 757	11
Jail Property – HB 757	11
Cremation of Unclaimed Bodies – SB 27	11
Solid Waste Fees – SB 29	12
Library Board Appointments – SB 40.....	12
Stray Equines – SB 73	12
County Clerk Financials – SB 133	12
County Treasurers – SB 149.....	13
Swinging Bridges – SB 261	13
TRANSPORTATION AND MOTOR VEHICLES	
FY27 Local Assistance Road Program List – HJR 76.....	13
Gravel Roads Pilot Program – HB 622	13
Regulation of Nontraditional Vehicle Wheels – HB 293	14
Obstructive Vegetation – HB 311	14
Electronic Vehicle Titling – SB 110	14

PUBLIC SAFETY

Deputy Coroners – HB 43 15
 Jail Staff Protection – HB 188..... 15
 Pedestrian Safety – HB 189 15
 Fire Safety Enforcement – HB 565 15
 Fire District Board Members – SB 20..... 15
 Safe at Home Program – SB 195..... 16
 DUI Update – SB 66 16
 Impeding a First Responder – SB 104 16

LAW ENFORCEMENT

School Bus Stop-Arm – HB 7 17
 License Plate Readers – HB 58..... 17
 Retired Deputy Sheriffs – HB 213..... 17
 Concealed Carry License – HB 312..... 17
 Criminal Background Checks – HB 448 17

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Certified Child Care Communities – HB 6..... 18
 Talent Recruitment Grant Program – HB 576 18
 GRANT Program – HB 647 18

INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES

Gas Utility Boards – HB 757..... 19
 Broadband – HB 314..... 19
 Water and Wastewater – HB 651 19
 WWATERS Program List – HJR 81 19
 Wind and Solar Energy – HB 677 20
 Residential Housing – HB 757..... 20

ELECTIONS

Election Improvements – HB 139..... 21
 PVA Elections – HB 757 21

OTHER NOTEWORTHY LEGISLATION

Kratom – HB 757 22
 Driver License Testing – HB 869 22
 Ballot Issue Advocacy – SB 59 22
 Behavioral Health Conditional Dismissal Program – SB 90 22
 Virtual Currency Kiosks – SB 189 22

INDEX

House Bills & Resolutions 23
 Senate Bills..... 24

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up

LEADERSHIP

2025-26 Executive Committee

PRESIDENT



Adam O’Nan
Union County
Judge/Executive

PRESIDENT-ELECT



Michael Logsdon
Oldham County
Magistrate

1st VICE PRESIDENT



Sean Curry
Green County
PVA

2nd VICE PRESIDENT



Jacqualynn Ammer Riley
Grant County
Magistrate

PAST PRESIDENT



Dan Mosley
Harlan County
Judge/Executive

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jodi L. Albright

Laurel County Attorney

Scott Alexander

Perry County Judge/Executive

Danetta Ford Allen

Rockcastle County Clerk

Jacqalynn Ammer Riley

Grant County Magistrate

Scott Bates

Henry County Judge/Executive

Elbert Bennett

Caldwell County Magistrate

Darrin Benton

Muhlenberg County Magistrate

Ronnie Bowling

Commonwealth's Attorney

Jonathan Bruer

Carlisle County PVA

Amy Chandler

Warren County Attorney

Harry Clark

Rowan County Judge/Executive

Joe Pat Covington

Scott County Judge/Executive

Sean D. Curry

Green County PVA

Randy Dial

Casey County Judge/Executive

Chuck Dills

Grant County Judge/Executive

David Fields

Pendleton County Judge/Executive

Gary Ginn

Fayette County Coroner

Stevie Givens

Butler County Magistrate

Orbrey Gritton

Anderson County Judge/Executive

Bobby Hall

Greenup County Judge/Executive

Doug Hall

Floyd County Circuit Court Clerk

Bill L. Hedges

Shelby County Magistrate

Steve Henry

Webster County Judge/Executive

John Hunt

Floyd County Sheriff

Rich G. Liebe

Christian County Magistrate

Josh Lindblom

Hardin County Jailer

David Livingston

Scott County Magistrate

Michael Logsdon

Oldham County Magistrate

Todd Mansfield

Todd County Judge/Executive

Craig Miller

Bracken County Magistrate

Gary W. Moore

Boone County Judge/Executive

Dan Mosley

Harlan County Judge/Executive

David L. Nicholson

Jefferson County Circuit Court Clerk

Adam R. O'Nan

Union County Judge/Executive

Berl Perdue

Clark County Sheriff

Joe Ross

Logan County Attorney

Reagan Taylor

Madison County Judge/Executive

Greg H. Terry

Carlisle County Judge/Executive

John Ward

Hardin County Sheriff

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up

KACo ADVOCACY TEAM

KACo has a strong voice representing Kentucky counties at the state and federal levels. We work to promote counties first, preserve county decision making and protect counties from cost shifting and preemption of authority.



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Sen. Greg Elkins and KACo's Shellie Hampton testified in support of SB 149 during the 2026 legislative session.

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

County Leaders,

Each legislative session in Frankfort brings a range of emotions—optimism and energy as the General Assembly begins its work; anxiety and frustration as bills move and change through the process; and ultimately fatigue, relief and, hopefully, satisfaction when the work is done.

The 2026 session delivered all of that and then some.

Over 60 working days, lawmakers considered nearly 1,300 bills, including the biennial budget. This legislative wrap-up includes a summary of major bills passed affecting county government. Unless otherwise noted, all bills passed become law 90 days after session adjournment. This year, that date is July 15.

As we've shared previously, House Bill 557, KACo's comprehensive proposal to reshape county jail funding and our top legislative priority, failed to advance in the 2026 session. Despite broad support across our membership and within the General Assembly—the bill had 52 co-sponsors—counties will go another year without any rightsizing of the state's share of jail expenses, including rising medical costs and credit for time served.

Several factors contributed to this outcome, including the request for a meaningful increase in state appropriations to better reflect the true cost counties bear in operating jails. We continue to believe that case was well-founded and fairly presented.

What this session made clear is that the work is far from finished and the consequences of inaction remain serious. Some counties are at a financial breaking point. The current funding model is not sustainable, and the challenges aren't going away.

To all the county officials who engaged in this legislative session: thank you! Your trips to Frankfort, input to our government affairs team, news interviews and conversations with legislators underscored the significance of transportation, jails and other critical needs for your county. Please continue sharing that county story.

The work you do every day in service of your community motivates and drives our advocacy. The service of a county official takes diligence and resolve, and KACo remains steadfast in supporting you.

Stronger Counties. Stronger Kentucky.



Jim Henderson
Executive Director,
Kentucky Association of Counties

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up



BUDGET

FY27-FY28 Executive Branch Budget

HB 500 (Rep. Jason Petrie)

The executive branch budget includes across-the-board spending reductions in FY27-FY28 for most state agencies, though many county-related programs were spared. Overall, the plan delivers a mixed outcome for counties—maintaining funding in several key areas while failing to address longstanding gaps.

- No significant changes in jail funding: \$1.5 million increase for the **program completion and sentencing credit program**, from \$12 million each year to \$13.5 million each fiscal year. This program exhausted funding at the previous \$12 million level in FY26.
- Maintains the **court security officer reimbursement rate** at \$15 per hour.
- Discontinued funding assistance for **county audit costs**: The budget does not include funding for the outlier audit program, nor does it provide support to maintain county clerk and sheriff audits at the 50% cost level.

There were, however, some bright spots in the budget:

- Increased funding for 911, including \$5 million each year for the **completion of NextGen 911**.
- Continued funding for the **body armor grant program** at \$10 million each year.
- 2% raises each fiscal year for most **state employees**. However, the budget does not include a salary increment for county attorneys, commonwealth's attorneys and their staffs.



FY27-FY28 Transportation Cabinet Budget

HB 501 (Rep. Jason Petrie)

The Transportation Cabinet budget commits significant new investments in county road funding.

- \$70.2 million in FY27 for the **Local Assistance Road Program** (LARP) to assist counties and cities with road projects, along with \$20 million in FY28 for the program.
- In recent years, LARP has been funded at around \$20 million annually. The additional funding in FY27 provides enough funding to complete all projects ranked 8, 9, or 10 that were submitted for consideration the fall of 2025.
- \$25 million each fiscal year for the **County and City Bridge Improvement Program**.

The budget also adds funding for county roads through two additional appropriations:

- In FY27, a **county and city grant pool** for road improvements, new construction, sidewalks, multimodal projects and pavement resurfacing.
 - Each county is eligible for up to \$100,000 (excluding Fayette, Jefferson) and any county whose county seat is not a unified city is eligible for up to \$200,000.
 - Cities that serve as a county seat are eligible for up to \$100,000.
 - Grants will require a dollar-for-dollar match and county road aid funds cannot be used to meet the match requirement.
- In FY28, **\$13 million from the general fund for county road aid**, supplementing the motor fuels tax receipts distributed through the revenue sharing formula.

The transportation budget also takes steps to **improve driver licensing services**:

- Funds three **new regional driver license offices** in Barren, Bullitt and Oldham counties.
- Allocates \$125,000 in FY28 to allow **vision testing for driver license renewals** to be completed at public libraries. Libraries may participate in the program through a memorandum of agreement with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet.
- Requires a **level-of-service report** on regional driver licensing offices with data on wait times to be submitted to the legislature by Sept. 1, 2027.

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up



BUDGET (*cont.*)

FY27-FY28 Judicial Branch Budget

HB 504 (Rep. Jason Petrie)

Provides funding for judicial branch operations.

- Includes **2% salary raises** in each year of the biennium for court personnel, including deputy circuit court clerks.
- Requires courts to use **video arraignment** when available. If a court does not use video arraignment when the system is available, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) will be responsible for the costs associated with transporting inmates to and from arraignment.
- Requires **AOC to report on the utilization of the video arraignment system**, including any impediments that may be reducing its use, with data broken down by courtroom and judge. The report must be submitted to the legislature by Oct. 1, 2027.



Rep. Jason Petrie | Photo by Legislative Research Commission Public Information

One-Time Funding Bill

HB 900 (Rep. Jason Petrie)

The General Assembly also passed this one-time funding measure, as in recent years, with funds from the state's Budget Reserve Trust Fund. The bill includes \$1.77 billion in one-time investments over the biennium, including line-item funding for many specific county projects.

HB 900 funds several **grant programs** available to counties:

- \$45 million each fiscal year for **Kentucky Water and Wastewater Assistance for Troubled or Economically Restrained Systems Program**.
- \$25 million each fiscal year for continuation of the **Kentucky Product Development Initiative**.
- \$50 million each fiscal year for the **Government Resources Accelerating Needed Transformation Program**.
- \$2.5 million each year for the **Kentucky Talent Recruitment Grant Program**.

HB 900 also includes one-time funding for **multimodal transportation infrastructure**:

- \$11.4 million in FY27 for **general aviation airports**.
- \$15.1 million in FY27 and \$14.5 million in FY28 for **public riverports**.

Emergency clause – effective April 13, 2026

Budget Updates

SB 197 (Sen. Phillip Wheeler)

Provides revisions to HB 500, the executive branch budget, and HB 900, the one-time funding bill, and includes several new one-time appropriations. Provisions include:

- \$3.96 million in new funding each fiscal year to support the costs of workforce and operations for local health departments.
- Ensures that funding appropriated in the previous biennium for the Kentucky Product Development Initiative (KPDI) does not lapse.
- Clarifies that no local match is required for the public riverport funding appropriated in HB 900.

Emergency clause – effective April 27, 2026

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up



TAX POLICY

Revenue Bill and Updates

HB 757 (Rep. Jason Petrie) and HB 869 (Rep. Adam Bowling)

- Sunsets the **tax increment financing (TIF) program** as of April 14, 2026. Delays the TIF Signature Projects Program sunset to Dec. 31, 2028. Existing TIFs will continue but cannot be extended or amended.
- Amends the formula for calculating modified new revenues for income tax and extends the timeframe for state tax revenues to 2048 for TIF projects approved prior to Jan. 1, 2023.

Delayed effective date – Jan. 1, 2027

- Amends language relating to **regional industrial taxing districts** passed during the 2025 session.
- Clarifies that when a taxing district adopts a **property tax rate subject to recall**, the rate takes effect 45 days after passage if no petition is filed challenging the levy. If a petition is filed, the rate is suspended pending resolution of the challenge. Requires the county clerk, upon receipt of an affidavit from three qualified voters initiating the petition process, to publish notice on the homepage of the clerk's website in addition to newspaper publication requirements.

Emergency clause – April 14, 2026

- Extends the **coal severance tax refund** for exports through July 1, 2028 and expands the refund for exports to any market outside of the United States. Requires the Department of Revenue to annually report on refunds issued by destination, county and taxpayer to the Legislative Research Commission beginning Nov. 1, 2026.
- Exempts from taxation real property owned by the **Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC)** when the property is acquired and leased for a project adding 48 or more multifamily residential housing units, is subject to an extended use agreement in favor of KHC, and has written consent from the county judge/executive and mayor.

Delayed effective date – Jan. 1, 2027

- Requires the Legislative Research Commission to prepare a report on the **taxation structure of depository financial institutions** to later than Dec. 1, 2026, for referral to the Interim Joint Committee on Appropriations and Revenue and the Interim Joint Committee on Banking and Insurance.
- Requires the Cabinet for Economic Development to complete a report on the current **tax credits and incentives available to data centers** in Kentucky and surrounding states by Aug. 1, 2027.

Online Occupational Tax Payment and Filing

HB 518 (Rep. Patrick Flannery)

Establishes an advisory committee to develop a combined net profits and gross receipts **occupational license tax return** or separate forms to be used by all business entities.

- The advisory committee will include members recommended by KACo, the Kentucky League of Cities, the Society of Certified Public Accountants, the Kentucky Association of County Treasurers and Finance Officers, the Kentucky Occupational License Association, and other groups representing businesses and contractors.
- Requires the Secretary of State to create fillable PDF versions of the standardized forms.
- Requires all local governments that levy an occupational license tax to provide fillable PDFs for **online filing** and accept **electronic payments** by July 1, 2029.
- Exemptions apply for local governments collecting less than \$200,000 in the prior fiscal year or where compliance costs would exceed 5% of the annual budget; and any governments that had an online filing and payment system on or before Jan. 1, 2025, or entered into a binding contract for implementation on or before July 1, 2026.
- Counties may charge an additional electronic processing fee to recover actual costs for electronic filing, processing, security, maintenance and payment acceptance.

Delinquent Property Taxes

HB 600 (Rep. Mary Beth Imes)

Allows county attorneys to use a consolidated legal process to collect delinquent property taxes more efficiently. Under this procedure, county attorneys may enforce tax liens by bringing a single legal action against multiple real estate parcels.

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up



COUNTY OPERATIONS

Public Notices

HB 869 (Rep. Adam Bowling)

Requires most public agency publications or notices to post times for both **eastern and central time zones**.

Emergency clause – effective April 27, 2026

Procurement Threshold

HB 392 (Rep. Michael Meredith)

Increases the small purchase threshold for local governments from \$40,000 to \$50,000 and sets automatic \$10,000 increases every five years beginning in 2030. Requires the Finance and Administration Cabinet to publish the current small purchase maximum.

Procurement of Used Vehicles and Equipment

SB 20 (Sen. Scott Madon)

Allows counties to purchase used vehicles and equipment without having to advertise, provided the price does not exceed 75% of the MSRP for the model year of similar vehicles or equipment.

Cash Payments

HB 757 (Rep. Jason Petrie)

Requires cash payments made to counties to be **rounded to the nearest five cents** when pennies are unavailable.

Jail Property

HB 757 (Rep. Jason Petrie)

Requires proceeds from the **sale of jail property** purchased with canteen funds to be returned to the canteen account and requires jailers to report annually, by December 1, any proceeds from the disposal of such property to the Legislative Research Commission.

Emergency clause – effective April 14, 2026

Cremation of Unclaimed Bodies

SB 27 (Sen. Greg Elkins)

Allows unclaimed bodies to be cremated and interred after 30 days if efforts to locate next of kin are unsuccessful. The fiscal court, in consultation with the coroner, determines whether burial or cremation is appropriate. If the decedent is known to be a member of a religious community that has expressed in writing to the coroner a willingness to cover burial costs, the fiscal court must also consult with that community.

Solid Waste Fees

SB 29 (Sen. Greg Elkins)

Prohibits counties and waste management districts from imposing fees, assessments, or permitting requirements on waste generated outside their jurisdiction, except where fees are negotiated through a franchise agreement.

Emergency clause – effective April 10, 2026

Library Board Appointments

SB 40 (Sen. Gary Boswell)

Removes the Department for Libraries and Archives (DLA) from the nomination process for library board members but requires boards to notify DLA of appointments within 14 days. Library boards submit nominees directly to the county judge/executive, with two appointment options:

- Standard process: Boards submit two nominees, and the county judge/executive, with fiscal court approval, makes the appointment within 30 days.
- Alternative process: Boards submit one nominee. If that nominee is rejected, the county judge/executive, with fiscal court approval, may appoint another qualified individual.

Stray Equines

SB 73 (Sen. Jason Howell)

Allows county judge/executives, with fiscal court approval, to contract with nonprofit organizations that provide animal sheltering services to handle stray equine duties. Provides immunity for judge/executives for discretionary acts related to the care, treatment or population control of stray equines.

County Clerk Financials

SB 133 (Sen. Matt Nunn)

- Eliminates a requirement for separate annual audits of county clerks' motor vehicle and motorboat receipts and instead includes those funds as part of the clerk's regular audit. The Transportation Cabinet remains responsible for covering the cost associated with auditing that portion of the clerk's accounts.
- Requires final settlements for county officials who leave office to be completed within 60 days. If a vacancy occurs before the end of a term, the outgoing official must remit any remaining funds to the fiscal court as excess fees, which would then be transferred to the official's successor.
- Amends the annual reporting deadline for the county clerk document storage fee from July 1 to August 1.

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up



COUNTY OPERATIONS (*cont.*)

County Treasurers

SB 149 (Sen. Greg Elkins)

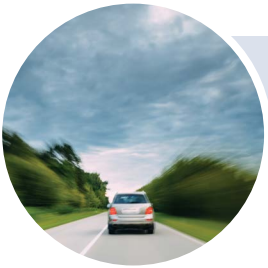
Allows fiscal courts to appoint an **acting county treasurer** if the county treasurer is temporarily unable to perform the duties of the office for more than five days.

- Clarifies that when the office is vacant due to resignation, termination, or death, the fiscal court may appoint an acting treasurer for up to 60 days. If the term of office has not ended within that 60-day period, the fiscal court must appoint a treasurer to complete the remainder of the term.
- Allows fiscal courts the option to appoint a deputy county treasurer to serve under the supervision of the treasurer. The deputy treasurer may exercise all powers of the county treasurer subject to any restrictions imposed by the fiscal court and is required to be bonded.

Swinging Bridges

SB 261 (Sen. Robert Stivers)

Clarifies that counties may provide for the care and maintenance of pedestrian swinging bridges that are open for recreation and public enjoyment and provides liability protections.



TRANSPORTATION AND MOTOR VEHICLES

FY27 Local Assistance Road Program List

HJR 76 (Rep. Jason Petrie)

Lists \$70.2 million in LARP projects to be funded in FY27.

Gravel Roads Pilot Program

HB 622 (Rep. John Blanton)

Establishes a pilot program allowing counties to use county road aid funds to apply **chip seal or recycled asphalt pavement (RAP)** on existing gravel roads.

- The maximum amount of road aid funds that may be used for this purpose is capped at the percentage of the county's road system that is surfaced with gravel as of July 1 of that fiscal year.
- Pilot program runs from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2030.
- Requires the Department of Rural and Municipal Aid to submit annual reports starting Oct. 31, 2027 on the use of chip seal and RAP on county roads.

Emergency clause – effective July 1, 2026

Regulation of Nontraditional Vehicle Wheels

HB 293 (Rep. Walker Thomas)

Requires certain nontraditional wheels (iron, steel, or wooden) to be equipped with a rubber strip where they contact the road surface, with an exemption for animal-drawn vehicles with a gross weight of less than one ton used solely to transport people.

Obstructive Vegetation Near Railroad Crossings

HB 311 (Rep. Josh Calloway)

Requires **railroad companies to remove obstructive vegetation** within their rights-of-way for 250 feet in each direction of every public railroad-highway grade crossing.

- If a railroad company fails to do so, the local government responsible for maintaining the road may provide written notice requiring the vegetation to be removed within 30 days.
- If the vegetation is not removed within that timeframe, the local government must coordinate with the railroad company to remove it and may recover the cost of removal from the railroad company.

Electronic Vehicle Titling

SB 110 (Sen. Jason Howell)

Modernizes Kentucky's vehicle title and registration system.

- Requires most lienholders and dealers to use the electronic title application and registration system beginning July 1, 2027.
- Requires vehicle titles to be issued electronically beginning Jan. 1, 2027, with an option for vehicle owners to request a printed copy for an additional fee.
- Allows renewal notices to be sent by email or text message instead of mail if the owner has provided contact information to the Transportation Cabinet in KAVIS.
- Permits county clerks to remit payments to the Transportation Cabinet and taxing districts using an automated clearing house.

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up



PUBLIC SAFETY

Deputy Coroners

HB 43 (Rep. Deanna Gordon)

Allows an extension of up to 180 days for required deputy coroner training when extenuating circumstances prevent completion within the required time. If the extension is granted due to injury or illness, the 180-day extension begins on the day the deputy coroner resumes performing their duties.

Jail Staff Protection

HB 188 (Rep. Kevin Jackson)

Expands assault in the third degree to include intentionally causing or attempting to cause physical injury to a healthcare provider working in a jail or prison. Expands eligibility for optional peer support.

Pedestrian Safety

HB 189 (Rep. Kevin Jackson)

Restricts stationary pedestrian behavior in state maintained rights-of-way that are not designed or designated for pedestrian use while allowing local governments, in coordination with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, to authorize limited exceptions through objective and safety-based permitting.

Fire Safety Enforcement

HB 565 (Rep. Myron Dossett)

Broadens enforcement authority of fire safety laws from solely the state fire marshal to a broader definition of “**fire protection official**,” including the state fire marshal, a fire chief, a fire marshal employed by a local government or a local appeals board. Clarifies that these officials may directly initiate enforcement actions, including injunctions and restraining orders, in the appropriate circuit court to address hazardous conditions.

Fire District Board Members

SB 20 (Sen. Scott Madon)

Requires all fire district board members to reside within the district, with an exception for the two firefighter-elected members, who may either be full-time paid employees of the district or residents of the district.

Emergency clause – effective April 10, 2026

Safe at Home Program

SB 195 (Sen. Craig Richardson)

Adds commonwealth's attorneys, assistant commonwealth's attorneys, county attorneys, and assistant county attorneys to the list of individuals eligible to apply for participation in the Safe at Home Program, which protects the confidentiality of participants' home addresses.

Delayed effective date – Jan. 1, 2027

DUI Update

SB 66 (Sen. Brandon Storm)

- Amends **driving under the influence statutes** to require that refusal to submit to a blood test results in a driver's license suspension by the court at arraignment, with an additional suspension imposed by the Transportation Cabinet upon conviction.
- Requires law enforcement officers to inform individuals of their rights regarding blood or breath tests; if those rights are not properly communicated, a refusal cannot be used against the individual in court or as an aggravating circumstance, and the court may not suspend the license at arraignment.
- Adds clonazepam, cyclobenzaprine, and fentanyl to the list of controlled substances applicable for DUI prosecutions.
- Requires the Transportation Cabinet to destroy driving history records that are more than 10 years old, an extension from the previous five-year retention period.

Impeding a First Responder

SB 104 (Sen. Matt Nunn)

Criminalizes the harassment or obstruction of first responders, including law enforcement officers, emergency medical services providers and firefighters, by establishing a 25-foot buffer zone around first responders while they are performing official duties.

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up



LAW ENFORCEMENT

School Bus Stop-Arm

HB 7 (Rep. David Hale)

Allows school districts to use video from bus-mounted cameras as evidence to issue civil penalties to drivers who pass a school bus while its stop-arm is deployed. Law enforcement agencies may charge a school districts a \$25 fee from every civil penalty that is enforced.

License Plate Readers

HB 58 (Rep. John Hodgson)

Places limitations on the data collected by automated license plate readers, commonly referred to as **Flock cameras**. All data must be destroyed within 90 days, unless tied to an active criminal investigation. Data cannot be sold or shared.

Retired Deputy Sheriffs

HB 213 (Rep. Emily Callaway)

Allows fiscal courts the option to provide **health insurance coverage** to reemployed retired deputy sheriffs or county police officers beginning August 1, 2026.

Concealed Carry License

HB 312 (Rep. Savannah Maddox)

Creates two types of concealed carry licenses: a **new provisional license** and the existing **standard license**.

- Requires the Kentucky State Police to issue provisional licenses to individuals ages 18 to 20 who meet the same eligibility requirements as standard license applicants.
- Requires the Kentucky State Police to notify provisional license holders 90 days prior to expiration and provide an application to transition to a standard license.
- Applicants must confirm continued eligibility, submit an application through the sheriff or electronically, and pay the required fee, after which a background check is conducted.
- No additional firearms training is required to transition to a standard license.

Criminal Background Checks

HB 448 (Rep. Tony Hampton)

Requires criminal justice agencies to provide criminal history records to a federal requesting agency conducting a basic suitability or fitness assessment for federal employees or contractors and authorizes the agency to charge a \$25 fee for conducting the background check.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Certified Child Care Communities

HB 6 (Rep. Samara Heavrin)

Amends the Certified Child Care Community designation program, which gives local governments the option to apply for the designation if they voluntarily adopt land use, zoning reform and programming at the local level to help increase the supply of child care. Requires applicants who have adopted planning and zoning to submit a review of their own land use policies as part of the application process and allows local governments to partner and submit a joint application.

Emergency clause – effective April 14, 2026

Talent Recruitment Grant Program

HB 576 (Rep. Robert Duvall)

Establishes the Kentucky Talent Recruitment Grant Program to recruit workers from outside Kentucky and retain Kentucky students. Counties, cities and certain nonprofits are eligible for the program. The program allows grants up to \$500,000, requires a 20% local match and allows regional projects.

GRANT Program

HB 647 (Rep. Shawn McPherson)

Extends the Government Resources Accelerating Needed Transformation (GRANT) program through Dec. 31, 2028, allowing it to continue assisting local governments and nonprofits with the local matching funds required for federal grants. Increases the required local match for eligible projects, doubling the previous requirement. Projects submitted after July 1, 2026 require a local match of 2% to 10% based on population.

Emergency clause – effective April 13, 2026



Rep. Samara Heavrin | Photo by Legislative Research Commission Public Information

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up



INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES

Gas Utility Boards

HB 757 (Rep. Jason Petrie)

Provides **county representation on municipal interlocal gas utility boards** by including one nonmember ex officio representative of each county and city that is served by the utility or contains any infrastructure or easements of the utility. Counties do receive a single combined vote on any utility action directly impacting an unincorporated area of any county if every county representative on the board votes unanimously.

Effective retroactively to Jan. 1, 2020

Broadband

HB 314 (Rep. Matt Lockett)

Reorganizes management of the **KentuckyWired broadband network**. Removes control from the Governor's office, shifts management to the Commonwealth Office of Technology and restructures the board to include a KACo appointee.

Emergency clause – effective March 10, 2026

Water and Wastewater

HB 651 (Rep. Josh Bray)

Amends the **Kentucky Water and Wastewater Assistance for Troubled or Economically Restrained Systems (WWATERS) Program** by requiring funding applicants to meet three or more specified criteria instead of just one, excluding projects that expand a utility's service area. Requires applications to include a detailed budget for all proposed expenses. Funding recipients must adopt best management practices established by the Kentucky Infrastructure Authority board to address performance deficiencies.

Emergency clause – effective April 13, 2026

WWATERS Program List

HJR 81 (Rep. Josh Bray)

Releases \$52.5 million appropriated during the 2024 legislative session for the Kentucky WWATERS Program and lists the projects to be funded.

Emergency clause – effective April 20, 2026

Wind and Solar Energy

HB 677 (Rep. Jim Gooch)

Adds **wind power facilities** to the solar siting regulations enacted in 2023. Continues to promote local control by preserving the primacy of local planning and zoning authority over decommissioning requirements, maximum height limitations and setback standards.

- Limits wind turbine height to no more than 350 feet.
- Requires any proposed structure used for the generation of electricity from solar or wind power to be located at least 1,000 feet from the boundary of any adjoining property, and any structures or facilities used in connection with the generation or storage of electricity to be located at least 2,000 feet from any residential neighborhood, school, hospital or nursing home facility.
- Requires applications for the construction of wind facilities to certify that turbines will not be artificially lighted except as required by law and that shadowing and flicker impacts will be minimized so as not to have a significant adverse effect on neighboring or adjacent properties.

Residential Housing

HB 757 (Rep. Jason Petrie)

Establishes a **residential housing infrastructure fund** to be administered by the Kentucky Infrastructure Authority for making low-interest loans to local governments for building, upgrading, renovation, or expansion of infrastructure owned, maintained, or operated by the local government.

Emergency clause – effective April 14, 2026



Rep. Jim Gooch | Photo by Legislative Research Commission Public Information

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up



ELECTIONS

Election Improvements

HB 139 (Rep. Jennifer Decker)

Makes a wide range of changes to Kentucky election laws and procedures.

- Grandfathers in **voting systems and equipment** that are in use or approved for use by the State Board of Elections and currently utilized by a county, as of the bill's effective date on April 14, 2026. However, when replacement equipment is purchased, county clerks are prohibited from acquiring voting systems that use barcodes, QR codes or other encrypted markings to record a voter's ballot selections.
- Authorizes the State Board of Elections (SBE) to coordinate with federal agencies to identify **deceased individuals and noncitizens** who are registered to vote. Individuals identified as noncitizens are to be designated as ineligible to vote unless they provide proof of citizenship to the county clerk's office, including a birth certificate, valid passport, consular report of birth abroad, certificate of naturalization or certificate of citizenship. If an individual identified as a noncitizen appears at a polling location, election officers are required to allow the individual to cast a provisional ballot upon attesting to citizenship on a form provided by SBE. *Note: This section of the bill has a delayed implementation date of Jan. 1, 2028.*

PVA Elections

HB 757 (Rep. Jason Petrie)

Clarifies that if no qualified **candidate for Property Valuation Administrator** files in a county by the primary filing deadline, the Department of Revenue must continue offering the qualifying exam until at least two individuals are certified as eligible or until 30 days before certification of candidates for the regular election, whichever occurs first.

Emergency clause – effective April 14, 2026



OTHER NOTEWORTHY LEGISLATION

Kratom

HB 757 (Rep. Jason Petrie)

Prohibits the distribution and manufacturing of **Kratom products** in Kentucky and establishes civil penalties of up to \$5,000 on the first offense and up to \$10,000 on the second offense for anyone who is found in violation of the law.

Delayed effective date – July 1, 2027

Driver License Testing Pilot Program

HB 869 (Rep. Adam Bowling)

Extends the Kentucky State Police pilot program to provide **driver license testing** in up to ten counties without a permanent driver license testing location through Dec. 31, 2028.

Emergency clause – effective April 27, 2026

Ballot Issue Advocacy

SB 59 (Sen. Steve Rawlings)

Establishes penalties for violating state law by using tax dollars or public resources to advocate **for or against ballot questions**. Clarifies that resources derived from tax dollars may not be used for such advocacy, including physical resources such as computers, copiers, printers, office supplies, and buildings; digital resources such as websites, email, and social media accounts; and employee time when acting within the scope of state or school district employment.

Behavioral Health Conditional Dismissal Program

SB 90 (Sen. Brandon Storm)

Extends the Behavioral Health Conditional Dismissal Program pilot project through Jan. 1, 2031. Limits participation to up to 20 counties and broadens existing reporting requirements. The program provides an alternative to incarceration by allowing eligible defendants to receive treatment for substance use and behavioral health disorders.

Virtual Currency Kiosks

SB 189 (Sen. Steve Rawlings)

Establishes a regulatory framework for virtual currency kiosks (**crypto ATMs**), including licensing requirements, consumer protections, fraud safeguards, and oversight by the Department of Financial Institutions. Authorizes the department to direct law enforcement to seize and remove kiosks under certain conditions. Permits local governments to enact and enforce ordinances, regulations and resolutions governing virtual currency kiosk businesses, provided they are not in direct conflict with state law.

Delayed effective date – April 30, 2027

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up



INDEX

House Bills & Resolutions

HB 6 - Certified Child Care Communities	18
HB 7 - School Bus Stop-Arm	17
HB 43 - Deputy Coroners	15
HB 58 - License Plate Readers	17
HB 139 - Election Improvements	21
HB 188 - Jail Staff Protection	15
HB 189 - Pedestrian Safety	15
HB 213 - Retired Deputy Sheriffs	17
HB 293 - Regulation of Nontraditional Vehicle Wheels	14
HB 311 - Obstructive Vegetation	14
HB 312 - Concealed Carry License	17
HB 314 - Broadband	19
HB 392 - Procurement Threshold	11
HB 448 - Criminal Background Checks.....	17
HB 500 - FY27-FY28 Executive Branch Budget	5
HB 501 - FY27-FY28 Transportation Cabinet Budget	6
HB 504 - FY27-FY28 Judicial Branch Budget	7
HB 518 - Online Occupational Tax Payment and Filing.....	10
HB 565 - Fire Safety Enforcement.....	15
HB 576 - Talent Recruitment Grant Program.....	18
HB 600 - Delinquent Property Taxes	10
HB 622 - Gravel Roads Pilot Program.....	13
HB 647 - GRANT Program.....	18
HB 651 - Water and Wastewater	19
HB 677 - Wind and Solar Energy	20
HB 757 -	
Revenue Bill.....	9
Cash Payments.....	11
Jail Property	11
Gas Utility Boards.....	19
Residential Housing.....	20
PVA Elections	21
Kratom.....	22

HB 869 -
 Revenue Bill Updates.....9
 Public Notices 11
 Driver License Testing 22
 HB 900 - One-Time Funding Bill.....8
 HJR 76 - FY27 Local Assistance Road Program List13
 HJR 81 - WWATERS Program List19

Senate Bills

SB 20 -
 Procurement of Used Vehicles and Equipment11
 Fire District Board Members15
 SB 27 - Cremation of Unclaimed Bodies.....11
 SB 29 - Solid Waste Fees12
 SB 40 - Library Board Appointments12
 SB 59 - Ballot Issue Advocacy 22
 SB 66 - DUI Update16
 SB 73 - Stray Equines.....12
 SB 90 - Behavioral Health Conditional Dismissal Program 22
 SB 104 - Impeding a First Responder.....16
 SB 110 - Electronic Vehicle Titling14
 SB 133 - County Clerk Financials.....12
 SB 149 - County Treasurers13
 SB 189 - Virtual Currency Kiosks..... 22
 SB 195 - Safe at Home Program16
 SB 197 - Budget Updates.....8
 SB 261 - Swinging Bridges13

2026 Legislative Wrap-Up

ABOUT KACo

The Kentucky Association of Counties (KACo) is a non-profit, non-partisan, member-owned association of elected county officials in all 120 counties. KACo provides services and products to support, educate and advocate for our members.

Judge/Executive

Magistrate/Commissioner

County Attorney

Sheriff

County Clerk

Jailer

Circuit Court Clerk

PVA

Coroner

Commonwealth's Attorney

