

Zack Kendall's Legislative Update

In our legislative update today, I'd like to talk about the four pieces of legislation that we are trying to focus on the most as well as some of the introduced and passed legislation in the state house so far this session.

Our Work

On **Ten Commandments** legislation, Rep. Richard White early on reintroduced his old bill from last year but then withdrew it once he realized we wanted him and Josh Calloway to combine elements of the two Ten Commandments bills into a **single bill**. **Josh Calloway and Richard White are working together** to do that but have so far not yet introduced the 2026 Ten Commandments bill.

Last year, Josh Calloway introduced House Bill 207. It was one of the most popular bills that we supported that didn't pass that year. It dealt with **removing erotic literature from the public school libraries**. In this legislation, school boards that prohibited parents from reading from those books at school board meetings would be **required to remove** those books from the public school libraries. Just this week, we sent Josh Calloway a letter encouraging him to **reintroduce** his legislation. **So, far, that legislation has not been reintroduced in 2026.**

The physician right of conscience bill known as the **Healthcare Heroes Recruitment and Retention Act** has appeared again. It is **Senate Bill 72**. We sent letters to senate leadership encouraging them to get that legislation passed quickly, but they haven't yet prioritized it. Right now, they are dealing with the budget part of healthcare legislation instead and reviewing SNAP benefits stats. The payment error rate for food stamp benefits in Kentucky is 4%, down from 9%. However, Senate Bill 72 did get more cosponsors after we sent our letters and sent out an email campaign.¹ **Support** this bill!

To **support** the Baby Olivia Act (**House Bill 359**), we sent a letter to over half of the members of the state house, including house leadership and everyone in the pro-life caucus who hadn't yet cosponsored the Baby Olivia Act. The Baby Olivia Act now has just as many cosponsors this year as last year, which is good, but we could do a bit better. In the past three

¹ Senate Bills 18 & 137 have been assigned to the senate health services committee, but SB72 has not yet been so assigned. So, despite our encouragement to the state senate to get Senate Bill 72 passed in quick fashion, they haven't been very quick to move on it. Senate Bill 72 did get another cosponsor after our email campaign, however. So far, in the state senate, there's a lot of bills in the committee on committees awaiting designation to a regular committee. Part of the reason why is due to the fact that we had our winter storm. This year, Senate Bill 72 is the physician right of conscience legislation known as the Healthcare Heroes Recruitment and Retention Act. We've supported this in the past. It needs to go to the Senate Health Services committee but hasn't been assigned there yet. The state senate passed this legislation last year, so it **shouldn't** be difficult to pass it this year in the state senate again.

years, **33 members** of the state house have been cosponsors to the legislation at least once. Keep in mind that there are **only 100** members in the state house, and most house education committee bills have **less than 10** cosponsors.²

² The Baby Olivia Act now again has 28 cosponsors plus its original sponsor. Now, if we count the former cosponsors of the bill who haven't cosponsored it this year, then we can say we have at least 35 votes in favor of that bill. About 35 members of the pro-life caucus have never cosponsored that bill. At first, you might think that this means we don't have the votes to pass this on the floor of the house, but usually, bills don't get even 10 cosponsors, let alone 28.

Legislation Introduced in State House

Democrats have filed several bills related to embryos this session. Representative Lindsey Burke has introduced legislation like House Bill 20 to mandate insurance coverage for in vitro fertilization **without** safeguards against embryo destruction. She also filed House Bill 400, which would permit the disposal of embryos without medical oversight. Meanwhile, Representative Daniel Grossberg filed House Bill 477 which declares that embryos created outside the womb are **not** legal persons.

House Bill 11 - to establish a process for the creation of new independent school districts from a persistently underperforming school district; this bill is aimed at breaking up JCPS; however, as discussed in our meeting, state senate leadership wants to give the new superintendent time to try to fix some of the problems with JCPS, so this bill might not get through the state senate

House Bill 12 is a bill that, as radio show host Andrew Cooperrider said, is "designed to shield legislators from public accountability." It would enable legislators and their family members to get government agencies to remove personally identifiable information from public records, "including who their family members work for."

As Cooperrider said, "If a legislator votes on a [different] bill that benefits an industry employing their spouse or child, this bill gives them a legal way to hide that connection. The public is left blind to potential conflicts of interest... There would be no way to trace how taxpayer handouts may end up in a legislator's or family member's pocket."

Democrats have introduced a few **pro-abortion bills** this session to make Kentucky a **pro-choice state** on abortion. These include House Bill 22, House Bill 23, and House Bill 476.

House Bill 22 would make health insurance companies cover abortion services and would establish that **abortion** and **contraception** are "**fundamental rights**" for **women**. The pro-choice movement has tried the tactic of combining declared rights for women in an attempt to make legislation and constitutional amendment proposals seem more reasonable. We should **not** permit them to slip in "a right to an abortion" like they did in Ohio.

House Bill 22, as introduced, also **changes** wording in our state's laws on insurance **from** "pregnant woman" **to** "pregnant person." This change in the law would **suggest** that "**pregnant men**" **can be covered under health insurance as pregnant men**.

Furthermore, in striking down a distinction in the definition of abortion in state law, this bill would allow for the definition of an abortion to **include “an induced premature birth intended** to produce a **live** viable child.” This change in what “abortion” means is possible in part due to “abortion” being defined by **"termination of pregnancy" wording** instead of “death of the fetus or embryo” wording.

House Bill 23 would **re-legalize abortion surgery practices** in situations that are **not** medical emergencies. In other words, it would **overturn the pro-life Trigger Ban law**, and it would also enable anyone facilitating an abortion in any way to avoid criminal and civil liabilities. It also would protect out-of-state abortion providers from liability.

Now, additional legislation has been introduced on a variety of topics.

House Bill 61: State Representative John Hodgson wants to establish the Kentucky Emergency Volunteer Corps, an all-volunteer, unarmed part of the Kentucky National Guard that reports to the local Emergency Management Coordinators in emergency situations such as floods, tornados, and earthquakes.³

House Bill 90 – a bill to prohibit public schools from lobbying the state legislature

House Bill 101 was filed by Representative James Tipton (R-Taylorsville) in order to remove sales taxes from church ministries. In 2022, the KY General Assembly passed House Bill 8, which led to churches being subject to these taxes. Last year, Rep. Tipton had filed a similar bill that did not move forward despite having more than half of the Republican caucus cosponsoring the bill. This year, however, there are **49 cosponsors** for the bill, so **they have the votes to pass the repeal of sales taxes for churches**, but they still need to get it through committee.

House Bill 170 would **strengthen** Kentucky’s Religious Freedom Restoration Act and has 21 cosponsors. This is a **good** bill.

House Bill 174 and Senate Bill 156 are legislation to remove all loopholes for marriage of people under 18 years of age. So, a court would no longer be able to approve marriages with people aged 17.

House Bill 189 is a bill **opposed to panhandling** by homeless people out on highways. It bans sitting, standing, or loitering in state highway medians, grassy strips, shoulders except in emergencies, in the case of vehicle breakdowns, and in the case of utility work on things like phone poll wires; it passed its main committee hearing and was put in the rules committee, so it could end up being voted on eventually

³ Lane Report Staff. “Hodgson files legislation to establish the Kentucky Emergency Volunteer Corps.” 12 Jan. 2026. <https://www.lanereport.com/185534/2026/01/hodgson-files-legislation-to-establish-the-kentucky-emergency-volunteer-corps/>. Accessed 20 Jan. 2026. Web.

House Bill 198 would **legalize recreational marijuana** for people **21** years of age and older. Please **oppose** this bill.

House Bill 199 is a **constitutional amendment** proposal that would **legalize recreational marijuana**, but it would **limit** recreational marijuana plant growing to **5** plants per person. Please **oppose** this bill.

House Bill 227 is new legislation that the Family Foundation is supporting for protects kids from harmful social media (but we have **not yet** analyzed it)

House Bill 270 – a bill to raise the minimum wage to \$15/hour⁴

House Bill 281 defines "charitable food donor" as a nonprofit or religious organization that is recognized as tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or home-based processor, which produces food for distribution to a homeless shelter or to individuals displaced due to a declared natural disaster; this legislation was passed by the state house last year and also this year

House Bill 334 – "Women's Bill of Rights Act" (designates genders based on biology), no transgender men in women's prisons, and transgender men aren't allowed in women's shelters; this bill is supported by Kentucky Right to Life

House Bill 360 – bans adult performances like drag-queen performances on public property in front of children

House Bill 398 is a bill about accounting in electric power rates.

House Bill 408 (Rena's Law): legalizes physician-assisted suicide in Kentucky upon request of the patient and requires the disposal of unused suicide medications.

House Bill 416, to preclude the Education Professional Standards Board from requiring a minimum score on any assessment; require applicants to submit proof of completion of a formative basic skills assessment at the time of application; require applicants to submit results of a formative basic skills assessment prior to their first day of attendance; require the postsecondary institution provide supports for candidates aligned with their formative assessment performance; to require the Education Professional Standards Board to narrowly tailor content assessments to the area in which an applicant is seeking certification; it is aimed at mildly reducing the barrier to entry for teachers in the public schools while maintaining certification requirements.

⁴ Democrat State Senator Gerald Neal said that Democrats want to raise the minimum wage in Kentucky to **\$15/hour**. He also wanted to address "housing issues" in the state. The Democrats want to focus on housing access. Gerald Neal thinks it's going to be a challenge to lower the income tax anymore, in light of the fact that the government ended up with about a \$150 million shortfall versus what was budgeted. David Meade pointed out that we have enough money in the rainy day fund to cover that shortfall from this past fiscal year. Meade, David; Gerald Neal; etc. "2026 Legislative Session Preview." KET. Jan. 2026.

<https://ket.org/program/kentucky-tonight/2026-legislative-session-preview/>. Accessed 7 Jan. 2026. Web.

House Bill 441 – bill for **no-dual citizenship** for state and local office politicians in Kentucky (Constitutional amendment proposal version)

House Bill 466 removes the Hepatitis B vaccine as a requirement for students to enter 6th grade and for giving to infants; this vaccine is a vaccine against a sexually-transmitted disease that can also be passed on from mother to child at birth

House Bill 476 is a Constitutional amendment proposal to establish an **individual right to reproductive freedom** but would allow the state government to regulate abortion **after** fetal viability in the womb; please **oppose** this bill

House Bill 479: law to establish misgendering as a hate crime as well as establish as hate crimes those actions against people based on the victim's race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, and physical and mental disabilities.

House Bill 482 defines "hemp-derived vapor product," "retailer," and "vapor product" and requires a retailer to verify that a **recipient** of a shipment or delivery of hemp-derived vapor products **is at least 21 years old**

House Bill 510 establishes the processes for pause in procedure for an organ donation

House Bill 544, the **Kentucky Ratepayer Protection Act**, has been filed. It is a bill that places regulations **on future data centers** that use **over 100 Megawatts** of electricity. For those **new** data centers to be built, a commission has to approve all contracts for selling power from a power plant that serves retail customers. This commission is under instruction to ensure that the data center “pays its average embedded cost share.”

House Bill 549 – pregnancy resource center bill

House Bill 551 – environmentalist constitutional amendment bill

House Bill 553 – gender transition bill

Legislation Introduced in State Senate

Senate Bill 6: Senate President Robert Stivers wants to give \$150,000,000 in the 2026 to 2027 fiscal year to public universities in Kentucky for research projects.

Senate Bill 18 – pediatry bill

Senate Bill 19 – mushrooms bill

Senate Bill 24 – traffic control signal monitoring bill

Senate Bill 25 – geoengineering bill

Senate Bill 26 is Sen. Lindsey Tichenor's bill to oppose DEI (Diversity Equity and Inclusion) policies **for the K-12 Schools**; it has 15 total cosponsors and so probably has enough votes already to pass the state senate if it can get out of committee. The legislature already passed this sort of bill for universities.

Senate Bill 30 – motor vehicle commission

Senate Bill 31 – Charlie Kirk day bill

Senate Bill 32 – economic infrastructure

Senate Bill 33 – recovery residences

Senate Bill 34 – property transfer

Senate Bill 90 – behavioral science

Senate Bill 108 is a **good** bill to require employers that mandate employee immunization **to allow exceptions based on religious belief or medical contraindication** (to make it an unlawful practice for employers to require vaccination as a condition of employment from employees with sincere religious beliefs against vaccination or for whom immunization would be harmful to health); **it has enough cosponsors to pass**

Senate Bill 111 (the School Recess Bill): require each school council to develop and implement a wellness policy that includes **30 minutes of recess for students in kindergarten through grade 5** to be included as part of each full instructional day and **15 minutes of recess on each early dismissal day**; allows **between 15 and 30 minutes of recess** per instructional day for students **in grades 6 through 12**; allows appropriate supervised physical exercise to be used as a student discipline tool during recess; and prohibits the denial of recess unless participation poses a threat to physical safety

Senate Bill 113 requires that firearms used in a homicide be destroyed

Senate Bill 115 adds to Kentucky anti-discrimination law that employers cannot discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity

Senate Bill 120 would make members on the Kentucky Board of Education (who represent each of the Supreme Court districts) **be elected in partisan elections instead of appointed**; the term of office will be **4 years**

Senate Bill 122 (Family Preservation and Accountability Act) cleared committee. It says people convicted of the SAME non-violent felonies could now get probation or lighter sentences **because they have kids**. This bill forces judges to consider parental status and push alternative sentencing over incarceration for caretakers of dependent children. It would create a **two-tier justice system** through **special treatment** to parents and legal guardians. This bill also allows the court to require the guilty defendant to participate in programs that “support the parent-child relationship.” This is **not** good in that it is **not** how the justice system is supposed to work.

Senate Bill 123 would require that all Kentucky driver’s license tests and driver’s permit tests be taken **only** in the **English** language

Senate Bill 124 allows school district employees to use sick leave for observance of religious holidays not otherwise included on the school’s calendar if the employee submits a personal statement verifying the observance and gives advance notice to the district;

Senate Bill 131 establishes a cause of action for a person who was wrongfully convicted of a felony in the Commonwealth; specifies amounts of damages that may be awarded to claimants; establish the wrongful conviction compensation fund

Senate Bill 135 would allow the Governor to use money from the Kentucky budget reserve trust fund for SNAP benefits (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) during a lapse in federal funding of that program

Senate Bill 138 enhances the penalty for the sentencing of people guilty of manslaughter and murder of minors as well as establishes the death penalty for those people whose abuse or neglect of the care of a minor results in the death of that minor; it also makes licensed child-care centers to be required to maintain video surveillance records for 90 days after the footage is recorded; video surveillance is not required for bathrooms and diaper-changing areas

Senate Bill 139 creates the Residential Ease of Access for Disabled Veterans Program for funding the construction and installation of accessibility ramps on residences of disabled veterans

Senate Bill 143: legislation to make an official ethical violation basically all comments and jokes of a sexual nature as well as sexual harassment and assault, by legislators and lobbyists at the capitol

Senate Bill 181 – another bill by Lindsey Tichenor

Legislation Passed by the State House

Just like last year, we saw a lot of legislation early on pass that is uncontroversial among the state legislators. One of the most controversial early piece of legislation to pass was a bill on permitting **Cigar Bars, which was HB194 with House Committee Substitute 1.**

A **cigar bar bill** passed last year in the house but not in the state senate. This legislation would **not** apply to **regular** restaurants under smoke-free laws; however, it would create a narrow exemption to allow cigar smoking in cigar bars, places where you must be **21 years of age** to enter and where **at least 25%** of their sales revenue are **smoking-related**. This legislation passed with **about 70 votes** in the state house, being mildly controversial.

HB169 with Committee substitute 1, requires insurance companies to cover anorexia, bulimia, and compulsive eating disorders; however, to be required to get this coverage, the patient must have both an abnormal BMI (abnormal weight in light of his or her height) and a mental health condition.

House Bill 393 on Alzheimer's disease also passed the state house overwhelmingly. The KY House passed a resolution recognizing the positive relationship between Kentucky and Japan.

House Bill 164 hearing aid bill has passed the state house.

House Bill 320 to enhance the penalty levels for human trafficking in Kentucky

House Bill 366 is a bill against digital child porn viewing & AI-child porn

House Bill 214, an act related to disabled veterans, for wheelchair ramp installation for their homes, passed the state house

House Bill 4 is one of the most cosponsored bills in the state house this year and **passed** the house **today, February 4th**. It is aimed at targeting grooming behaviors made against minors. The prosecution will have to demonstrate intent, and a "course of conduct" of at least two sexually suggestive behaviors have to be under scrutiny for someone to be charged with grooming. The charge of grooming will also apply in cases where the accused person appears to be trying to normalize or desensitize the minor to acts of sexual conduct.

House Bill 134 requires the Cabinet for Health and Family Services to employ a health professional as a statewide sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) coordinator; establish requirements for the description, essential duties, and responsibilities of the SANE coordinator position; require the cabinet to collaborate with others to develop a statewide strategic plan that utilizes a regional model to ensure SANE coverage for all Kentucky hospitals; this measure passed the house

Legislation Passed by the State Senate

Senate Bill 1 announced that JCPS **can** have a different governance structure with a chief executive (superintendent) being responsible only for day-to-day operations. It also admits shortcomings in JCPS.

Senate Bill 3 with Amendment 1 requires each school district to have **at least a 2% budget reserve** for emergencies and shortfalls, requires the posting of contracts for superintendents and separation pay, and requires superintendents to provide full budget presentations to school boards two weeks in advance.

Senate Bill 10 is a constitutional amendment proposal to limit the Governor's authority to grant pardons or commute sentences within 60 days prior to a governor's election. The measure passed the Senate 36 to 0

Senate Bill 13 allows a local planning commission to include a nonvoting, ex officio representative from a nearby military installation when the planning area includes or is adjacent to a base.

Senate Bill 20 allows city governments to establish different base pay incentive amounts for different types of city officers by ordinance

Senate Bill 22 expands eligibility for the Dual Credit Scholarship Program to include students enrolled in registered teacher apprenticeship programs and modifies academic eligibility requirements. The measure passed by a 37–1 vote.

Senate Joint Resolution 23 passed the Kentucky state senate to affirm Kentucky as a “food as medicine” state, to encourage the coordination of hospitals with food companies for providing medically-tailored meals for patients (improve food quality)

Senate Bill 28 makes illegal the use of handheld cell phones while driving, even for regular phone calls; it passed by a **31–7** vote

Senate Bill 29 prohibits counties or waste management districts from imposing fees, assessments, or permitting requirements on solid waste facilities based on where the waste was generated. The measure passed the Senate 36 to 0

Senate Bill 38 requires Medicaid managed care organizations and state programs to comply with existing insurance laws over pharmacist reimbursement

Senate Bill 46 permits school districts to use ten-passenger non-bus vehicles for approved school activities while changing safety requirements for drivers

Senate Bill 48 passed the state senate. It strengthens mandatory supervision on the reenter of nonviolent offenders into the community. It is to prohibit an inmate from qualifying for mandatory reentry supervision if the inmate has previously been convicted of 2 or more offenses that would classify him or her as a violent offender or has been recommitted to prison for a violation of probation, shock probation, parole, or conditional discharge; require the Department of Corrections to produce an annual report on the results of the mandatory reentry supervision program by February 1 of each year.

Senate Bill 49 establishes a voluntary battery stewardship framework to support the safe collection, recycling, and recovery of covered batteries and battery-containing products while reducing fire and safety risks at waste facilities.

Senate Bill 51 is a constitutional amendment proposal to freeze the assessed property tax value of homes for senior citizens; as we discussed in our meeting, this bill doesn't go far enough in eliminating property taxes, and property taxes won't necessarily go down if the value of your property goes down; and there is the chance that this amendment proposal and some other property tax amendment proposals won't succeed at the ballot box

Senate Bill 68 has passed the state senate. It allows the Kentucky Horse Park Commission, through its president, to exclude any person whose participation in Olympic, Paralympic, or equestrian sports or activities has been restricted by the United States Center for SafeSport.

Senate Bill 76 raises the population threshold for counties to increase a school occupational license tax from 300,000 to 500,000 residents, effectively preventing Fayette County from pursuing such an increase in the future. I voted against the measure because it overcorrects for a past procedural failure by stripping local communities of taxing authority, rather than addressing transparency and public notice issues, and limits school districts' ability to address funding needs. However, it passed the Senate 28-6.

Messages from Andrew Cooperrider

Andrew Cooperrider said:

On the first day of the legislative session, Rep. Burke (D) decided to file a bill designed **to shield legislators from public accountability**.

House Bill 12 would let lawmakers and their immediate family members demand that government agencies scrub “personally identifiable information” from public records — including who their family members work for.

If a legislator votes on a bill that benefits an industry employing their spouse or child, this bill gives them a legal way to hide that connection. The public is left blind to potential conflicts of interest.

For example: It is public record who owns a company; under this law, a “covered person” could request that information be hidden from public view. If this passes, there would be no way to trace how taxpayer handouts may end up in a legislator’s or family member’s pocket.⁵

Andrew Cooperrider also had some criticism of how much the legislature spends:

This year Republicans have a choice to make: keep bankrolling Beshear's boondoggle empire... or finally cut the waste, fraud, and bloat.

Last biennial budget (2024-2026): The Republican Legislature **raised total spending by 16%** after adjusting for inflation — from a yearly average of \$52.65B (with **\$13.45 billion from the General Fund**) to ~\$65B (with **~\$16 billion from the General Fund**).

Now in 2026, there is tough talk about slashing the budget and cutting the income tax next year... but will they actually do it? To fund another tax cut, they'd need to **carve out** about **\$1 and ½ billion** in real reductions. History says: Doubtful. The Kentucky Republican Legislature spends like Democrats when the rubber meets the road.

According to Austin Horn at the Lexington Herald Leader, State Senate President Stivers and his staff believe that it is too soon to lower the income tax again for 2027, and they think that trying to redistrict out the single Democrat in Congress (Congressional District 3 here in Louisville) is a risky move.⁶

⁵ Cooperrider, Andrew. “On the first day of the legislative session.” 7 Jan. 2026.

<https://x.com/KYCooperrider/status/2008704100347634035>. Accessed 7 Jan. 2026. Web.

⁶ Horn, Austin. “How a ‘center-right’ KY Republican became the center of power in Frankfort.”

<https://www.kentucky.com/news/politics-government/article312420769.html>. Accessed 7 Jan. 2026. Web.

More on KET⁷:

The state senate pro-temp said that about half the budget is education spending. Republican Rep. David Meade said childcare and the budget are the main focus for this session. He wants to streamline the building codes and enable building permits to be acquired more quickly.

Pro-temp David Givens says the teachers pensions went **from 13% funded** around 2016 to **28% funded** today. Givens says he is willing to consider giving state government workers a raise.

Democrat Rep. Pam Stevenson says she doubts that there are as many people defrauding the Medicaid system in Kentucky as some Republicans think. David Meade wants to remove people as beneficiaries who may be taking advantage of the system.

More News on Legislator Grossberg

On February 2nd, there was supposed to be a public hearing into harassment ethics charges against Democrat KY House Rep. **Daniel Grossberg**, but an out-of-court-style deal was met instead in which Rep. Daniel Grossberg **agreed to a public reprimand and \$2,000 in fines**.⁸ Max Morley is the Democrat candidate who is challenging Dan Grossberg in the 2026 election. Max Morley has served on the Board of Directors of the Jefferson County Teachers Association teachers union.⁹ Colmon Elridge, the leader of the Democratic Party in Kentucky, wants Grossberg to resign.

Grossberg is known for introducing some of the pro-abortion legislation and legislation against embryos being considered as legal persons in the Kentucky state legislature.

⁷ Meade, David; Gerald Neal; etc. “2026 Legislative Session Preview.” KET. Jan. 2026.

<https://ket.org/program/kentucky-tonight/2026-legislative-session-preview/>. Accessed 7 Jan. 2026. Web.

⁸ Horn, Austin and Alex Acquisto. “Embattled KY Rep. Grossberg Settles with Public Reprimand, Waives Ethics Hearing.” Lexington Herald Leader. 2 Feb. 2026. <https://www.kentucky.com/news/politics-government/article314512897.html>. Accessed 2 Feb. 2026. Web.

⁹ Morley, Max. “Meet Max.” Max for Kentucky. <https://www.maxforky.com/meet-max>. Accessed 2 Feb. 2026. Web.

From the Twitter account of the Kentucky State Senate Republicans

SEN. AARON REED FILES SENATE PRIORITY LEGISLATION TUESDAY TO RETURN DRIVER'S LICENSE RENEWALS TO COUNTIES FRANKFORT, KY. (Jan. 13, 2026)—

Sen. Aaron Reed, R-Shelbyville, filed Senate Bill (**SB 7**) on Tuesday. The bill, designated as **priority legislation** by the Senate Majority Caucus, will return driver's license renewal and duplicate services to local county offices in counties without a regional licensing office, including the circuit clerk, county clerk, county sheriff or county judge/executive, through agreements with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC).

The bill responds to growing public frustration with long wait times, limited appointment availability and recent investigative reporting that has raised serious concerns about how Kentucky's driver licensing system is operating under the state executive branch's control.

"Across Kentucky, people are fed up with long waits for basic services," Reed said. "When state government bureaucracy creates barriers instead of access, it is clear the system is not working. SB 7 offers a workable path to return license renewal services to trusted and eligible local offices so Kentuckians are not forced to drive hours to a regional office in another county."

Recent investigative reporting raising concerns about the improper issuance of driver's licenses was among the factors that prompted Reed to craft and file the proposal. SB 7 establishes a system requiring KYTC to enter into agreements with eligible local officials to issue renewal and duplicate driver's licenses and personal identification cards in counties without a regional licensing office. Under the bill, KYTC is responsible for purchasing and installing the necessary equipment.

Local officials may issue driver's license renewals and duplicates only to residents of their county, except where an interlocal agreement allows participating counties to serve each other's residents. Counties may collaborate through interlocal agreements to share equipment, personnel, and facilities. In counties where no local official chooses to issue renewals, the county judge/executive may enter into an interlocal agreement with another county to provide services for their constituents.

"I commend Sen. Reed for stepping up to lead on this important legislation in a practical way," Senate Transportation Chair Jimmy Higdon, R-Lebanon, said. "It is one that I trust we can get over the finish line, and that provides a workable framework for our local officials. I'm encouraging my colleagues to put their full support behind SB 7. I truly believe this is the right path forward. As committee chair, I'll make this bill a priority in the Senate Transportation Committee."

Upon the bill's filing this afternoon, **it carried the backing of 28 Senate co-sponsors.** "It's not often that an issue generates this level of support and uniformity within a single legislative chamber," Senate President Robert Stivers, R-Manchester, said. "Through Sen. Reed's work, and hearing from our constituents and caucus members, it became evident this legislation warrants priority consideration.

When the need is this apparent, we also have a responsibility to act with intent." The proposal also updates renewal terms for standard driver's licenses and REAL ID credentials and establishes administrative requirements for locally issued renewals. If enacted, the effective date is July 1, 2027. SB 7 was referred to the Senate Transportation Committee and will be considered at tomorrow's 9 a.m. meeting.