

Sen. McConnell introduces Protecting American Farmlands Act

LOUISVILLE — United States Senator Mitch McConnell introduced the Protecting American Farmlands Act on Tuesday, a bill to provide farmers with capital gains tax relief and keep agricultural land in the hands of active producers. The legislation addresses a growing crisis in farmland retention, ensuring that retiring farmers can transition their operations to the next generation while preserving farmland for long-term agricultural use.

“Kentucky Farm Bureau is proud to once again stand alongside Senator McConnell in championing legislation that strengthens the future of

American agriculture. The Protecting American Farmlands Act is the outgrowth of important work done through our Kentucky Farm Bureau Farmland Transition Initiative,” said Kentucky Farm Bureau President Eddie Melton.

Kentucky’s farming landscape has changed significantly in the past two decades. Since 2002, the state has lost 1.4 million acres of farmland, a 10% decline. The number of farms has also dropped by 20%, while the average age of Kentucky farmers has increased to 57.1 years. As farmland continues to appreciate in value, farmers face increasing challenges in

acquiring land, while outside investors are buying up farmland and either developing it for non-agriculture purposes entirely or leasing it back to operators—limiting farmers’ ability to build equity in their land.

The Protecting American Farmlands Act builds on the work of the Kentucky Farm Bureau Farmland Transition Initiative, which seeks to keep farmland in production and ease financial barriers for retiring farmers. The bill provides critical tax relief, allowing landowners who sell to active farmers to roll the gains from that sale into an individual retirement account.

By deferring taxes, this measure gives retiring farmers more control over their financial future while helping keep farmland in production.

President Melton added, “This legislation not only helps ensure that our nation’s farmland remains in the hands of active farmers, but it also provides retiring farmers with a viable pathway to transition their operations to the next generation. We look forward to the lasting impact this legislation will have on farming communities here in Kentucky and across the country.”

By reducing financial barriers for farm transitions, this

bill gives retiring farmers an option to sell their land without losing significant portions of their proceeds to taxes. It also provides a more flexible retirement strategy, addressing the common challenge of farmers being “asset rich and cash poor” in their later years.

Kentucky Farm Bureau has long been a leader in advocating for policies that support farm families, and this legislation represents a major step forward in ensuring the long-term viability of American agriculture.

For more information on the Kentucky Farm Bureau Farmland Transition Initiative, visit kyfarmlandtransition.com.

Celebrating agriculture in the classroom

Getting the chance to speak with students involved in agriculture programs earlier this year, I saw just how eager students can be for education when it involves vibrant learning experiences that are relevant to the community and the world around them.

One of the key pillars of our United We Learn vision for Kentucky public education is vibrant learning experiences for our students. By showing students how lessons in the classroom apply to the real world through agriculture, one of the most important parts of our economy both locally and globally, kids are able to connect much more with the curriculum and find out who they want to be.

These vibrant learning experiences are one of the many reasons I am excited about Agriculture Education Week, set for March 17-21. This is the first time Kentucky will be celebrating Ag Education Week, which is an all-encompassing learning experience for students that also equips educators with ready-to-use lessons and fosters

community involvement to create hands-on learning opportunities.

The collaboration on this one starts at the top: Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman, Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell and I have combined our attention on something that will provide our children with opportunities to thrive for generations to come.

The key initiatives of Ag Education Week are broadening access to agriculture education to help students understand where their food, fuel and fiber come from. We at the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) helped develop accessible and easy-to-use lesson plans and resources that are aligned with the Kentucky Academic Standards to support teachers as they strive to provide a complete agricultural education experience. Kentucky’s K-2 students will be learning about pollination through an agricultural lens, and our students in grades 3-5 will be learning about erosion.

Another key initiative of Ag Education Week is to connect agriculture to



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real-life skills by teaching about nutrition, sustainability and how agriculture intersects with nearly every career field in Kentucky. This initiative is not just for students aspiring to become farmers or work in the agriculture industry. It will help all students develop valuable skills that translate to a variety of careers, while helping them grow into educated consumers as well.

As my colleague, Commissioner Shell, pointed out during the launch of this event at the Kentucky State Capitol Rotunda in February, agriculture touches every aspect of our lives, from the food we eat to clothes we wear to the fuel that powers our communities. This is an opportunity to get our kids engaged in agriculture early, fostering an appreciation for the industry while exposing children to potential careers they may not have thought about before.

For more information on Agriculture Education Week, the history and diversity of Kentucky agriculture lesson plans and resources, and to learn how you can get involved in this initiative, visit the All in for Ag Education Week website.

Nelson County sheriff, chief deputy indicted over whistleblower case

BY PETER W. ZUBATY
PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

Nelson County Sheriff Ramon Pineiroa and his chief deputy, Brandon Bryan, were indicted by a Grand Jury Wednesday on a series of felonies in the fallout from charges that they discriminated against deputies Ian Justice and Will Purdom in their roles with the Greater Hardin County Narcotics Task Force.

The case is being investigated by Kentucky State Police Post 4 and Det. Blake Owens, and is being prosecuted by Bullitt County Commonwealth’s Attorney Amanda Hernandez Troutman.

In all, Bryan is hit with eight charges, including five felonies, while Pineiroa is facing six charges, three of which are felonies.

Detectives Ian Justice and Will Purdom filed a verified complaint in February, alleging they were retaliated against after reporting the chief deputy, Brandon Bryan, for allegedly breaking the law.

Justice and Purdom claim in the report that Pineiroa pulled them off a task force and prevented them from working overtime.

Justice and Purdom are now suing for damages including lost wages.

The suit alleges Bryan illegally sold three vehicles from a joint Greater Hardin County Narcotics Task Force (GHCNTF) and Nelson County evidence warehouse — these vehicles were awarded to the sheriff’s office through drug forfeiture. The vehicles were sold privately and not at a public auction as is required by law, and allegedly sold them for less than market value.

Justice states in the suit that he approached Bryan, Pineiroa, his department evidence technician, and his department CFO about the illegal activity.

Both Pineiroa and Bryan are charged with felony abuse of public trust more than \$10,000 but less than \$100,000, as well as two felony counts of theft by deception, \$10,000 or more. In

addition, both men are charged with misdemeanor charges of official misconduct, and two charges of violating state whistleblower laws.

Bryan also faces two additional felony charges of second-degree forgery.

Pineiroa and Bryan are scheduled for an arraignment hearing at 2 p.m. March 20 in Nelson Circuit Court. Their bond will be set at that date.

Nelson County Judge-Executive Tim Hutchins issued a statement Friday morning about the case.

“I have received several media requests for comment, and as the chief elected official in Nelson County, I take the responsibility of governing and the administration of County resources very seriously. The trust of the people whom we are elected to represent is the bedrock of our Republic. I await the findings of truth from the judicial proceedings and will have no further comment until that time.”

Voter registration drops since 2020 despite population increase

FRANKFORT — Secretary of State Michael Adams announced that the number of registered voters in Kentucky has declined significantly since he took office in 2020, despite Kentucky’s rising population in that time. The finding comes after the Commonwealth removed 231,110 ineligible voters in February in compliance with federal and state law.

“On my watch we have removed 671,292 ineligible voters from Kentucky’s rolls, including 255,484 deceased voters,” said Adams. “Kentuckians trust our elections, and they should.”

Of the 231,110 voters removed, 225,311 were inactive, 5,122 were deceased, 348 had registered to vote in other states, 231 were felony convicts, 38 were adjudged mentally incompetent, 33 were duplicate registrations, and 27 who voluntarily de-registered.

Of the 225,311 inactive voters removed, 99,168 were Democrats, 95,732 were Republicans, and 30,411 were registered under other affiliations. The National Voter Registration Act, and Kentucky’s equivalent law, require a multi-year process to remove inactive voters unless they die, are

judged mentally incompetent or guilty of a felony, or act to remove themselves.

Republican registration accounts for 47% of the electorate, with 1,580,776 voters. Republican registration went down by 95,675 voters, a 5.71% decrease. Democratic registration constitutes 42% of the electorate, with 1,396,723 voters. Democratic registration dropped by 101,942 voters, a 6.8% decrease. There are 357,311 voters registered under other political affiliations, making up 11% of the electorate. “Other” registration fell by 29,434, a 7.61% decrease.

CANCER

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“However, if diagnosed and treated at an early stage, individuals have a much better chance of survival. For this reason, the American Cancer Society recommends colorectal cancer screening starting at age 45 for individuals not at increased risk of the disease.”

Haider added that gastroenterologists or general surgeons may recommend earlier screening if you have a family history of colon cancer, a personal history of inflammatory bowel disease or other

risk factors for colorectal cancer.

Baptist Health offers an online colon cancer risk assessment designed to help identify risk factors and determine whether a colon cancer screening should be considered.

“Screening is an essential tool in detecting colorectal cancer early, even before symptoms appear,” said Haider. “There are various screening options, including a traditional colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, at-home stool tests and CT colonography. It’s important to work with a healthcare provider to choose the right screen-

ing test for each individual.”

The signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer often go unnoticed in the early stages, but potential warning signs include a change in bowel habits lasting a month or more such as constipation, diarrhea or narrow stools; a feeling the bowel does not empty completely; constant abdominal pain; blood in stools; fatigue; nausea or vomiting; rectal bleeding; weakness; and unexplained weight loss. Individuals experiencing any of these symptoms are urged to consult a healthcare provider for further evaluation.

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