

# Kentucky ranks low in innovation

BY DENIS HOUSE  
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When it comes to innovation, Kentucky could use some help. This is according to a new study released by wallethub.com, which ranked the Bluegrass State 45th, with only Kansas, Arkansas, North Dakota, West Virginia, Louisiana, and Mississippi ranking lower.

Innovation is a principal driver of U.S. economic growth, with the country spending more than \$800 billion per year on research and development, which ranks the U.S. third out of 133 countries on the Global Innovation Index, trailing only Switzerland and Sweden. To recognize the nation's biggest contributors, WalletHub compared the 50 states and the District of Columbia across 25 key indicators of innovation-friendliness, ranging from the share of STEM professionals to R&D (research and development) spending per capita to tech-company density.

"The most innovative states are especially attractive to people who have majored in science, technology, engineering, and math, or STEM, as they offer abundant career opportunities and investment dollars, both for jobs at existing companies and for startups," said Chip Lupo, WalletHub analyst. "These states also instill young students with the skills they need to succeed in the current workforce, skills which are useful whether or not they pursue a STEM career."

Kentucky had an overall score of 31.06, well behind first-place District of Columbia's 69.79. In Human Capital, Kentucky ranked 47th, 39th in Innovation Environment, 41st in Projected STEM-Job Demand by 2030, 30th in Eighth-Grade Math & Science Performance, 42nd in Share of Science & Engineering Graduates Aged 25+, 27th in Share of Tech-



Photo by Yagi Studio/Metro Creative  
**Kentucky ranks low in innovation, according to a study by wallethub.com.**

nology Companies, 44th in R & D Spending per Capita, and 43rd in Venture-Capital Funding per Capita.

Shivendra Panwar, Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at New York University's Tandon School of Engineering, said state policymakers need to work with local industry using seed or matching grants to encourage innovation.

"Establish a reasonable regulatory environment, provide safe, inexpensive middle-class housing next to startup zones, invest in R&D areas where the local region has a competitive advantage, and improve K-12 education and make it more equitable," Panwar said. He added that policymakers can assist individuals who may lose their jobs or otherwise be displaced by innovation across industries by assisting with transition training for new jobs.

"Good local universities, a budding innovation ecosystem, reasonable (not necessarily the lowest) taxes and regulations, quality of life, and hospitality to those who move in from across the U.S. and abroad," he added.

Massachusetts (64.12), California (63.64), Colorado (62.95), Washington (61.82), Maryland (61.32), Virginia (58.34), Delaware (54.97), Utah (53.19), and New Jersey (52.01) rounded out the top 10 behind the District of Colum-

# Republicans elect local leadership

The Republican Party of Marion County met on February 15, 2015, for the purpose of electing local party leadership. This is done every four years.

Elected in February were:

• Michael Cecil — Chairman

• Judy Tate Blackwell — Vice Chairman

• Michael Eppley — Treasurer

• Trina Clark Martin — Secretary

• Nathan Smith — Youth Chairman

The next monthly meeting will be held on

April 8 at 6:00 p.m.. This meeting will be held at the newly opened Marion County Event and Sportsplex on Independence Drive, Lebanon.

For more information, contact marioncountyrepublicanparty@outlook.com

# Jobless rate up here, across state

BY PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

Unemployment rates rose in 109 counties, including Marion County, between January 2024 and January 2025, according to the Kentucky Center for Statistics. At 5.8% in January, the Marion County figure was up 2% from the 3.8% rate recorded in January 2024, the KYSTATS breakdown says. The local statistic accounts for 475 local residents actively seeking work, the data shows.

According to the center's data, the local unemployment rate was higher than

the 5.7% average for the Lincoln Trail Area Development District. Woodford County recorded the lowest jobless rate in the commonwealth at 4%. It was followed by Fayette and Shelby counties, 4.3% each; Oldham and Scott counties, 4.4% each; Bourbon, Jessamine and Nicholas counties, 4.6% each; and Harrison, Todd and Washington counties, 4.7% each.

Wolfe County recorded the state's highest unemployment rate at 13.8%. It was followed by Lewis County, 12.2%; Elliott County, 11.5%; Magoffin Coun-

ty, 11.2%; Martin County, 11%; Carter County, 10.7%; Menifee County, 10.6%; Lawrence County, 9.8%; Breathitt County, 9.3%; and Morgan County, 9.1%.

County unemployment rates and employment levels are not seasonally adjusted because of small sample sizes. Employment statistics undergo fluctuations due to seasonal events such as weather changes, harvests, holidays, and school openings and closings, the KYSTATS news release said.

SEE **JOBLESS/PAGE A8**



Photo courtesy of Kentucky Classic Arts

The cast of Something Rotten, JR.

# Something Rotten! Jr. The Musical

LEBANON — Kentucky Classic Arts presents Something Rotten! JR., the story of two brothers who set out to write the world's first musical in this hilarious mash-up of sixteenth-century Shakespeare and twenty-first-century Broadway.

Created by Grammy Award-winning songwriter Wayne Kirkpatrick, and successful screenwriters Karey Kirkpatrick and John O'Farrell, performances of Something Rot-

ten! JR. begin March 27 at 7:00 p.m. and run through March 30.

Under the direction of Michelle Strom and choreographed by Kara Hinton, Something Rotten Jr. promises to be an incredible showcase of local talent. The cast is comprised of young actors ranging from ages 10-18 and coming from Marion, Taylor, Nelson, Hardin, and Washington Counties.

Something Rotten Jr. is sponsored by Strong Con-

tracting. Be sure to grab your tickets today at [www.kentuckyclassicarts.com](http://www.kentuckyclassicarts.com), or call 270-699-2787, or stop by and see us at 237 N. Spalding Avenue. Tickets will also be available at the door, but buy them now to ensure you get the best seats.

Performances: March 27, 28, 29 at 7:00 p.m., May 29 and 30 at 2:00 p.m.

Tickets & Information: [www.kentuckyclassicarts.com](http://www.kentuckyclassicarts.com) \$12 for students, \$15 for adults. + \$2 fee add-on



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