

Celebrating the strength and spirit of Kentucky workers

As Labor Day approaches, we pause to honor the hard-working Kentuckians whose dedication and resilience power our communities. From classrooms to construction sites, farms to factories, public offices to private enterprises, our workforce is the backbone of the commonwealth.

Across rural Kentucky, from farming towns to coal communities, hard work is not just a job; it is a way of life. Whether it is harvesting crops at dawn, repairing roads and bridges, operating local businesses, or running essential public services, our rural workforce reflects the values of determination and a

deep sense of responsibility.

In cities like Bardstown, Bradfordsville, Bloomfield, Lebanon, Loretto, Gravel Switch, Willisburg, New Haven, Fairfield, and Springfield in the 14th Senate District, we see the daily rhythm of labor in our hospitals, schools, offices, and local businesses. Teachers

are back in the classroom preparing the next generation with care and purpose. Health care workers, utility staff, and service professionals keep our communities moving and connected. Their work is essential not only to the economy but also to the quality of daily life.

This Labor Day, we

also recognize the first responders who remain on duty while others take a well-earned break. Our police officers, firefighters, EMTs, dispatchers, and members of our military stand ready to protect and serve, often sacrificing their own holidays to keep us safe. Your commitment is deeply appreciated.

We also acknowledge the important role of labor unions in Kentucky and across our nation. Through their advocacy workers have secured protections we often take for granted today. Their contributions continue to shape a stronger economy and better opportunities for all workers.

Labor Day is a time to reflect on the contributions of workers across generations who built

this country with strength and resolve. Let us continue that legacy by valuing work, supporting families, and creating opportunity in every corner of Kentucky. Kentucky's workforce is among the Bluegrass State's greatest assets, and at the core of our record-breaking economic investments are the workers that private industry depends on to thrive.

Thank you for your hard work, your service, and your continued belief in the power of a job well done. I wish you and your family a safe and meaningful Labor Day.

Sen. Jimmy Higdon, R-Lebanon, represents the 14th Senate District, including LaRue, Marion, Nelson, Spencer, and Washington Counties.



JIMMY HIGDON

My thoughts this week

Last week I attended an informational meeting for a 400-acre solar farm being built in Marion County. I was expecting a presentation along with a question-and-answer session, but the meeting included neither. Instead, there were some handouts and posters. Visitors were asked to write their questions on slips of paper and were promised a response. I was disappointed, as I learn a lot from the questions other people ask at such meetings. They often ask questions I wouldn't think to ask, plus I get a better feel for their concerns. My thoughts are also with the Raywick firefighters injured in a roll-over accident in the fire

department's tanker truck. The accident occurred while on their way to assist with a fire in Loretto on Friday. Although it is

reported the injured firefighters are going to be okay, their injuries are serious.

Prayers for them and their families, as it will be a long road to recovery.

As always, please keep those tips and story ideas coming. I appreciate each and every one I receive.

So those are my thoughts this week, not that you care (or should care) what I think. But I do care what you think. You are always welcome to share your thoughts in a letter to the editor.

Have a blessed week.



JANE REID KLEY

Kentuckians reminded to care for eye health during Eye Exam Month

FRANKFORT — Gov. Andy Beshear and the Education and Labor Cabinet's Division of Blind Services encourage Kentuckians to prioritize their eye health by making an appointment with an ophthalmologist during National Eye Exam Month in August.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Kentucky has one of the 10 highest rates of visual acuity loss or blindness in the United States. An estimated 93 million adults in the United States have a high risk for serious vision loss, but only half visited an eye doctor in the past 12 months.

"Regular eye exams are an important part of taking care of your overall health, regardless of your age, so you can catch problems early and correct vision as soon as possible," Gov. Beshear said. "It's also important to remember that students ages 3-6 starting school for the first time are required to have an eye exam."

In 2000, the Kentucky General Assembly enacted legislation that requires all children entering public preschool, kindergarten, Head Start or public school for the first time to have an eye examination by an optometrist or ophthalmologist no later than Jan. 1 of the school year.

Roughly 67% of children in Kentucky receive routine vision screening, lagging behind the 72.4% figure in top-performing states, according to Vision Center, an informational website about eye health and vision. Prioritizing regular eye exams throughout a child's academic years can help them see correctly to succeed in school, sports and life.

"Regular vision exams can catch eye problems in the early stages and prevent vision loss or blindness," said Cora McNabb, executive director of the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation,

which includes the Division of Blind Services. "It can prevent eye strain from incorrect prescriptions and detect eye diseases such as diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma in their early stages."

For adults, an annual eye exam can help improve their work performance and overall health. Regular eye exams ensure that your prescription is correct to prevent eye strain and can detect eye conditions. In the digital age, many workers experience eye strain, headaches, dry eyes and worsening vision because of prolonged screen use. Optometrists also can detect early onset signs of diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol during an eye exam.

As Kentuckians age, vision problems and eye diseases can compound. For example, cataracts affect an estimated 10-12% of Kentucky seniors, remaining the leading cause of reversible blindness, particularly in rural areas. A higher-than-average smoking rate of 26% in Kentucky is associated with increased occurrence of glaucoma. Diabetic retinopathy prevalence is reported at 12.5% in Kentucky, exceeding the national average of 9.6%.

In addition, effective Jan. 1, 2025, vision screenings became a requirement for anyone getting a new or renewed Kentucky driver's license. This new requirement, passed by the Kentucky General Assembly in 2021 and signed into law by Gov. Beshear, aims to enhance highway safety by ensuring all drivers maintain good vision throughout their years behind the wheel. Regular vision screenings help identify any impairments that could affect a driver's ability to safely operate a vehicle, protecting both the driver and others on the road. For more information about this requirement, visit drive.ky.gov.

Beshear administration bans deadly 'designer Xanax'

BY MELISSA PATRICK
KENTUCKY HEALTH NEWS

Gov. Andy Beshear banned the sale of bromazepam, also known as "designer Xanax," on Aug. 18 through an emergency state designation that changes the drug to a Schedule 1 controlled substance. This change gives law enforcement the ability to arrest anyone selling or possessing the drug.

"Team Kentucky has made important progress in our fight against addiction, with three-straight years of declines in overdose deaths, and we're committed to ensuring that work continues," Beshear said in

a news release. "This deadly drug has no place in our communities, and now we have the tools needed to get it off the streets and protect more lives."

The emergency action comes as a coalition of 21 attorneys general, led by Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman, is urging the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to ban the unregulated drug. Earlier this month, Coleman called on Kentucky officials to take emergency action to schedule the drug.

"By answering our call to take emergency action on bromazepam, we have given Kentucky law enforcement new tools to keep this dangerous drug off our streets," Coleman

said in the release. "I'm proud of the zealous collaboration with the Northern Kentucky Drug Strike Force to sound the alarm and save lives. We live in a moment when as little as one pill can kill – and is killing – our kids. I'm glad we could work together to tackle this grave threat."

Bromazepam — widely known as "designer Xanax" — is being passed off as prescription pills, including benzodiazepines, which are commonly used to treat conditions such as anxiety disorders, insomnia, and seizures.

"There is zero margin of error when it comes to illicit drugs and counterfeit pills," the attorneys general

said in their letter to DEA Administrator Terry Cole, dated Aug. 18. "As parents and public officials, we must do everything possible to cut off the supply of these deadly substances through vigorous enforcement, while also continuing to promote the prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts that are saving lives across our states."

Bromazepam was detected in 48 overdose deaths in Kentucky in 2024, according to the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy's annual report.

Kentucky joins Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Virginia and West Virginia in designating bromazepam as a Schedule 1 controlled substance.

Court rules medical cannabis users shouldn't lose 2nd Amendment rights

Patients who possess medical cannabis in compliance with state laws are free to exercise their 2nd Amendment rights to own a firearm, according to a ruling by judges on the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals.

The decision, which is consistent with a recent ruling by the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, finds that disarming citizens solely because they either possess or consume cannabis is not "consistent with this nation's history and tradition of firearm regulation."

District Court judges in Oklahoma and Texas have also recently issued similar opinions.

The case was brought by former Florida Agriculture Commissioner Nikki

Fried (who now serves as a member of NORML's Board of Directors) and several medical cannabis patients. Members of the NORML Legal Committee — including attorneys David Holland, Nikki Fried, Greg Morse, and Joseph Bondy — filed an amicus brief in the case, opining, "Neither the Founders, Framers, nor elected leaders of the United States, all of whom had intimate knowledge of the role of cannabis cultivation and consumption in the colonies and new nation, took any legislative action to disarm cannabis consumers of the right to bear arms."

Fried called the ruling "a huge win for freedom. No medical cannabis patient should have to choose

between their rights to their medicine or their right to bear arms."

Joseph A. Bondy, Chair of NORML's Board of Directors, added: "This is a substantial win for patients and constitutional rights. This ruling makes plain what NORML has long argued: medical cannabis patients should not be treated as second-class citizens under the law."

For decades, the US government has held a 1968 federal law prohibiting the possession or sale of a firearm to an "unlawful user" of a federally controlled substance should be applied broadly to criminalize gun owners with any history of marijuana use. The Trump administration has

requested the US Supreme Court to weigh in on the issue.

NORML Deputy Director Paul Armentano praised the 11th Circuit Court's ruling. "Neither past nor current cannabis use should automatically preclude someone from legal protections explicitly provided by the US Constitution," he said. "Either the Supreme Court or Congress need to ultimately resolve this issue so that responsible cannabis consumers are no longer threatened with federal prison terms simply for exercising their 2nd Amendment rights."

The case is Cooper et al. v. Attorney General of the United States of America et al.

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