

MAYOR HAROLD SLONE SPEAKS AT PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION MEETING CONCERNING AEP RATE INCREASE

By ROBERTA CANTRELL
BSN Editor

Recently a public hearing was held in Ashland by the Public Service Commission (PSC).

The hearing was to hear the response to Kentucky Power's proposed rate increase.

Unfortunately, our regions lawmakers were unable to attend as the 2026 General Assembly was in session.

However, a statement was released by the Kentucky House Majority Caucus with KY State Rep. Patrick Flannery, State Rep. Scott Sharp, Sen. Rob-in Webb and Sen. Phillip Wheeler.

The media release stated "Kentucky Power's latest proposed rate increases are just another result of the hostile federal energy policies implemented during the Obama and Biden Administrations. These failed policies targeted coal and fossil fuels and have created an affordability crisis across the nation. Our state is no stranger to its effects. We hear stories from constituents all the time about how increased electric bills are making it harder to keep lights on at home and cover other basic monthly expenses. These rate increases have to stop, and we remain committed to seeking solutions that provide rate relief to Kentuckians."

The proposed rate is nearly a 15 percent increase.

"For many families, seniors and small businesses that compounding effect is a real concern," ended the media statement by the lawmakers.

Louisa Mayor Harold Slone, who did attend the meeting said he did not attend the meeting to question the Commission's responsibility but to ask that they fully consider the downstream impacts this increase will have on public water and wastewater utilities, and "ultimately on the citizens we all serve."

Slone said electricity is essential for these systems.

"This means our residents are hit twice," explained Mayor Slone. "First through increased electric bills and again through increased water and wastewater rates. This compounding effect is especially difficult for seniors on fixed incomes,

working families and small businesses who are already struggling with affordability."

The mayor also explained a rate increase as this could cause difficult decisions on whether to delay maintenance, postpone improvements or raise rates that citizens can at least afford.

The mayor asked the Commission to consider the timing, size, structure and how this rate increase will affect the full chain of public utilities.

Kentucky Power has proposed a rate hike to take effect in Spring 2026 (tentatively March 1) to cover rising operational costs, with a revised settlement proposing an 8% increase in 2026 and a 9% increase in 2027 for residential customers.

The original proposal sought a 14.9% increase, but the negotiated settlement, currently under review by the KPC aims to mitigate the impact of rising costs and declining customer base in Eastern Kentucky.

Key Details of the 2026 Rate Case are:

Proposed Increases: The initial filing requested a 14.9% hike for residential customers and 13–15% for commercial/industrial users.

Settlement Proposal: A 12% increase was proposed after public pushback, which, when combined with deferred tax liabilities, could lead to an 8% increase in 2026 and 9% in 2027.

Impact: If fully approved, the average residential bill could see significant increases, with some reports suggesting an added cost of roughly \$27 per month.

Timeline: A final decision from the PSC is expected by June 29, 2026, or earlier if the settlement is accepted.

Reasons for Increase: The company cites increased costs for equipment, severe weather mitigation, and a shrinking customer base in their 22-county service area.

Public hearings have shown strong opposition due to the high poverty rates in the service area, with residents expressing concerns over affordability.

NEARLY 11 MILLION FREE MEALS SERVED TO KIDS DURING SUMMER OF 2025

FRANKFORT — No Kid Hungry Kentucky, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), and Feeding Kentucky have unveiled new data showing that—for the first time in history—free summer meals for kids were available in all 120 counties of the state. Between May and August 2025, almost 11 million free summer meals were served to Kentucky's children at meal sites throughout the Commonwealth—up from 8.1 million in summer 2024 and 5.3 million in summer 2023.

A major contributor to the expanding reach of summer meal programs across the Commonwealth is the widespread availability of SUN Meals to Go, a grab and go option which allows rural families the flexibility to pick up multiple days' worth of meals to eat off-site or at home. Local school districts and community organizations serving as program sponsors in 113 of Kentucky's 120 counties served over 9.1 million SUN Meals to Go during summer 2025, representing 83% of all summer meals served in the state.

"Children who depend on school lunch and breakfast can now access healthy summer meals in every Kentucky county," said Cathy Gallagher, Summer Food Service program manager, Kentucky Department of Education. "My staff and I are honored to help many school districts and

other organizations close the hunger gap so that children are supported. This helps ensure that kids return to school healthy and ready to learn at the end of summer."

Long standing gaps in local access to U.S. Department of Agriculture summer meal programs in Caldwell and Green counties were closed in 2025 when Caldwell County schools and Feeding America Kentucky's Heartland Food Bank became summer meal sponsors. No Kid Hungry, KDE and the Kentucky Kids Eat Program of Feeding Kentucky provided support to these partners in their expansion and delivery of much-needed SUN Meals to Go service in rural communities.

Public libraries played pivotal roles in summer meal availability in as many as a third of Kentucky counties. The Lawrence County Public Library returned as a sponsor, and many other libraries also served as meal sites. Public libraries in Green and Casey Counties, in particular—where no summer meals were available in 2024 —played key roles in closing gaps for summer meal service in 2025.

"Without access to school meals, summer can be the hungriest time of year for kids across the Commonwealth. Closing the gap in local access to summer meals among Kentucky counties is a perfect example of how local school districts,

DONATE LIFE KENTUCKY TRUST RECORDS ONE OF STRONGEST YEARS EVER FOR DONOR REGISTRATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

MORE THAN 75,000 NEW REGISTERED DONORS

LOUISVILLE — Donate Life Kentucky Trust marked 2025 as one of the strongest years in its history with more than 75,000 Kentuckians joining the state's organ, eye and tissue donor registry, and more than \$1.7 million raised to support the life-saving mission.

More than 1,000 Kentuckians are in need of a life-saving transplant. Each new name on the Donor Registry increases their chance for survival, and each dollar raised by the organization helps provide necessary access to care, making basic living and travel expenses possible for transplant patients and donor families.

"Each dollar donated and each selfless decision to join the Donor Registry symbolizes renewed hope for those waiting," said Shelley Snyder, Executive Director of Donate Life Kentucky Trust. "When Kentuckians choose to register as a donor, or financially contribute to our nonprofit, they're nurturing families and helping them navigate the full transplant journey."

Through its patient and family support programs, Donate Life Kentucky Trust provided direct support to more than 100 families with pre- and post-transplant assistance essentials such as gas and grocery cards, rent and utility assistance, and medication and co-pay support. Additionally, Donate Life Kentucky Trust helped donor families with funeral and memorial needs through their Donor Family Support Program.

Donate Life Kentucky Trust also provided more than \$20,000 in scholarships for Kentucky students who wanted to creatively express their donation and inspire others to register as donors.

In total, thanks to the generosity of Kentuckians, the organization raised \$1,723,045 to support the mission of addressing the unmet needs of the donation and transplant community.

In 2026, the organization will provide 24/7 access to accurate and factual information regarding organ donation. The effort will provide those seeking more information about the donation process instant access to information on their website and through text messaging.

Donate Life Kentucky Trust will continue expanding education on organ donation, deepening community partnerships, honoring donors, and helping families across the Commonwealth by strengthening support. To learn more about the mission, visit www.donatelifeky.org.

ARREST | From A1

thirty-day period of time in which Castle had been seen on security film obtaining items without paying for them but was able to leave without being stopped.

She was charged with theft by unlawful taking/shoplifting and transported to Big Sandy Regional Detention Center.

Castle is a teacher in the Johnson County School System employed at W.R. Castle School. Castle is also a local businesswoman and recently started an online clothing store Mitch & Kate's Boutique.

community organizations such as food banks and public libraries, our Kentucky Department of Education and anti-hunger organizations like Feeding Kentucky and No Kid Hungry can work together to reduce food insecurity when school is out of session," said John Cain, Kentucky Kids Eat Program Director, Feeding Kentucky and Co-Manager, No Kid Hungry Kentucky.

JAIL LISTING			
Big Sandy Regional Detention Center Jail Listings for Lawrence, Johnson and Martin counties from January 19 to January 25.			
Lawrence County			
•Chad Lucas Baisden, 30, of Kermit, WV, is charged with burglary 2nd degree.	charged with contempt of court libel/slander resistance to order.	\$500<1,000.	•Daniel Ray Ritchie, 46, of Nippa, is charged with possession of a controlled substance 1st degree (methamphetamine).
•Earl Bradley Bevins, 42, of Betsy Layne, is charged with failure to appear, drug paraphernalia buy/possess, possession of a controlled substance 1st degree methamphetamine.	•Justin Ray Gibbs, 38, of Lowmansville, was served bench warrant for court.	•Michael Dwayne Caudill, 56, of Salyersville, is charged with failure/improper signal, no registration receipt, no registration plates, possession of open ALC beverage container in motor vehicle, failure of owner to maintain required insurance, failure to wear seatbelts, failure to produce insurance card, operating motor vehicle under the influence.	•Ricky Lee Gauze, 46, of Williamson, is charged with bail jumping 1st degree.
•Lola Boyce, 41, of Louisa, is charged with failure to appear.	•Homer Robert Hale JR., 46, of Louisa, is charged with fleeing/evading police, serving bench warrant for court, drug paraphernalia buy/possess, possession of a controlled substance 1st degree methamphetamine.	•Jessica Rae Fairchild, 37, of Paintsville, is charged with failure to appear.	•Roy Kenneth Goble, 50, of Lovely, is charged with failure to appear, possession of a controlled substance 1st degree methamphetamine.
•Kaydee Lynn Castle, 39, of Louisa, is charged with TBUT or DISP Shoplifting.	•Stacy Brooke Lackey, 36, of Louisa, is charged with assault 4th degree dating violence no visible injury, criminal mischief 2nd degree.	•Clarence Wayne Gipson, 52, of Gunlock, is charged with TBUT or DISP all others \$500<1,000.	•Frankie Lee Maynard, 49, of Pilgrim, is charged with possession of a controlled substance 1st degree (drug unspecified).
•Jessica Renee Fields, 39, of Louisa, is charged with failure to appear.		•Brandon Scott Gullett, 41, unknown address, is charged with failure to appear.	•Shawn David Moore, 46, of Inez, is charged with TBUT or DISP shoplifting.
•Gary Denver Fyffe, 60, of Blaine, is	Johnson County	•Lawrence Paul David Hinkle, 24, unknown address, is charged with probation violation for misdemeanor offense, failure to appear.	•Donald Ray Perkins, 41, of Warfield, is charged with probation violation for felony offense, parole violation for technical violation.