

Week in review

THESE SUMMARIES OF FULL STORIES WERE DRAFTED BY AI AND EDITED BY OUR JOURNALISTS

Our best-read local news stories



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An emergency sign urges precaution as people prepare to drive down Tate's Creek Road into Madison County.

Madison County residents recall escaping floodwaters

Residents of Madison County are sharing harrowing accounts of narrowly escaping floodwaters after eight inches of rainfall struck the region June 27. Shannon Webb said the water rose so fast she only had time to grab her dogs and children before fleeing to higher ground. Her neighbor, Shasta Hensley, had just 10 minutes to collect her dogs and ID before also evacuating. Three people died in Madison County and one in Jackson County, with state officials saying flooding contributed to a Jackson County crash. Gov. Andy Beshear reported 17 households sheltering and 320

homes without water, while the number of communities declaring a state of emergency grew from five to 18 overnight. His administration was seeking both individual and public federal assistance to support recovery efforts.

Reported by Taylor Six, published June 28

Fayette County superintendent files whistleblower claim

Fayette County Superintendent Demetrus Liggins filed a formal whistleblower-reprisal and education-accountability complaint with the Kentucky Office of

Education Accountability on June 25, alleging the Fayette County Board of Education retaliated against him after he raised concerns about a staff member's legislative duties. Liggins has been on paid administrative leave for about two weeks following confusion over a potential resignation. His complaint alleges he raised concerns about Rep. Adrielle Camuel's legislative duties interfering with her role as an FCPS administrative assistant, and that two days later an attorney for Camuel contacted the district. Camuel had previously complained to the board that Liggins alleged-

ly slipped a note under her office door implying a threat of legal action. Liggins has denied writing the email or placing it under her door. The board appointed Assistant Superintendent Bill Bradford as acting superintendent and hired law firm VanAntwerp Attorneys to review Liggins' employment. Liggins' contract runs through 2029.

Reported by Valarie Honeycutt Spears and Beth Musgrave, published June 25

Lexington church's devil skit sparks viral controversy

Mt. Olivet Baptist Church in Lexington is facing online criticism after a video from its vacation Bible school program went viral, showing church staff staging a skit in which soldiers "open fire" on a figure portraying the devil in front of children. Following the "shooting," Pastor Dewayne Walker counts up before an explosion sound is heard, drawing loud cheers from the kids. Walker defended the skit, saying the church has run vacation Bible school for 32 years and annually features a presentation contrasting good and evil. He described the segment as using "the gospel gun" to symbolically defeat sin, stating, "The clip you saw was simply killing the devil." He added the viral clip represents only a small portion of the full program and said he does not plan to address the video further publicly.

Reported by Christopher Leach, published June 29

Beshear to name new UK trustees amid criticism

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear is expected to appoint two new University of Kentucky board trustees before July 30, when the terms of Ron Geoghegan and Robert D. Vance expire. The appointments come after Beshear publicly criticized UK's board, administration, and President Eli Capilouto over transparency concerns, centralized governance, privatization, and employment changes. The governor's Postsecondary Education Nominating Committee announced three finalists for one open seat: Mitchel Denham, Joseph Palumbo, and Donna Perry. Denham is vice chair of the Kentucky Personnel Board; Palumbo serves on the Kentucky Ethics Commission; and Perry is a labor and employment attorney. The state Senate must approve Beshear's final selections.

Reported by Jesse Fraga, published June 29

Lexington draft rules would ban major data centers

Lexington's planning staff has released a draft zoning text amendment that would place significant restrictions on data centers throughout Fayette County. The 20-page proposal prohibits major data centers — defined as facilities exceeding 50,000 square feet — from operating in any zone countywide. Minor data centers would be restricted to warehouse

business and light industrial zones, subject to conditional use requirements. No data center could be located within 1,000 feet of a residential zone, agricultural zone outside the urban service boundary, school, or childcare facility. Generator use would be limited to backup and emergency purposes only. The amendment was initiated after the council unanimously voted in June to draft new rules and enacted a development moratorium through at least Oct. 31. The Planning Commission is scheduled to hold a public hearing on the proposal on July 30.

Reported by Piper Hansen, published June 26

Nature Conservancy expands E. Ky. land holdings

The Nature Conservancy has acquired 1,732 acres in Whitley County, Eastern Kentucky, expanding its presence along the Cumberland-Pine Mountain corridor near Laurel Fork. The newly acquired Thacker property sits between a 1,075-acre tract TNC transferred to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources earlier this year and 253,000 acres of Cumberland Forest known as Ataya. TNC Kentucky director David Phemister described the corridor as critically important for ecological connectivity across the Appalachian Mountains. The organization is considering transferring the Thacker property to KDFWR.

Reported by Austin R. Ramsey, published June 30



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KYLIE COOPER File Photo/REUTERS

Demonstrators hold letters making up the slogan "Born in the USA = citizen" outside the U.S. Supreme Court building as the court hears oral arguments on the legality of the Trump administration's effort to limit birthright citizenship for the children of immigrants, in Washington, D.C., U.S., April 1, 2026.

Supreme Court blocks Trump's birthright citizenship order

The U.S. Supreme Court has rejected President Donald Trump's executive order seeking to restrict birthright citizenship, dealing a significant blow to one of his core immigration priorities. The 6-3 ruling upheld a lower court's decision blocking the order, which directed federal agencies not to recognize citizenship for children born in the United States if neither parent is a citizen or legal permanent resident. Chief Justice John Roberts authored the ruling, citing the 1898 precedent *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* and writing that there was "scant evidence" to support the administration's interpretation of the 14th Amendment. Experts had esti-

mated Trump's directive could have affected the legal status of as many as 250,000 babies born each year in the United States.

Reported by Reuters, published June 30

Homeland secretary urges migrants to get status or leave

U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin said June 28 that migrants living in the United States under temporary protected status should either pursue permanent residency or return to their home countries. Speaking on CNN's "State of the Union" program, Mullin stated, "Ei-

ther try to fill out the paperwork and be here underneath a permanent status or we'll help you get back to your country." The remarks signal the administration's continued pressure on migrants with temporary protections to resolve their immigration status, offering either a path toward legal permanence or assisted departure as the available options going forward.

Reported by Reuters, published June 28

Venezuela quake survivors decry slow government aid

Frustration is mounting across Venezuela after

deadly twin earthquakes struck the country, with the confirmed death toll surpassing 2,200. The back-to-back 7.2- and 7.5-magnitude quakes on June 24 are believed to have killed as many as 140 U.S. deportees, including children, who were staying at a collapsed hotel. Experts say decades of neglect and poor building code enforcement under past leaders Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro likely worsened the toll. In El Junquito, residents say few public officials have appeared, leaving farmers and locals to provide basic supplies. Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado says the government blocked her return from Panama. Three U.S. citizens are confirmed dead and 12 are missing, with a State Department task force fielding over 300 inquiries from Americans seeking assistance.

Reported by Reuters, published June 29

Supreme Court upholds mail-in ballot grace periods

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 on June 29 to uphold state laws allowing mail-in ballots received after Election Day to be counted, rejecting a Republican-led challenge to Mississippi's five-day grace period. Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Amy Coney Barrett joined the court's three liberals in the majority, with Barrett authoring the opinion. Justices Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch, and Brett Kavanaugh dissented. The

ruling overturned a 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decision that had found Mississippi's law inconsistent with federal statutes governing election timing. Following the ruling, President Donald Trump called on Congress to pass the SAVE America Act, which would require photo ID to vote and proof of citizenship to register. About 30 states and Washington, D.C. accept ballots postmarked by Election Day but received afterward.

Reported by Reuters, published June 29

Trump dismisses housing bill, pushes voting curbs

President Donald Trump cast doubt on signing a bipartisan housing affordability bill, calling it "a big yawn" while pressing Congress to first pass the SAVE America Act, which would require proof of citizenship to register to vote and create a national voter database. Trump last week canceled a signing ceremony for the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act to pressure Republicans. The Consumer Price Index jumped to 4.2% in May, its highest since April 2023, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Trump has also repeatedly called affordability "a hoax" and said he does not consider Americans' financial situation when making decisions about the ongoing war on Iran, remarks that risk complicating the election landscape for Republicans ahead of November midterms. Senate Republican

Leader John Thune has declined Trump's push to scrap the 60-vote filibuster threshold.

Reported by Reuters, published June 30

Rep. Kean returns to Congress, cites depression

U.S. Rep. Thomas Kean Jr., a New Jersey Republican, returned to the House floor June 30 after a months-long absence, revealing he had been hospitalized and diagnosed with depression. Kean, who missed more than 100 votes since early March, said he followed his doctor's advice to remain in the hospital. "It is physical. It is emotional," he said of the illness. House Speaker Mike Johnson expressed support, noting that elected officials can face health challenges. "He's missed some votes, but he's still been working as he was able, as he explained," Johnson told reporters before Kean's remarks. "I think his constituents have been served throughout this process. We're all human. People get ailments, people have to fight cancer and terminal diseases, and all sorts of other maladies, but they're still duly elected representatives." Kean faces Democrat Rebecca Bennett in November in New Jersey's 7th Congressional District, a competitive seat that has changed parties twice in the past eight years.

Reported by Reuters, published June 30