

# Opinion

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## Calvin Coolidge understood what new clowns don't

Even someone with a rudimentary understanding of economics should know that if you tax a business or individual beyond their level of tolerance they will pack up and leave the state for one with lower or no state income tax. Unfortunately, one can't escape the long arm of federal taxes.



CAL THOMAS

Proof of this axiom comes from the IRS and its publication of the latest (2023) migration numbers. Unleash Prosperity, which touts its mission to "educate policy makers and the public about government policies that have been proven, in practice, to maximize economic growth and equitable prosperity in America and around the world," constructed a graph from the numbers. Their findings should be no surprise except to those Democrat politicians who are in denial and can't help themselves when it comes to squeezing more money out of successful individuals and businesses.

California leads the list for the most people leaving the state, taking with them \$11.9 billion in revenue. Next is New York, which lost \$9.9 billion, followed by Illinois (\$6 billion), Massachusetts (\$4 billion), New Jersey (\$2.6 billion), Pennsylvania (\$2.2 billion) and four more. All have governors who are Democrats. Most who left went to Florida, Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Arizona and other states with no, or lower taxes.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul takes the chutzpah prize for begging wealthy former residents to return to the state. The reason? She says they have eroded New York's revenue base. She offers them no incentive to return. Maybe a tax cut would help.

New York City's Democrat-Socialist Mayor Zohran Mamdani wants to raise taxes on the wealthy, but can't do it without approval from the General Assembly. If it happens, expect even more people to flee.

According to Bloomberg.com, approximately 546,000 residents left New York between April 2020 and 2024.

Democrats in Washington State have adopted a 9.9 percent state tax. It's scheduled to take effect Jan. 1, 2028. That leaves time for the wealthy to make moving plans. Their politicians

appear as ignorant, or blind, as those in states which already are losing overtaxed residents and businesses.

This may not be socialism in its purest form, but it is headed in that direction.

As this is the centenary of our 30th president, Calvin Coolidge, his economic philosophy might be instructive for contemporary politicians who keep taxing and spending beyond the means of many to keep up.

Coolidge said: "A government which requires of the people the contribution of the bulk of their substance and rewards cannot be classed as a free government, or long remain as such."

How about this one: "The collection of any taxes which are not absolutely required, which do not beyond reasonable doubt contribute to the public welfare, is only a species of legalized larceny. Under this republic the rewards of industry belong to those who earn them."

Coolidge's economic views are the antithesis of socialism, a failed economic system that is gaining popularity among younger Americans who have never had to live under it.

While the late composer Stephen Sondheim probably never would have allowed any of his songs to be used for political ends, one from his musical "A Little Night Music" could fit the thinking and policies of high tax Democrat states.

The lyrics include "Isn't it rich (no pun intended)? Aren't we a pair (Hochul and Mamdani). And then the concluding line: "Don't you love farce (politicians)? My fault, I fear (they never admit error). I thought that you'd want what I want (taxpayers) Sorry, my dear. But where are the clowns? Quick, send in the clowns Don't bother, they're here." They are certainly here and not just in high tax blue states, but also in Congress.

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## After years of effort, kinship care still awaiting meaningful action

I spent years advocating for Senate Bill 151 — Kentucky's kinship law. When it unanimously passed in 2024, I celebrated. When I recently urged lawmakers to reject the state's proposed implementation plan, people asked me why?



NORMA HATFIELD

Here's my answer: I fought for this law because kinship families deserve meaningful support; not a promise that runs out of money. Kentucky's children have many unmet needs. We need to leverage what's available so that we can do more for them consistently. We aren't there yet.

SB 151 gives kinship caregivers up to 120 days to stabilize children and make informed decisions. It offered a qualifying event pathway into kinship foster care and ensured children have a voice in placement; it directed the state to maximize federal funding.

Yet, a straightforward law has become a "little law that could" — struggling to move forward for reasons that have little to do with children or families.

So here we are, two years later and it remains unimplemented. A key reason cited is Fletcher v. Commonwealth of Kentucky, which addresses whether agencies can move forward without specific legislative funding. There's been ongoing litigation and recently the Kentucky Attorney General filed an amicus brief supporting

the state auditor's position. As for funding, in the fall of 2025, the state auditor identified \$25 million in unspent Medicaid-related funds. She recommended that a portion (\$15.9 million) go towards SB 151. Gov. Beshear used the other \$9.1 million toward a senior meals program which previously ran out of money. Despite the auditor's recommendation and available funding, SB 151 remained stalled.

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services has proposed implementing SB 151 using state funding rather than leveraging federal dollars. No alternative approach has been formally presented. That choice matters. How a program is structured determines whether Kentucky can access federal funding. At a time of competing needs, using only state dollars for a larger program can potentially impact the ability to provide services elsewhere.

serious needs are visible and they're all competing for limited funding that a stronger SB 151 implementation could help address. For example, a 2026 state auditor's report confirmed that children removed from their homes by the state are spending nights in office buildings, hotels, and other unlicensed settings — 304 children over 22 months, totaling 1,577 days. Similar findings were documented

in 2025 and the issue has persisted since at least 2023. In 2024, legislative testimony, CHFS Secretary Eric Friedlander said Kentucky would "pay what it takes" to address this problem.

The Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program was reduced by 35% in the fall of 2025 due to funding constraints. KTAP serves families below the poverty line and 42% of kinship families rely on it. No funding restoration plan is in sight.

These types of programs serve vulnerable children and families trying to hold their lives together. How can Kentucky ignore millions of dollars in untapped funding when we could receive approximately 71 cents on the dollar from the federal government? The opportunity applies directly to SB 151. Where's the creativity and persistence to pursue it?

The estimated proposed price tag for SB 151 is approximately \$14.7 million in state funds solely. Its plan is created from an estimate that has a limited data snapshot of caregivers; it lacks clear guardrails for qualifying events and it uses language such as "to the extent the General Assembly appropriates state general funds" — documenting that the funds may run out.

That risk of running out of funds is unacceptable. When funding evaporates, services stop and don't always return. Families feel the impact; bureaucracy moves on.

As for SB 151, legislators

found the proposed regulation deficient. It failed to incorporate an approach for federal funds that the law directed the state to pursue.

The regulation being found deficient isn't the end, it's an opportunity. After two years, Kentucky's kids shouldn't face more delays. We need to focus on the work and not excuses.

Kentucky isn't being asked to invent something new. The tools exist. I've offered to share research from other states. The question is whether CHFS is willing to consider other options.

As for state funding, legislators have proposed \$5 million annually for kinship implementation — approximately Kentucky's share if federal funding were utilized, based on CHFS estimates.

That's my "why" — real examples of unmet needs across Kentucky's child welfare system that can be addressed by leveraging available federal funding and fully implementing SB 151. With more resources, we can do more across the system.

We have the law. We have the tools. We need meaningful action.

Norma Hatfield of Elizabethtown is president of the Kinship Families Coalition of Kentucky and a member of the Grand Voice Network with Generations United. She can be reached at [njh@me.com](mailto:njh@me.com).

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

#### DIFFERENCE OF OPINION SHOULD NOT BE PUNISHED

The dictionary's definition of authoritarianism is a political system characterized by preserving the political status quo and reductions in democracy, separation of powers, civil liberties and the rule of law. Do these actions sound familiar?

Any media source not agreeing with our current administration now are referred to as terrorist groups. I find that worrisome. Newly appointed Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr insists broadcasters

who air "fake news" must "correct course before their license renewals come up."

Just because you do not agree with the spoken or written word does not mean it is unlawful or untrue. Should our leaders be able to pick and choose what is broadcasted? Isn't that called censorship?

We all know there is more than one side to any issue. Variety is the spice of life. If we all rooted for the same team, there would not be a sport.

Thomas Jefferson was frequently attacked in the press. He advised editors to divide their newspapers into four sections labeled truth,

probabilities, possibilities and lies and observed that the first section would be the smallest and the last the largest. We expect news coverage to be reasonably unbiased and hopefully factual, whereas editorial pieces usually relay the opinion of the publisher.

Maybe we should watch an hour of Fox News and an hour of CNN and find the truth is somewhere in the middle.

Joseph Goebbels, a German politician and chief propagandist for the Nazi Party said, "Repeat a lie often enough and people will believe it." The public wants the facts and the truth, but

our media outlets achieve higher ratings through partisan coverage.

Denzel Washington in the movie American Gangster said, "The loudest one in the room is the weakest one in the room."

Pundits or commentators may spout their opinions in an authoritative manner with conviction but may be drawing their so-called valid data from second- or third-hand sources. There is no law or requirement for pundits to have expertise as a subject matter expert on all issues or situations.

Larry Keene  
Elizabethtown

### TODAY'S QUOTE

"Truth is strong and sometime or other will prevail."  
— Mary Astell, English writer (166-1731)



### ABOUT THIS PAGE

Opinion pages are intended to provide a forum for discussion of issues of local interest. If you have a question, call 270-769-2312 or write 408 W. Dixie Ave., Elizabethtown, KY 42701. Letters to the editor may be submitted by mail or sent by email to [letters@thenewsenterprise.com](mailto:letters@thenewsenterprise.com)

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