

# SEN. RICK GIRDLER'S LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Week eight of the 2026 Regular Session

Much of the attention in Frankfort right now is turning to the biggest priorities of the session, especially education and the state budget. As legislation moves between the House and Senate, the focus is on long-term policies that will impact Kentucky families, students, and communities for years to come. This week, the General Assembly advanced House Bill (HB) 1, a major education measure that allows Kentucky to participate in a new federal Education Freedom Tax Credit program. The program, created by Congress in 2025, provides a federal tax credit for donations that help fund educational opportunities for students. By opting in, Kentucky ensures those federal dollars connected to Kentucky taxpayers stay here and support students in our own communities. Importantly, HB 1 does not create a new state program, raise taxes, or reduce funding for public schools. Kentucky's education funding formula remains unchanged, and SEEK funding is not impacted. Instead, this measure allows families to access additional resources for expenses such as tutoring, instructional materials, special services, and other educational supports. These tools can strengthen student success across public, private, and other learning environments. The choice before Kentucky is straightforward. Federal tax credits will be claimed regardless of whether the state participates. Opting in ensures those resources benefit Kentucky students rather than flowing to other states that have already joined the program. Below are several measures that were approved in the Senate this week.

define approval criteria in law and issue decisions within 30 days when no timeline exists. SB 124 allows school districts to offer teachers and school employees the option to receive payment for a portion of unused sick leave while still preserving the choice to save time for emergencies or retirement. SB 129 reduces employer contribution rates to the Unemployment Insurance Service Capacity Upgrade Fund, which was created to modernize the state's unemployment system after failures during the COVID-19 pandemic. SB 162 streamlines Kentucky's juvenile diversion process by removing a required step that testimony showed had become slow and inconsistent in many communities. SB 170 creates a pilot program in at least 10 school districts to address habitual truancy through earlier intervention, stronger family engagement and improved coordination among schools, courts and community partners. SB 101 strengthens protections for teachers and school staff by requiring school districts to adopt policies addressing assaults against educators and ensuring incidents are reported to law enforcement.

accountability and efficiency. An emergency provision ensures uninterrupted service during the transition.

SB 37 designates the Treeing Walker Coonhound as Kentucky's official state dog, recognizing the breed's deep connection to the commonwealth's hunting heritage and outdoor traditions.

SB 157 aligns Kentucky mortgage law with federal standards by clarifying how certain loan amounts are calculated and providing exemptions for loans below federal thresholds. The measure promotes consistency and transparency in lending.

SB 214 authorizes the Department of Agriculture to accept and manage nonfederal grants and private funds that support its programs. An emergency clause allows the department to immediately pursue new funding opportunities that benefit farmers and rural communities.

As always, it's an honor to represent you in Frankfort. If you have questions or ideas, feel free to contact my office at 502-564-8100 or email me at Rick.Girdler@kylegislature.gov. You can learn more about bills, committees, and other updates from the Kentucky General Assembly at [www.legislature.ky.gov](http://www.legislature.ky.gov). Sen. Rick Girdler, R-Somerset, represents the 15th Senate District, including Clinton, Cumberland, Pulaski, Russell, and Wayne Counties. Girdler serves as vice chair of the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee. He is also a member of the Senate Committees on Economic Development, Tourism, and Labor; Families and Children; and Natural Resources and Energy. Additionally, Girdler serves on the Capital Projects and Bond Oversight Committee.

SB 98 requires contractors to comply with recognized welding safety standards when specified in project plans and ensures qualified inspection of critical welds.

SB 122 gives courts the ability to consider whether a nonviolent defendant is the primary caretaker of a dependent child when determining an appropriate sentence.

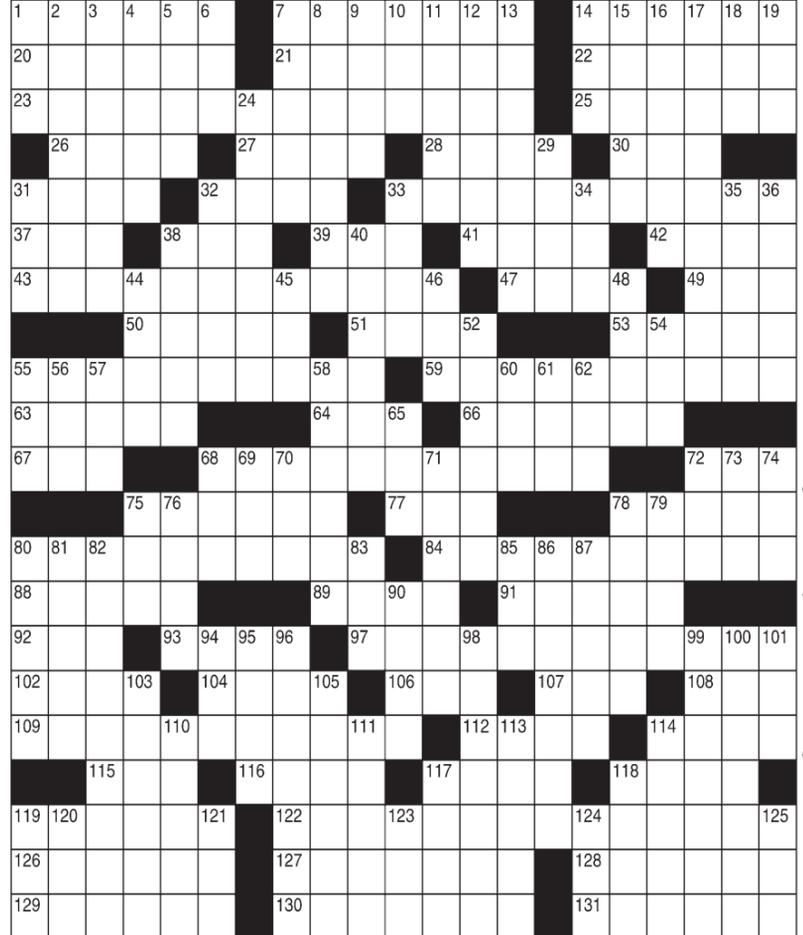
HB 314 modernizes oversight of KentuckyWired by transferring operational management to state technology professionals and reforming governance to improve

3/5/26

## Super Crossword

FUN 'N' GAMES

- ACROSS**
- 1 Lack of vitality
  - 7 Neighbor of Florida
  - 14 Garlicky sauces
  - 20 In a rational manner
  - 21 Unexpired driver's license, e.g.
  - 22 Well-spoken
  - 23 Whole bunch of baby felines?
  - 25 Regions, weatherwise
  - 26 Some reddish deer
  - 27 Sex educator Shere
  - 28 Jokester Jay
  - 30 Viscous stuff
  - 31 DVD: — (data holders)
  - 32 Make angry
  - 33 Dogs that hunt egrets?
  - 37 Fade away
  - 38 B.A., e.g.
  - 39 Corp. exec in charge of ads and branding
  - 41 Locale
  - 42 "Oh, gotcha"
  - 43 Snacks that help physicists build atomic bombs?
  - 47 Campus digs
  - 49 Text-scanning device: Abbr.
  - 50 French for "the king"
  - 51 Head up
  - 53 1890s veep Stevenson
  - 55 Back of an overseas ship?
  - 59 Entrepreneur Bezos who cooks sheep delicacies?
  - 63 Tan-colored
  - 64 "Ich bin — Berliner"
  - 66 Actors Momoa and Satham
  - 67 Frigid
  - 68 Ladies who use Speed Stick?
  - 72 — Newton
  - 75 Shared a living space
  - 77 Water, in Lille
  - 78 2008 documentary about the national debt
  - 80 Cover girl from a city in central Georgia?
  - 84 Fire breather's parachute descent?
  - 88 Flabbergast
  - 89 Paddy food
  - 91 — Park (Edison's home)
  - 92 Machinery wheel
  - 93 Unwell
  - 97 Package shipped to singer Dolly?
  - 102 From the top
  - 104 En — (in full court)
  - 106 Free TV spot, in brief
  - 107 "I taut I — a puddy tat!"
  - 108 Med. group
  - 109 Serenity in a rabbit colony?
  - 112 Woody den
  - 114 U-boats, e.g.
  - 115 Feel unwell
  - 116 Andean land
  - 117 French essayist Simone
  - 118 Singer Horne
  - 119 Nag
  - 122 Answer from poet Countee?
  - 126 Greek goddess of wisdom
  - 127 Phoenician goddess of fertility
  - 128 "Could be"
  - 129 Dony
  - 130 Owen
  - 131 Atlantic City hotel/casino
  - 132 Request
  - 2 Capital of Kenya
  - 3 Buries
  - 4 Doles (out)
  - 5 Specks in la mer
  - 6 "Anthem" author Rand
  - 7 Benefit
  - 8 Med. test worker
  - 9 Balm additive
  - 10 Playbill info
  - 12 Some track runners
  - 13 Lymphoid throat mass
  - 14 Ravens' gp.
  - 15 "Send me!"
  - 16 "Yes, yes!" in France
  - 17 Food flatfish
  - 18 Suffix with Benedict
  - 19 Roads: Abbr.
  - 24 Bun worn at the back of the neck
  - 29 Savvy about
  - 31 Fight arbiter
  - 32 Co. shuffling
  - 33 Expectation
  - 34 That girl
  - 35 Unstimulating java
  - 36 Letter stroke
  - 38 Protest at which people lie down
  - 40 "Uncle" of old TV
  - 44 Whole lot
  - 45 U.S. spy gp.
  - 46 "Uncle" of the U.S.
  - 48 Singer Aimee
  - 52 "Of the day," on menus
  - 54 VIPs at raves
  - 55 DOJ agency
  - 56 Tolkien fiend
  - 57 Crooner Orbison
  - 58 Often-dinged car feature
  - 60 — o'-shanter
  - 61 Mao — tung
  - 62 Ending for ball or bass
  - 65 DE-to-VT dir.
  - 68 Dad's mate
  - 69 Angsty genre
  - 70 Flanders of "The Simpsons"
  - 71 Fishing boots
  - 72 Animal's coat
  - 73 The same: Prefix
  - 74 Hiatus
  - 75 Cartoonist Chast
  - 76 Wallet bills
  - 78 Spouse's father, e.g.
  - 79 Bad smell
  - 80 Kind of parrot
  - 81 Refrigerator brand
  - 82 Reluctant to be filmed
  - 83 Glass edge
  - 85 Latin "I love"
  - 86 Non-Jewish
  - 87 Comparable (with)
  - 90 Robin's wear
  - 94 "Son of," in Arabic
  - 95 AI who drew L'il Abner
  - 96 Patella
  - 98 Natural gifts
  - 99 England-to-France connector
  - 100 Envoy's residence
  - 101 — Angeles
  - 103 Authors
  - 105 David of "NYPD Blue"
  - 110 Justice Kagan
  - 111 Niche sects
  - 113 Buenos —
  - 114 Capital of South Korea
  - 117 Existed
  - 118 Meg Mallon's gp.
  - 119 Wok, e.g.
  - 120 Greek vowel
  - 121 Light beam
  - 123 Notes before tis
  - 124 Sis, e.g.
  - 125 Swirly letter



Answers on Page 9

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