

Opinion

Bills reviewed by judiciary committee

The House Judiciary Committee plays a vital role in shaping the laws that impact Kentuckians every day. From contracts and courts to juvenile justice, jails, prisons, and other correctional facilities, the issues before this committee are broad and deeply consequential.

While every legislative committee reviews new laws, the Judiciary Committee is especially significant because it helps establish the legal framework that underpins both our civil and criminal justice systems. Its work defines and defends our rights and responsibilities, ensures accountability, and promotes public safety.

Here are several key pieces of legislation approved by the House Judiciary Committee during the 2025 session:

Addressing Property Damage and Loss Caused by Squatters — HB 10 streamlines the process for law enforcement to remove squatters from private property while enhancing penalties for those who unlawfully damage real estate.

Strengthening Domestic Violence Laws — HB 38 makes violating a protective order three times in five years a class D felony.

Enhancing Accountability in Criminal Justice Institutions — HB 136 requires the annual report made to the legislature by the Department of Corrections to include additional data on persons released from a correctional institution, including time served, gang-affiliation, drug test results, educational attainment, and recidivism.

Penalizing Failure to Return Rented/Leased Personal Property — HB 201 expands the definition of theft by failure to make required disposition of property to include situations where an individual retains rental or lease equipment or other items valued at \$100 or more beyond the contractually agreed period.

Protecting the Integrity of Legislative Proceedings — HB 399 creates the crime of interference with a legislative proceeding

for knowingly engaging in disorderly or disruptive conduct in any legislative building that disrupts, impedes, or prevents the legislature from conducting business.

Honoring Kentuckians — HB 662 protects the personally identifiable information of judicial officers and their immediate family members; establishes a process for the removal of personally identifiable information from publicly available content.

Banning Taxpayer-Funded Gender Transitions in Prison — SB 2 prohibits public resources from being used to fund cosmetic services or elective procedures like gender transitioning surgeries and hormone therapies. The measure allows for eligible drug or hormone therapies to be tapered off if a health care provider documents that ending the treatment immediately would cause harm to the inmate.

Protecting Critical Infrastructure — SB 64 strengthens penalties for the theft of copper from critical infrastructure, including cable, telephone, electrical highway, and broadband.

Protecting Our Most Vulnerable from Sextortion — SB 73 establishes the crime of sexual extortion; requires posting of information and resources available, and mandates school district superintendents to notify students in 4th grade and above, as well as parents and guardians of all students, of the crime of sexual extortion.

Providing Law Enforcement Tools to Investigate Child Exploitation — SB 169 allows administrative subpoenas to gather records from social networks, mobile payment services, and cloud storage providers in law enforcement cases investigating crimes related to child exploitation, harassment, and stalking.

As always, I can be reached anytime through the toll-free message line in Frankfort at 1-800-372-7181. You can also contact me via email at Daniel.Elliott@kylegislature.gov and keep track through the Kentucky legislature's website at legislature.ky.gov.



DANIEL ELLIOTT
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Life lessons at graduation

As I have done for several years, I attended the graduation ceremony held on Friday at the high school.

So many things are the same. Some things change. One thing that won't change is the determination to give these graduates some pieces of advice, some kernels of wisdom, that the speakers I guess hope the teens will reflect on. I don't think much of what was said will be remembered by most of them. I know that because I don't remember what was said in my graduation ceremony. I was not in a focused state, with a million thoughts and emotions going through my head.



CHARLIE VANLEUVEN
EDITOR

I also wasn't sure they would give me a diploma. Yes I wasn't a good student in high school, but I made up for that in college. Wouldn't that have been something for them to stop the whole ceremony and tell that in fact I should probably go home?

Anyway, the lessons given to the Class of 2025 were to remember their roots, and to follow their dreams. Also they should work hard which is great advice.

I have some potentially bad advice to give, but first I wanted to bring up something that happened at the ceremony. Two elderly people were carried out of the gymnasium. The first situation happened

before the event began. I saw a crowd move out of a section of the bleachers, then I saw people carrying an elderly man down off the bleachers and out the side door. Then a woman near me also collapsed during a musical performance and she too was carried out. I hope both the man and the woman are doing fine now, but it was both concerning and very touching.

Here there were two people not in the best shape trying so hard to be a part of their grandchildren's or great-grandchildren's celebration. Perhaps they shouldn't have come, but they were determined to come. They so loved their graduating family members that they came anyway. That was the first thing that struck me, was the love that the older generation carries.

I guess that's the first thing I would tell a graduate is that love is a powerful thing. It is so powerful that it can save the world. It conquers hate. It produces a brilliant light that scatters the darkness of despair. Without love there is no hope. With love all can be overcome, even death.

The second life lesson comes from an old joke. The woman's light hair color may or may not be an important part of the joke.

It goes like this: A woman prayed and prayed that she would hit the jackpot of the lottery. She said, "Please God, let me win this lottery and I will do so much good with it."

The winning numbers were drawn and she didn't win.

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Living off the grid

I recently watched a TV show called Homestead Rescue about people who go back of beyond to get away from city living and to live "off the grid."

Off the grid? It means that, unlike me, they would not have East Casey Water Company for water, KU for electricity, Luttrell's for trash collection, or Windstream for phone and internet. They can't raise their own food or take advantage of other food sources available to them like deer and wild hogs. If they try to raise livestock, they can't protect them so they lose them to predators. They quickly find out they can't live or even barely survive on their homesteads so they call in the Raney family to help them.

The Raney family consists of a father and his daughter and son. All are adept at driving big yellow machines (bobcats, skid steers, loaders, excavators), felling trees, building houses, making greenhouses and gardens, and literally moving mountains or part of them. They bring a small

building crew in with them and correct the worst problems the wanna-be homesteaders have.

These are usually the need for sanitary facilities (indoor toilet or outdoor privy), a source of clean water, and emergency contact with the outside world. They get things like solar panels, building materials, chickens and other livestock donated to the homesteaders. The Raney's leave them in much better shape than they were when they arrived.

Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute! I've been thinking about my Wells grandparents and how they lived. They didn't know it but they lived "off the grid".

My grandparents lived in a house they built in 1895. It had no insulation, no electricity until much later, no indoor plumbing, no way of heating except wood-burning stoves, no air conditioning, and no phone until years later. They had chamber pots ("thunder mugs") they used at night then took out to the privy in

the morning to empty them.

When they needed water for drinking, cooking, or bathing, they went outside to the well and brought it to the house in a bucket. My grandmother did laundry in the back yard in a big iron kettle full of water under which she built a fire to heat it. The laundry process took all day — from dawn until dark — then the ironing had to be done during the following week.

My grandparents did not have a refrigerator until I was about six years old. To preserve fresh perishable foods like milk and butter, they kept them in cool well water in the old wellhouse.

Other foods like vegetables and fruits got canned or dried. Meat was smoked and stored in the smokehouse until it was used. Even sausage got canned. Lard was a desirable byproduct of hog slaughtering and it was used not only in food preparation but in the production of lye soap. (My grandmother's lye soap even floated like Ivory soap.)

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THE AMISH COOK

The blessing of new life

BY GLORIA YODER

A week ago, we were all thrilled to have a newborn added to the Raber family; Jenson Kade was born to my younger sister, Faith, and her husband. There is nothing quite like that newborn preciousness of a brand-new breath, ready to grow into his or her own unique self. My far-away sister from South Dakota had come for a period of six weeks with plans to have a home birth at their rental home in Illinois. We were delighted to have this rare opportunity to spend time with Jenson during his first several weeks of life.

Yesterday brought on another whole new set of excitement. Brother Javin and his wife were getting ready to have their twin boys. The names were kept a secret (though we had given them oodles of suggestions to 'help' them along).

Now, it was just a matter of waiting out the wait. Javin's wife had done amazing throughout all the discomforts of carrying twins, and now the time was getting super close.

Yesterday morning, I explained to the children that I would need all of their help for the day ahead. I explained to them that what they

do for others, they are actually doing for Jesus. They listened, intrigued with the idea of doing something of value. I went on to explain how, when I was a girl, I would at times have jobs at home which I did not enjoy while others would get to go do more fun things, but in essence, we were all serving by being where we're meant to be.

While I had their attention I went on to explain that I would need their help to do some projects around the house and flow with their big Sister Julia while I would go to Washington, Indiana with Javin and Regina where their babies would be born. They seemed to catch on to the idea of doing what they could. By 10:45 I was off. Jesse had joined Grandpa at their little country store while the rest of the children worked on the list that Hosanna and I had gotten ready for them.

I prayed as we cruised down the highway. There was so much to trust God for — children at home, twins on the way, and high blood pressure for the expectant mama to work with.

An hour later, Mom and I were walking in the hospital. How thankful I was to have Mom with me.

It didn't take us long to find the correct room where Javins had just settled into. Ah, it was so good to see them there.

Hours passed as we waited on a plan of moving forward. Toward evening, the doctor came and gave his orders. My mind drifted this way and that, a number of years ago there was another birth at a hospital where Daniel's nephew, Israel, was born; this precious little baby lived for two hours as we held him, crying, yet marveling over God's hand in it all.

Now in Regina's room there were also reminders of the nurses and doctors who so diligently tried their best to nurse my husband back to life, but it was not to be. Then there was my precious daughter who was born at this very hospital a number of years ago, long before I actually knew of her existence. How I would have loved to turn back the clock of time and see her as a newborn. As she said before I left for the hospital yesterday morning, "Maybe I was even born in the same room!?" I will forever be thankful to the God who created her, it does not matter how or to whom we were born, God made us family. Surely the miracle of adoption is not cheap or less than

the best!

Now today we were waiting for these two little boys to be born. It was like the hand of God Himself was there through every step and every dimension.

At 9:04 and 9:09 they were born safe and sound, crying their sweetest newborn cry. I used to wonder if there's anything like that first cry of the baby that has been waited on for months on end; well yes, there is! Two treasured souls equals double the joy, double love, and double bonding.

No, it's not like my own, but it is rich and it is precious. Jotham Daniel was born first, weighing 7 lb. and 3 oz, followed by Jordan Daniel, tipping the scales at 6 lb and 5 oz. Jordan soon showed an issue with his breathing. The nurse kindly explained to us that she will need to take him to help him breathe. I watched in anguish as this dear little body tried to breath laboriously. In my heart I knew he would be okay, still it was hard to not see him stay with his mama. Javin and I stood by his warming bed and prayed for him. I sensed God telling me that it is important that we remain at peace, even for the baby's sake.

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