

‘During this moratorium, we have not received any applications (for a data center); we have not considered any applications. That’s given us the space, I think, necessary to draft an ordinance with no external pressure on the process.’

Planning Director Holden Fleming responding to the public at a recent forum about data centers

Other views

America’s AI boom has a blue-collar challenge

America’s artificial intelligence future may depend as much on electricians, welders, and construction workers as it does on software engineers.

Technology companies are investing at a remarkable pace in the infrastructure needed to power AI. Microsoft, Meta, Amazon, and Alphabet are expected to spend about \$700 billion just this year. That figure doesn’t include the additional investments required for semiconductor manufacturing and electric grid renovation.

But there’s a major obstacle: America doesn’t have enough skilled workers to build everything the AI economy will require.

By 2030, the United States could need an additional 140,000 more skilled tradespeople — welders, HVAC technicians, construction workers, electricians, and others — to meet AI infrastructure demand. Finding and training them should be a national priority.

During a recent trip to Switzerland, I was briefed on the latest data from the nearly century-old Swiss apprenticeship model. This skills-based program has helped support one of the most innovative economies in the world by providing clear, respected pathways into technical careers.

Through Switzerland’s Vocational Education and Training system, students can begin apprenticeships as early as age 15, combining classroom instruction with practical experience at participating companies. Today, roughly 70 percent of Swiss young people participate in apprenticeships spanning construction, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, healthcare, banking, and other industries.

Importantly, choosing an apprenticeship doesn’t close the door to higher education. Graduates can enter their chosen profession or continue their studies and pursue a university degree. The system therefore gives students multiple routes to successful careers rather than treating vocational and academic education as competing tracks.

Employers benefit, too. Companies see an estimated 7 percent to 10 percent return on their investment in apprenticeship programs, and many apprentices ultimately remain with the companies that trained them. Businesses gain a reliable way to develop talent while workers receive skills tied directly to available jobs. Programs can also evolve alongside technology and industry, rather than training workers for jobs that may no longer exist.

That approach is particularly relevant as America builds the physical foundation of the AI economy.

Demand for skilled trades is poised to increase dramatically. Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang has estimated “six-figure salaries for people who are building chip factories or computer factories or AI factories.” Meanwhile, more young Americans are showing interest in vocational education as they face uncertainty about some white-collar careers and rising higher-education costs.

Employers should seize that opportunity by investing not only in wages, but also in apprenticeship pipelines.

Some states have already started. Colorado’s Career-Wise program, partially inspired by the Swiss model, combines classroom education with paid apprenticeships in fields such as information technology and advanced manufacturing. Similar efforts are emerging elsewhere as employers look for sustainable ways to develop skilled workers.

Those programs should become the beginning of a broader movement.

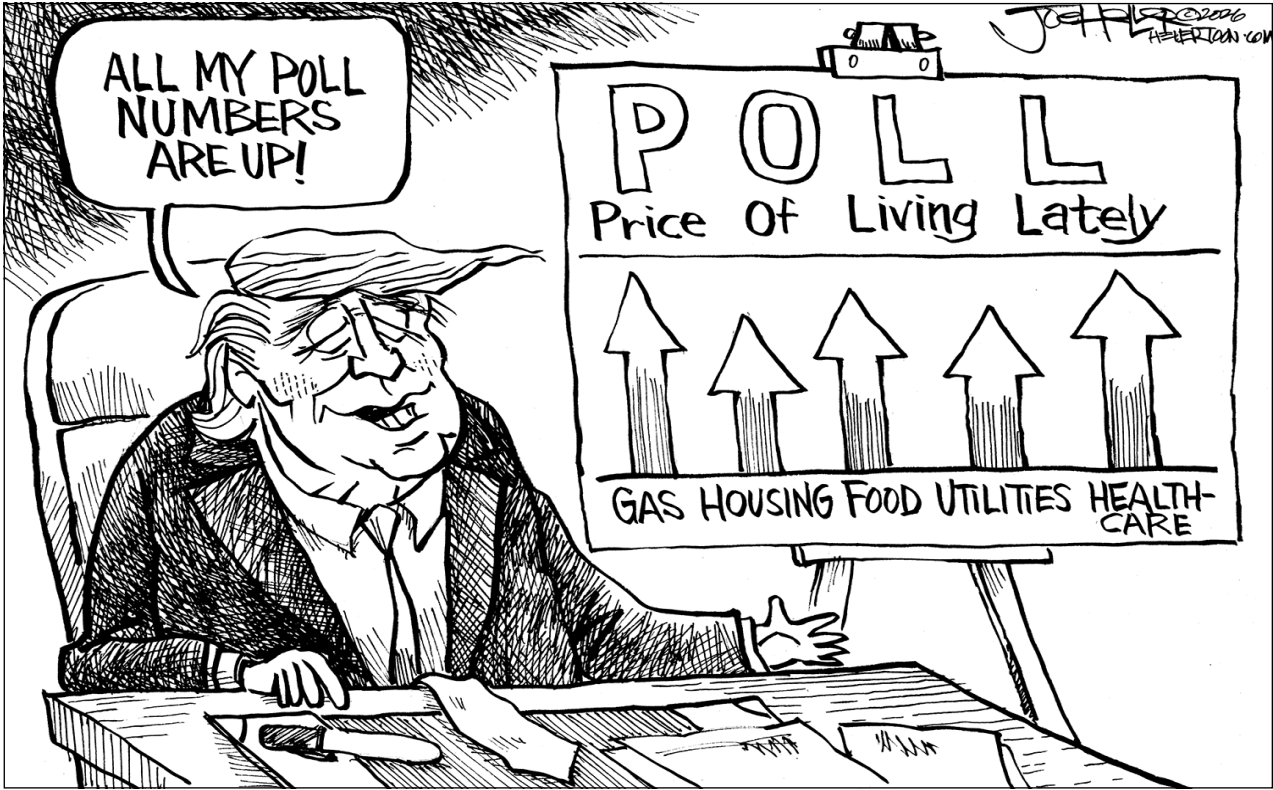
America’s AI leadership won’t be secured by algorithms and computing power alone. It will also require people who can build chip plants, install electrical systems, wire data centers, and maintain the infrastructure beneath the digital economy.

Switzerland has spent generations building that kind of workforce. As America confronts its own AI infrastructure challenge, we should learn from its example.

ROB PORTMAN is a former U.S. Senator and represented Ohio from 2011 to 2023.



Rob Portman
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Guest Columnist



Why we return money to Kentuckians

A few months ago, a Kentucky coal miner came to one of our unclaimed property county roadshows and discovered something he never knew was his: a significant amount of money waiting for him.

For his family, it couldn’t have come at a better time.

They were preparing to welcome a new child. Just the year before, the family had lost their home in the devastating Eastern Kentucky floods. They had already endured tremendous hardship when they learned the Kentucky Treasury was holding a substantial amount of money that belonged to them.

That money could not give them back the home they lost or erase what they had been through.

But it could help them move forward. It gave them an opportunity for a fresh start.

That is why we return money.

Kentucky has been safeguarding and returning unclaimed property for generations. The Commonwealth’s unclaimed property laws have been in effect since the 1940’s, creating a process to secure financial assets until their rightful owners can be found.

The law has changed over the decades, but the basic responsibility has remained the same: when money belongs to a Kentuckian, we should do everything we can to return it to them.

Behind every unclaimed property claim is a person, a family, a business or an organization. Sometimes the amount is significant. Sometimes it is only a few dollars.

But you cannot measure the impact of a claim simply by looking at the amount.

A large claim can help a family rebuild. A smaller one might mean a few days’ groceries, gas to get to work, a utility bill paid, or an unexpected expense covered.

And sometimes, this money serves an even more important purpose. When someone who

has unclaimed property also has outstanding child support or criminal restitution obligation, the unclaimed money may be sent to the custodial parent or the crime victim rather than paid to the defendant.

This is another way unclaimed property makes a difference in the lives of Kentuckians — by putting money where it is needed most.

Unclaimed property comes from many places—old bank accounts, death benefits from lost life insurance policies, left-behind utility and apartment deposits, uncashed paychecks, forgotten safe deposit boxes, and other financial assets that busy people sometimes neglect. Too often, people do not even realize they are missing money.

Our responsibility is to safeguard this money and return it to the rightful

owner. After a statutory period, typically three years, financial institutions and businesses turn unclaimed property over to the Kentucky State Treasury for safekeeping. The Treasury then maintains a searchable database so people can find and reclaim what belongs to them.

Since taking office, returning unclaimed property has been a priority of my administration. We have taken this program directly to Kentuckians through county roadshows and brought this search to events across the Commonwealth, including the Kentucky State Fair.

Kentuckians can be proud of our progress. We recently passed \$123 million returned to Kentucky families from every walk of life.

I too am proud of this milestone, but I do not think about it as simply \$123 million. I think about the people behind that number—families getting a fresh start, Kentuckians getting help with unexpected expenses, and children getting their child support.

I also think about people discovering money they never knew was

waiting for them, about the son who learned his deceased mother left him the death benefits of a life insurance policy he never knew existed. Surprise, mixed with tears and gratitude, describes his reaction.

That is the difference this program makes.

And that is why Kentucky is recognizing Unclaimed Property Week during the fourth week of September, Sept. 21–25, 2026. This year, the General Assembly established the fourth week of September as Unclaimed Property Week, giving us an opportunity to shine a light on the program and encourage more Kentuckians to search for money that may belong to them.

For the first time, we are dedicating a week to raising awareness about the millions of dollars in unclaimed property waiting to be returned to Kentuckians. Too many people still do not know this program exists, and we want to change that.

I encourage every Kentuckian to visit treasury.ky.gov and search for unclaimed property. Search for yourself, your family members and even your business. It’s free, and it only takes a few minutes.

You may find thousands of dollars. You may find \$10. You may find nothing at all this time.

But you will never know unless you take a moment to search your name. It’s important to check every year.

Government has a responsibility to be a good steward of the resources entrusted to it. When that money belongs to a Kentuckian, our responsibility is simple: safeguard and return it.

Because behind every dollar is a story.

And sometimes, returning that money does more than put a check in someone’s hands.

Sometimes, it gives a Kentucky family a new beginning and confidence their government remembered them.

MARK METCALF is the Kentucky State Treasurer.



Guest Columnist
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Mark Metcalf

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Editor’s Note: Letters to the Editor are the expressed opinions of the writers and not necessarily the opinions of the News-Graphic.

Holding values our community deserves

To the Editor,

During the Planning Commission’s public hearing on September 17, I took a strong stance against data centers. I was proud to stand alongside over 100 fellow Scott Countians who shared my concerns about inviting a potentially ruinous industry into our community. The many thanks I received vastly outweighed the criticisms.

However, one comment stuck with me. After adjourning, an individual reprimanded me for asking pointed questions in a public forum, and suggested that my conduct “says a lot about my values.” Since they were called into question, I’d like to share what my values are, and why our community deserves leaders who embody them.

Chief among them is stewardship. I’m loyal to the soil upon which my ancestors toiled. Scott County is the only home I’ve ever known. Like many others, I’m devastated to see so much of our farmland bulldozed for commercial development. I’m keenly aware of the irreversible sacrifice we make every time a patch

of land is paved over.

Next is transparency. I saved my questions for the court of public opinion, because residents deserve the full picture, not a predetermined snapshot. Sometimes democracy needs to be adversarial.

Another principle I stand on is tenacity. The courage to do what’s right when the powers that be prefer silence. I refuse to comply with the status quo when we’re already teetering on a water crisis. When residents called for a ban, they were told it might be challenged legally. Allowing our actions to be dictated by fear of litigation is not courage, it’s cowardice.

I’m by far the youngest govern-

ment official in Scott County. Some folks treat my youth as a liability. I see it as an asset. I have a deeper sense of responsibility for every vote I cast, because I’ll be living with the consequences longer than any of my counterparts.

I will not be intimidated or made to feel guilty for defending my hometown, whether from data centers or any other developer seeking to exploit our resources for their own gain. Loyalty, transparency, tenacity. That’s what I stand for, even when others chastise me for it.

In the words of the late Wendell Berry: “Whether we or our politicians know it or not, Nature is party to all our deals

and decisions, and she has more votes, a longer memory, and a sterner sense of justice than we do.”

Tristin Black
Georgetown

Election letters deadline

The News-Graphic will publish candidate endorsement letters through Friday, October 16. Any endorsement letters published after that date must be prepaid \$20 and will be considered political advertising. Normal letter to the editor requirements apply.

Corrections

Georgetown News-Graphic will be glad to correct any errors that appear in the newspaper or clarify any statements that are unclear.

The correction or clarification will appear on Page 6.

To request a correction or clarification, 502-863-1111 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., and ask for Ashley McGee, or send an email to amcgee@news-graphic.com.

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Comments in the form of letters to the editor or guest columns are encouraged. Letters, e-mails and guest columns must be signed and include an address and telephone number. Letters should not exceed 400 words. Individuals may write only one letter per topic every 30 days. Letters must be in good taste, and the News-Graphic reserves the right to edit for correctness, length and style. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the News-Graphic.