

State Representative Reed on reopening Kentucky

Why do Kentuckians wait while states like New York and California move forward with reopening plans? All eyes are on legal challenge to reopening, emergency powers legislation

As states across our nation announce plans to shed pandemic-related requirements, I have received a number of phone calls, emails, and messages from folks who want to know why Kentucky has not. Some folks even ask why the legislation we passed to require our state to reopen has not taken effect. Sadly, the answer is pretty simple – the Governor is suing to prevent it.

It is no surprise that the Governor dislikes the bills since he vetoed them in January. However, it is frustrating he would refuse to accept the will of the people even after those vetoes were overwhelmingly overridden by the legislature in February. Instead of faithfully enforcing the laws, he chose to tie the measures up in court. The Kentucky Supreme Court will

Capitol Focus



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wait until June 10 – two months after it accepted the case and four months after the suits were filed – to hear the Governor’s lawsuit and another filed by Kentucky businesses that challenges his unprecedented exercise of power. So, as neighboring states and places like California and New York dial back their requirements, Kentuckians wait as all eyes are on the seven elected members of the Kentucky Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Governor last fall, but we used that ruling to guide the development of these bills to ensure what we passed

could withstand a court challenge. I sincerely hope they remember their job is to interpret the laws and whose job it is to make new laws – and rule in favor of our constitution and therefore the will of the people who elect them.

The Supreme Court will consider HB 1, legislation that provides direction to help businesses, schools, nonprofits, and other organizations remain safely open throughout the rest of this pandemic. We also made permanent changes to how our state approaches emergencies. We limited executive orders issued during a state of emergency to 30 days unless extended by the legislature and required the attorney general’s permission to suspend a statute during a state of emergency (SB 1). In addition, we passed SB 2 to prevent

the executive branch – including unelected appointees – from using the regulatory process to make laws.

Both SB 1 and SB 2 provide the ability to respond quickly to an emergency while preventing a governor from overstepping his or her authority. Whether or not you agree with how the current governor handled this pandemic, our Kentucky Constitution grants each branch of government separate, limited powers. The legislative branch enacts laws and crafts a budget, the executive branch implements the laws, and the judicial branch interprets them. Our government works best when no branch overreaches into another’s area.

Before I conclude, I want to share some good news. One of the

top three credit rating agencies announced last week that Kentucky’s financial outlook would change from a “negative” rating to a “stable” rating. Credit ratings are important because they measure our state’s financial well-being, but also because they are used to determine how much it costs us to borrow money for major projects that require financing. I know this sounds a lot like how our individual credit scores play into how much we pay to buy a house or car. The announcement from Fitch Ratings is a sign that the conservative policies we passed this session – particularly the budget and our investment of federal COVID-relief funds – are right for our Commonwealth. Frankly, this upgrade is also a clear sign that government works best when it uses its authority appropriately.

Of course, our work is far from done. While stable is good news, we still have to navigate a dangerous economy as too many of our friends and neighbors remain unemployed while others struggle to keep their businesses open and we see rising costs in everything from food to lumber and building products. We must be realistic and act carefully in the weeks and months to come.

Thanks for taking the time to read this week’s update. I can be reached through the toll-free message line in Frankfort at 1-800-372-7181 or by email at Brandon.Reed@lrc.ky.gov. If you would like more information about any of these bills or legislative actions, you can also visit the Legislative Research Commission website at legislature.ky.gov.

Commissioner Quarles, Ky. cattle producers celebrate May as Beef Month

Beef is important to Ky.’s economy with more than half of its farms raising cattle

STAFF REPORTS

After a year marked by a global pandemic that disrupted the nation’s supply chain and cattle prices, Kentucky cattle producers joined Kentucky Commissioner of Agriculture Dr. Ryan Quarles today to commemorate the month of May as “Kentucky Beef Month.”

“If the pandemic showed us anything, it was the importance of our beef cattle farmers. When grocery stores shelves were empty, Kentucky residents turned to our farmers and our farmers delivered,” Commissioner Quarles said. “Beef is not only good for you as part of a healthy, balanced diet, but buying Kentucky Proud beef is good for the state’s economy, keeping your hard-earned money right here at home. I ask all Kentuckians to join me and our cattlemen in enjoying some delicious beef during the month of May.”

With more than half of Kentucky farms raising cattle, the state is home to 38,000 beef cattle producers according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service. The Commonwealth is 14th in the nation for the total number of beef cows and calves with an inventory of 2.15 million head as of January 1. With nearly a million beef cows, Kentucky boasts the largest beef cattle inventory east of the Mississippi River and the eighth-most in the nation.

Kentucky produced more than 667 million pounds of beef last year valued at more than \$701 million. Beef cattle sales accounted for more than \$727 million in cash receipts to Kentucky producers in 2020 and gross income of more than \$739 million.

During the pandemic, Commissioner Quarles and the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board invested more than \$3.5 million into expanding meat-processing capacity across the commonwealth so the state would not be as reliant upon out-of-state meat processors. In May 2020, Commissioner Quarles and Attorney General Daniel Cameron wrote the Department of Justice to request an investigation in possible anti-competitive practices that might have occurred during the processing slowdown, which resulted in higher prices for meat at the grocery store but lower prices on the farm.

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture helps producers find new markets for their cattle, conducts beef cattle shows, tracks market prices, and protects Kentucky’s herds from disease. To find out more about the Department’s services, go to www.kyagr.com.

Consumers can locate Kentucky Cattlemen’s Ground Beef burgers, made with locally-sourced beef raised by Kentucky producers at Kroger stores across the state. To find local beef near you, visit kyproud.com/beef.

Cheatham to serve on CERS Board

STAFF REPORTS

George “Lisle” Cheatham, a Certified Financial Fiduciary® and owner of American Financial Consultants, Inc. has been appointed by Governor Andy Beshear and confirmed by the Kentucky State Senate to a four-year term on the County Employee Retirement System (CERS) Board of Trustees.

Cheatham will also be serving on the CERS Finance Committee as well as the CERS Investment Committee.

Under House Bill 484, passed during the 2020 Regular Session of the Kentucky General Assembly, the name of the former Kentucky Retirement

Systems was changed to the Kentucky Public Pensions Authority as well as created a new governance and administrative structure. Governance of CERS was transferred to a separate 9-member Board of Trustees. Six of those trustees are appointed by the Governor from lists of candidates provided by KACo, KLC, and KSBA. In an Executive Order on March 8, Governor Beshear appointed George Carlisle Cheatham II to the CERS Board of Trustees representing the Kentucky School Board Association.

“I am very appreciative to the Kentucky School Board Association for their nomination and to

Governor Beshear for appointing me to the CERS Board of Trustees. I also want to thank Senator Givens for sponsoring my confirmation in the State Senate,” said Cheatham. “I understand more than anyone the challenges a local government and school systems regarding their escalating pension costs. But, as trustees, our chief responsibility is to ensure the long-term solvency of the trust funds so that the current and future retirees can count on these benefits in their retirement or if disabled,” Cheatham went on to say.

The Kentucky County Employee Retirement System

(CERS) Board of Trustees is responsible for the investment of funds of pension and health insurance benefits for over 265,000 active and retired local government employees and non-teaching staff of local school boards. (<https://kyret.ky.gov/About/Boards/Pages/default.aspx>)

Mr. Cheatham is a registered representative through NEXT Financial Group, Inc., a member of FINRA/SIPC and a member of the Atria Wealth Solutions family of companies. Mr. Cheatham also holds the Certified Financial Fiduciary® designation through the National Association of Certified Financial Fiduciaries.

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