

Senator Givens— Week one of the 2026 Regular Session



Senate report
State Sen. David Givens

The 2026 Regular Session of the Kentucky General Assembly is officially underway, beginning the constitutionally required 60-day budget session. While the first week is largely procedural, it plays an important role in setting both direction and tone. It is a time for organization, reflection, and prepar-

ing for the substantive work ahead. Budget sessions require careful judgment. The decisions before us affect classrooms, public safety, infrastructure, and the everyday services families depend on. That responsibility calls for discipline, patience, and a clear focus on long-term outcomes. As this session begins, I am both mindful of the challenges ahead and optimistic about Kentucky's ability to continue moving forward responsibly. Kentucky enters this session on solid footing. Years of

thoughtful fiscal management have allowed the commonwealth to navigate economic uncertainty while maintaining essential services and making strategic investments. Preserving that balance, with respect for taxpayers and an eye toward long-term stability, will remain central to the work ahead. Beyond the budget, lawmakers have begun filing legislation that will guide policy discussions in the weeks to come. These early proposals reflect concerns I hear regularly from Kentuckians across the state,

including affordability, workforce development, public safety, and government accountability. Each proposal deserves careful consideration, informed by experience, and grounded in respect for the people and communities affected. Earlier this week, I had the opportunity to discuss the start of the session and the road ahead on Kentucky Tonight. Conversations like these are valuable, not because they offer easy answers, but because they allow for thoughtful discussion about priorities,

trade-offs, and the responsibilities of public service. Transparency and open dialogue remain essential to maintaining trust in the legislative process. As Senate President Pro Tempore, my role is to help ensure that process remains deliberate, fair, and focused. That means fostering productive discussion, encouraging collaboration, and keeping attention where it belongs: on the people of Kentucky and the future we are working to build. The first week is only the beginning, but it matters. It sets ex-

pectations for how the work will be done and the tone we carry forward. I approach this session with steady confidence, thoughtful optimism, and a commitment to making careful decisions that reflect Kentucky's values and serve the commonwealth well, both now and in the years ahead. It's a privilege to serve you in Frankfort. If you have questions or ideas, feel free to contact my office at (502)-564-8100 or email me at David.Givens@kylegislature.gov.

Representative Bivens— Lawmakers convene 2026 Regular Session



State Representative
Ryan Bivens

The first session of the Kentucky General Assembly took place in 1792 in a two-story log structure in downtown Lexington. Lawmakers met for 23 working days and passed several pieces of legislation that laid the foundation for early statehood. Among those bills was a revenue measure aimed at providing the young Commonwealth the resources necessary to serve its people. The measure levied taxes on land, livestock and other holdings; required the licensing of taverns and retail stores; and implemented a tax on billiard tables and stamps for legal papers.

Two hundred thirty-four years later, the General Assembly convened on Tuesday, January 6, at noon. In the years between, the state has seen the ratification of four constitutions, the construction of four capitol buildings, 11 major wars, almost 50 economic recessions and countless natural disasters. Despite this, one thing remains consistent — the role of the legislature as the Commonwealth's lawmaking body.

Despite how the world has changed since that first legisla-

tive session, lawmakers will be working on many of the same core issues, including passing a state budget.

Budget: This may be the toughest budget we face in recent memory because there are a number of uncertainties, including economic challenges on the international level and changes to programs. Overall, I think you'll see us focus on stability and pass a responsible budget that provides for the state's needs, with a commitment to making sure Kentuckians benefit from each dollar we invest. In these uncertain times, we want to ensure stability in spending, revenue sources and programming — not new programs or unnecessary expansions.

Education: The legislature has provided historic levels of funding, even when adjusted for inflation, to K-12 public education, as well as passed policies aimed at making schools safer, lessening behavior issues and improving the way we teach. Yet our kids continue to struggle. More than half are reading and doing math below grade level, and too many enter the workforce without the basic skills necessary to succeed. The legislature will continue to support public education and our children, families and teachers. But we are also looking for accountability.

We spend more on education than any other general fund category — and we should. However, students across the state need to reach their full potential.

Medicaid: We will continue to look for ways to make Medicaid more efficient and effective. The state- and federally funded program provides health care for our poor and most vulnerable. A third of our state's population receives benefits through Medicaid, including more than half of Kentucky's children. We spend billions in state and federal tax dollars to provide benefits. However, despite these investments, we still have among the worst rates for chronic diseases and fatal conditions. And a recent report by the Kentucky auditor identified several concerning issues, including more than \$800 million in benefits paid by mistake.

Road funding: I believe we will continue using a priority-based approach to funding projects at both the state and local levels, and I appreciate the support — both public and private — that we have seen. Simply put, we are using a formula to determine which roads and bridges need to be addressed first and eliminated the political nature of the road-funding process.

Child care: Identifying ways to get more Kentuckians access to

quality child care is a major goal for us. We continue to hear from constituents that they need full-time, year-round care from providers they know and trust. The legislature has invested in child care assistance for working Kentuckians, as well as provided incentives for employers to offer child care — either in-house or through a provider — as an incentive to employees. However, our work is far from over. We are looking at how we can eliminate unnecessary barriers for those who want to open and run centers, as well as how we can improve existing programs.

Housing shortages: Kentucky is facing a housing shortage of more than 200,000 units. This interim, the Housing Task Force took a comprehensive look at the issue and identified several ways state policies can be updated to help address the shortage. This session, we will likely consider licensing, permitting and land-use policies to eliminate unnecessary red tape that often stands in the way of building new homes and renovating old ones.


The Legislative Research Commission (LRC) is the legislature's administrative arm and maintains a

helpful, information-packed website. It contains every bill and resolution, schedules, contact information and information about the legislative process. I regularly refer to LRC publications, which provide research on a variety of issues and can also be downloaded from the website.

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 e-mail at Ryan.Bivens@kylegislature.gov and keep track through the Kentucky legislature's website at legislature.ky.gov.



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It's a great honor to serve as your state representative for Green, LaRue and Hart Counties. I am looking forward to a productive 2026 legislative session, which started January 6, and will continue through April 15.




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