

Senate committee endorses first responder safety barrier bill

Piggy Bank Design Winner

A bill to ensure a “safety barrier” for first responders while they work advanced Thursday from the Veterans, Military Affairs and Public Protection Committee.

Bill sponsor Sen. Matt Nunn, R-Sadleville, said the legislation is often called the “Halo Act,” and it would create a 25-foot safety barrier around first responders when they’re performing their official duties.

Under the measure — Senate Bill 104 — a first offense would be a class B misdemeanor, a second or third offense would be a class A misdemeanor, and each subsequent offense would constitute a class D felony charge.

“What this bill does is ensure that the men and women who protect and serve our commonwealth every day can do so without any interference, any impediments. That way they can go home safely every day, and the people they’re protecting and serving get the best, most efficient treatment,” he said.

Nunn said the bill calls for a verbal warning if someone is impeding, harassing or intimidating a first responder. If the offender

ignores that warning, they can be charged.

Committee Chair Matthew Deneen, R-Elizabethtown, said the bill would provide a safety net for all responders, mentioning how first responders are sometimes impeded by distraught family members while they’re working.

“That’s critical to making sure that our first responders, whether it is law enforcement, fire, rescue, that those individuals have the space to do their job and that they can return home safely to their families,” he said.

Sen. Jimmy Higdon, R-Lebanon, also supported the bill, but cited concerns over the felony provision, which he called a “pretty tough standard.”

Nunn said he understands the levity of the felony charge, but he noted that it only takes effect on the fourth offense and that warnings are given before each charge. He said an offender will have been warned and charged many times before the felony provision kicks in.

“At that point, I feel like it is an appropriate escalation,” he said.

Sen. Karen Berg, D-Louisville, described

the bill as “thoughtful,” but voted against the measure. She said she’s not aware of incidents happening very frequently and questions why penalties would need to escalate.

Berg said state law already forbids people from intentionally obstructing or disrupting an emergency responder from performing his or her official duties.

“I’m just curious, do you know how many people have been cited under this in the last couple of years in this state,” she asked.

Nunn said he didn’t have statistics on how many people have been cited under current statute, but he further explained the intention of the bill.

“We have a serious problem here. I hear this often from first responders, and what this bill does is it creates a clear standard. The statute you described has some room for interpretation. This creates a very clear standard in my opinion, and that’s necessary to ensure those first responders can perform their duties,” he said.

Sen. Gary Clemons, D-Louisville, also raised some issues over the bill. He said he understands the 25-foot rule

for EMTs and firefighters, but he expressed concern about police and immigration officers violating the free speech rights of people who may be recording the incident. He voted against the measure.

Sen. Craig Richardson, R-Hopkinsville, voted in favor of the SB 104 and said it’s necessary.

“I think this bill creates well-defined standards to protect people that want to be there, that want to be close by, that are concerned and have a vested interest in what’s happening, but also protects those that are trying to serve and do their job,” he said.

Sen. Gary Boswell, R-Owensboro, said he shares Higdon’s concern regarding felony offenses.

“However, I would say in this particular case, I think your bill is very lenient,” Boswell said. “You’ve given so many opportunities for people not to do this. I don’t think we’re talking about a lot of young kids here. I think we’re probably talking about people who possibly might be a little bit older, and they should know better.”

SB 104 now heads to the full Senate.



Photo submitted
Dakota Milby won the Green County 4-H Piggy Bank Design Contest and received \$25 thanks to United Citizens Bank in Greensburg. The contest is held annually in conjunction with Kentucky Saves which is a statewide campaign to promote saving money, building wealth and reducing debt.

Bivens

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The bill would limit the fees charged for advising or assisting with veteran benefits; ban deceptive or aggressive soliciting practices; provide notification that free services are available; and protect veterans personal, medical, and financial information.

HB 508 would also require compensated advisors to file an

nual report with the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs and enforces violations under the Consumer Protection Act.

HCR 44 urges Congress to create an accreditation pathway for private companies that assist veterans in navigating the benefits system.

HJR 25 would declare Kentucky a

Food is Medicine state and encourage state agencies to expand programs that use nutrition as part of medical care and disease prevention.

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 Ryan.Bivens@kylegislature.gov and keep track

through the Kentucky legislature’s website at legislature.ky.gov.

Givens

From page 3A

The bill removes outdated restrictions and requires timely approval or denial of license applications.

SB 153 strengthens protections for homeowners by targeting fraudulent contractor practices, particularly after natural disasters. The measure enhances disclosure requirements and enforcement tools to safeguard families during recovery.

SB 155 establishes a framework for responding to animal health emergencies, authorizing coordinated action to protect livestock, agriculture and food supply chains.

SB 158 sets transparency standards for optional financial products tied to vehicle purchases, ensuring they are clearly disclosed,

separately priced and not required as a condition of financing.

SB 160 improves oversight of child care centers by clarifying corrective action standards, ensuring fair review processes and maintaining strong safety protections for children.

SB 172 promotes electric rate stability by allowing regulators to extend the recovery period for utility fuel costs, helping reduce sudden rate increases for households and businesses.

SB 183 requires proxy advisory firms to base shareholder voting recommendations on financial factors and disclose when non-financial considerations influence their advice. Violations are treated as deceptive business practices

under Kentucky law.

As we head into week seven, floor activity will continue to increase and our attention will turn more deliberately toward budget discussions and key priorities. There is important work still ahead, and I remain committed to advancing thoughtful, responsible policies that serve the people of Kentucky well.

As always, it is an honor to serve you in Frankfort, and I look forward to updating you as the 2026 Regular Session continues. If you have questions or ideas, feel free to contact my office at (502)-564-8100 or email me at David.Givens@kylegislature.gov. You can learn more about bills, committees, and the work of the Kentucky General Assembly by visiting www.legislature.ky.gov.

Rising prices may not dominate headlines the way they did a year or two ago, but if you’re retired, you’re probably still feeling them. Even when overall inflation cools, the costliest expenses — like health care, utilities, insurance and property taxes — tend to rise faster than broad inflation numbers suggest. That creates a squeeze that can make you question whether your income plan is built to last.

Fortunately, you often can adjust without drastic cuts that affect your lifestyle. Start by understanding where the pressure comes from and how to build more flexibility into your plan.

Inflation hits retirees differently. You’ve likely noticed your grocery bill, prescription drug costs and heating expenses haven’t returned to “normal.” Even small increases compound over time and can chip away at your buying power.

If your income plan was created years ago, it may assume lower inflation or relatively stable price increases over time. Recent years have shown that’s not always the case.

Why some income plans feel strained. Any plan relying on fixed withdrawals or rigid budgets can feel tight when living costs rise. If you’re drawing from investments, you may hesitate to increase your withdrawals because of market volatility. And if you depend on fixed income sources like Social Security or a pension, yearly cost of living increases may not keep pace with your expenses. You might live 25 to 35 years in retirement, giving small annual cost increases decades to add up.

What you can do without sacrificing stability. A few adjustments can help you stay ahead of rising costs and maintain your financial confidence.

First, review your withdrawal strategy. Ask your financial advisor about flexible approaches that increase income when markets and portfolios perform well and pull back during tougher times. This protects your long-term plan with room to respond to rising prices.

Next, rebalance your portfolio. You may uncover opportunities to shift toward investments with more consistent income or better tax efficiency. Sometimes a small tweak can generate extra cash flow without increasing overall risk.

Finally, look at your income sources. You may be less affected by rising costs if you delay taking Social Security, work a part-time job, add inflation-protected bonds or create predictable lifetime income with annuities, if they’re appropriate for your situation.

Don’t overlook health care: Health care costs often grow faster than general inflation. Medicare premiums and out-of-pocket expenses can rise annually, and the need for long-term care remains a big financial uncertainty for retirees. Building health care-specific inflation into your plan now can help prevent surprises later. Any savings you have in a health savings account can help you cover health care costs. And many pharmaceutical companies offer financial assistance programs to help pay for costlier medications.

Stay flexible and informed: Today’s retirements look different from those of even a decade ago. The key is staying flexible, reviewing your plan regularly and making small adjustments before pressure builds. A financial advisor can help you find the right approach to navigating rising costs without disrupting the life you’ve worked hard to build.

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