

# Chairman Guthrie Op-Ed: Congress is done waiting for big tech to protect kids online

The following op-ed by Congressman Brett Guthrie (KY-02), Chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, appeared in the Washington Post last week.

"The most popular social media platforms are constantly changing and reinventing themselves, but one challenge has remained consistent over three decades: Kids are at risk when they go online. "Anxiety, depression, loneliness and self-harm rates are sky-high among teens and children, demonstrating the dangerous effects of social media. "So, who is responsible for protecting America's youth? Every adult should consider themselves on the hook for that, but those of us in Congress have a special obligation to hold tech companies accountable for the products they design. "That is why congressional Republicans are advancing meaningful legislation to protect kids, empower

parents and guardians, and address the harms children and teens face online. "We can no longer stand by and wait for others to act. "We know progress can be made because we have already enacted a major piece of online safety legislation this Congress. Working alongside first lady Melania Trump, we passed — and President Donald Trump signed — the Take It Down Act, which targets the spread of sexually exploitative, nonconsensual AI-generated images. "While that is a good first step, it is just one piece of a much larger puzzle. As the internet continues to evolve, we know that no single action can address every challenge. What's needed is a comprehensive approach that puts kids' well-being and parental empowerment at the center of the digital world. "Last week, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce approved the Kids

Internet and Digital Safety Act, a legislative package that will protect children and teens from online harms, empower parents and hold Big Tech accountable. "For starters, the Kids Act represents an improved version of the previously proposed Kids Online Safety Act, preserving the bill's best ideas while addressing concerns about its constitutionality. After pairing the original proposal with additional measures to strengthen privacy, transparency and accountability across the online ecosystem, this version of the bill is stronger and more capable of surviving court challenges. "Second, the Kids Act limits access to online pornography for minors. For too long, online websites with adult content have relied on an honor system where every user is assumed to be an adult. We know that isn't true. Children should not be accessing pornographic content. The Kids Act requires

all websites that contain adult content to uphold this basic standard through age-verification measures — just as a brick-and-mortar storefront would. "Additionally, the act targets new internet threats, like artificial intelligence chatbots or predators using video game chat functions, head-on. Republicans are working to give parents the power to limit those communications as they see fit and to impose strict disclosure requirements on AI chatbots to prevent deceptive messaging. "Acknowledging that government alone cannot solve this problem, the Kids Act facilitates the development of partnerships among parents, experts and industry to address these challenges and others to develop. New educational efforts will help empower a generation of parents to diagnose and respond to digital threats. "Nevertheless, the Kids Act is not the end of our work.

"The committee also advanced the App Store Accountability Act this week. Unfortunately, smartphones often operate as a hidden layer between children and parents, as kids download apps and buy digital goods without a parent's permission. Instead of relying on another honor system, the App Store Accountability Act creates a simple, private and secure process to verify users' ages and require kids to first obtain a parent's permission. It leverages modern technology to put apps on notice that they are dealing with children and teens and, thus, have heightened safety obligations. "Another bill we are working on, known as COPPA 2.0, would modernize kids' privacy protections that are already on the books. "Until now, 13 has been treated as the age of digital adulthood, a relic of the internet's early days when Congress enacted the original Children's Online

Privacy Protection Act in 1998. Back then, we never could have imagined how things would develop. Extended privacy protections for teens and a ban on targeted advertising to kids are long overdue. "Collectively, these bills form a commonsense, comprehensive package designed to make the internet safer for kids. But this is not an academic exercise. "This work is personal. Some of the loudest, most courageous advocates for reform are parents who have lost children due to online harms. Every member of our committee represents families who have endured unimaginable grief. They deserve more than gestures and idle promises. They deserve laws that work. "We cannot rely on Big Tech companies that refuse to take responsibility for the products they put into the world. They've had years to self-regulate, and they have failed. Now it's time for Congress to act.

## Givens' update: Week 10 of the 2026 Regular Session



**Senate report**  
State Sen. David Givens

Before sharing this week's legislative update, I want to recognize the loss of Staff Sgt. Benjamin Pennington of Glendale, Kentucky, who died after being gravely injured during a March 1 attack on Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia. Staff Sgt. Pennington served as a unit supply specialist with the 1st Space Battalion, 1st Space Brigade at Fort Carson, Colorado, supporting systems that help provide missile warning, GPS tracking and satellite communications for our armed forces. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 2017 and was just 26 years old. The Kentucky Senate honored his service this week with a resolution recognizing his sacrifice. My thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends and fellow service members as we remember a young Kentuckian who gave his life in service to our nation.

**Legislative Update:** The final stretch of the session Week 10 of the 2026 Legislative Session brought a noticeable increase in committee hearings and floor votes as the General Assembly enters the final stretch of the 60-day session. With just 14 legislative days remaining, both chambers are working to move priority legislation through the process. During this stage of session, bills that pass both chambers are sent to the governor for review. The governor has the authority to sign a bill into law or veto it. If a veto occurs, the General Assembly may vote to override it during the final days of the session. One measure vetoed by the governor has already been enacted over his veto this year, and additional veto discussions may occur as the session continues.

Alongside policy legislation, lawmakers are also working on the state's most significant responsibility this session: passing the two-year state budget and the two-year road plan. The House has advanced its version of the budget through House Bill 500, and the Senate is currently reviewing the proposal and preparing possible modifications. Once the Senate acts on the bill, it will likely move to a conference committee made up of members from both chambers. This is where final details are negotiated before the General Assembly sends the completed budget to the governor for consideration. As always, I will continue working with my colleagues to ensure Kentucky families are well served as we complete our work in the weeks ahead. Bills approved in the Senate Below is an update on legislation approved by the Senate this week. SB 6: Appropriates \$150 million in FY 2027 to support research consortiums through the Endowed Research Fund administered by the Council on Post-secondary Education. SB 34: Allows property owners to name a beneficiary to receive a home or vehicle at death without going through probate while preserving existing legal protections. SB 53: Clarifies that local planning commissions and boards may hold public hearings and accept public comment when reviewing development plans and subdivision plats. SB 65: Nullifies several administrative regulations deemed deficient by the Administrative Regulation Review Subcommittee, reinforcing legislative oversight of agency rulemaking. SB 66: Updates Kentucky's impaired driving laws by clarifying consequences for refusing a blood test and expanding substances subject to DUI prosecution. SB 97: Establishes

minimum insurance coverage standards for prosthetic and orthotic devices to ensure patients have access to medically necessary equipment. SB 100: Strengthens the oversight authority of the Energy Planning and Inventory Commission in reviewing Kentucky's energy supply and major utility decisions. SB 116: Updates statutes governing physician assistants to support more efficient collaboration within physician-led health care teams and improve access to care. SB 133: Updates audit and financial reporting requirements for certain local entities, raising thresholds and allowing flexible audit schedules for qualifying entities. SB 198: Updates statutes governing the Office of the Attorney General, including background check requirements for staff accessing federal tax data and administrative law clarifications. SB 219: Establishes a \$3 fee on deferred deposit transactions to support statewide reporting and data collection requirements for those businesses. SB 221: Makes it a Class D felony to knowingly purchase or sell human remains after they have been authorized for burial or cremation. SB 226: Allows agents guaranteeing prices under pre-need burial contracts to charge a one-time administrative fee of up to 15 percent once the contract is fully paid. SB 262: Proposes a constitutional amendment allowing ballot questions to summarize amendments rather than requiring the full text on the ballot. SB 291: Creates a statewide licensing system for secondary metal recyclers and strengthens reporting requirements to help deter copper theft and infrastructure damage. SB 312: Expands the authority of certified court security officers to transport individuals in custody or under

court order, including certain mental health commitment cases. SB 323: Requires subpoenas for medical records from non-party health care providers to be served at least 14 days before records are due. SB 343: Reorganizes the Department of Workers' Claims by moving it to administrative attachment under the Office of the Governor and establishing new leadership and operational structures. SJR 62: Directs the Division of Water to study permitting and regulatory requirements for removing debris from waterways after flooding and recommend ways

to streamline cleanup. SJR 116: Directs Kentucky universities to collaborate on solutions to address the state's physician shortage and expand access to care in underserved communities. It's an honor 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. You can learn more about bills, committees, and the work of the Kentucky General Assembly by visiting [www.kylegislature.gov](http://www.kylegislature.gov).

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
An Industrial Development Authority Meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 18, 1:00 p.m., CDT, at the Campground Office, Legion Park Road, Greensburg, KY 42743.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
The Regular Monthly Green County Fiscal Court Meeting for March 2026 will be held on Thursday, March 19, 2026 at 5:00 P.M., CT, at the Courthouse, 203 West Court Street, Greensburg, Ky 42743. The monthly Committee Meetings will be held one hour prior to the Fiscal Court Meeting, beginning at 4:00 P.M., CT.

**PUBLIC NOTICE TO LOGAN C. SMOTHERS**  
A lawsuit foreclosing on property located at 368 Inez Pruitt Road in Green County, Kentucky has been filed naming Logan C. Smothers as defendant as he is alleged to have purchased and mortgaged the property at 368 Inez Pruitt Road. Logan C. Smothers is hereby given notice of that collection/foreclosure lawsuit, *Kentucky Housing Corporation vs. Logan C. Smothers*, Green Circuit, 25-CI-00117 of being named a defendant and of the need to file some response to the Petition to assert any interest, if any, he may have, or claim to have, relative to the property.

**PUBLIC NOTICE TO HEIRS OF ALECIA MANDY STEVENS**  
There is presently pending in Green County (Kentucky) District Court a probate action, probating the estate of Alecia Mandy Stevens, born in Walpole, MA, deceased on July 5, 2024 in Green County, Kentucky. Anyone claiming to be an heir of Alecia Mandy Stevens is hereby given notice of that probate action, In re: Estate of Alecia Stevens, Green District, 24-P-00082 and of the need to notify the Court of any interest they may have, or claim to have, relative to being an heir of Alecia Stevens. For questions, contact the Law Office of Donald J. Sharp, sdon0727@gmail.com, 270-932-2889.

**PUBLIC NOTICE TO SHANE BREWER**  
There is presently pending in Green County (Kentucky) Circuit Court a civil action to allow the Green County Fiscal Court to terminate Shane Brewer's ownership of three dogs found abandoned at 1368 Earl Thompson Road, Green County, Kentucky, along with other civil claims associated with those abandoned animals. Shane Brewer is hereby given notice of that civil action, *Green County Fiscal Court vs. Shane Brewer*, Green Circuit, 25-CI-00173 and of the need to assert in this civil action any claim he may have to those animals, or present any defense he may have in abandoning those animals.

**PUBLIC NOTICE TO ANY SPOUSE OF BARRY KEITH MAYS**  
A lawsuit to collect on delinquent tax bills for property located at 3140 Highway 88 in Green County, Kentucky has been filed naming the "unknown spouse of Barry Keith Mays", as well as other parties as defendants/persons who may have an interest in the property at 3140 Highway 88. Anyone who is presently married to Barry Keith Mays a/k/a Keith Mays is hereby given notice of that collection/foreclosure lawsuit, *BG48, LLC vs. Janice Mays, et al.*, Green Circuit, 25-CI-00075 of being named a defendant and of the need to file some response to the Petition to assert any interest, if any, they may have, or claim to have, relative to the property.