

Bivens: Voters to decide fate of constitutional amendment



State
Representative
Ryan
Bivens

Are you in favor of limiting a Governor's ability to grant pardons or commute sentences by prohibiting him or her from granting pardons or commuting sentences during the time period beginning 60 days prior to the general election at which the Governor is elected, and ending when the Governor is sworn in for that term by amending the Constitution of Kentucky as stated below?

These words will appear on the November General Election ballot for all voters in Kentucky to decide the fate of a proposed amendment to our state's constitution. This proposal was placed on the ballot after lawmakers passed Senate Bill 10 earlier this month.

The proposal did not come out of nowhere. It follows public outcry over the more than 400 pardons and commutations issued by former Governor Matt Bevin in the final days of his term. Still, controversy over pardons is nothing new in Kentucky. In 2003, then-Governor Paul E. Patton pardoned four men facing campaign finance charges tied to the 1995 governor's race, and Governor Steve Beshear later issued more than 200 pardons of his own. In fact, they go back even farther. Kentucky's early constitutions in 1792, 1799, and 1849 all allowed governors to grant pardons but did not require any public explanation. Concerns about abuse led constitutional convention delegates to add language to the current Kentucky constitution that requires governors to put their reasons in writing and make those records available for public inspection.

Let me begin by stressing that placing any amendment on the ballot is not necessarily an endorsement of it, but rather a reflection of its importance as an issue and the need for voters to weigh in directly. Similarly, this column is intended to inform, not to persuade either for or against its passage. In our republic, constitutional amendments are among the most significant questions citizens are asked to consider, and they deserve careful, thoughtful explanation rooted in context and clarity.

Kentucky is currently operating under its fourth constitution, adopted in 1891. That alone offers important perspective as the world of 1891 looked very different from the one Kentuckians live in today. There are other differences. For example, the U.S.

Constitution is relatively short and broad, providing an outline of general principles and leaving many specifics to the legislative and judicial branches. Kentucky's Constitution is much longer and far more detailed. It includes specific rules about things like taxes, education, local offices, and even procedural requirements that the federal document leaves open. That level of detail can provide clarity and guardrails, but it also means that the document can require updates over time to remain relevant and responsive to changing conditions.

It is also important to recognize that amending Kentucky's constitution is not the same as amending the United States Constitution. At the federal level, constitutional changes are rare and require an extraordinarily high threshold. In Kentucky, the process is more accessible. Proposed amendments must pass both chambers of the General Assembly, after which they are placed on the ballot for voters to decide.

This year, the Kentucky General Assembly approved such a proposal. Through Senate Bill 10, lawmakers voted to place a constitutional amendment before voters that would modify the governor's pardon powers.

Under the current constitution, the governor has broad authority to grant pardons and commute sentences. This authority is a longstanding feature of executive power, designed to serve as part of checks-and-balances, checking the power of the justice system. It preserves the ability to extend mercy in rare cases and offers a safeguard when the legal system does not fully account for all circumstances.

The proposed amendment would place a temporary limitation on that authority during the final portion of a governor's term. Specifically, it would prohibit a governor from issuing pardons during the 60 days leading up to a gubernatorial election and continuing through the inauguration of the next governor.

In November 2026, Kentucky voters will have the final say. Between now and then, there will be opportunities to review the language of the amendment, hear from various perspectives, and consider what the change might mean in practice.

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.

Road Closure



West Hodgenville Avenue from Second Street to Hidden Valley Road is closed. The small hillside near the water tower has fallen very near to the edge of the road making any traffic a potentially dangerous situation. Residents of Graham Court and Lewis Court, two of the nearby neighborhoods, have been forced to use the lower entrance to their homes and cannot access their homes coming from the area near Adanta and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

White Goods Amnesty Program



Workers unload items Friday from a trailer during the White Goods Amnesty event.

Genealogical Society Heritage Fair



Photo by Clevis Jeffries

The Green County Genealogical Society hosted a Heritage Fair Saturday, April 25 at the Greensburg Community Center. A number of vendors participated in the fair.

Day of Prayer

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Greensburg Baptist Church Music Director Natalie Williams will perform the National Anthem and provide special music.

Green County Judge-Executive John Frank will give the welcoming remarks.

Prayers will be presented by GCHS Employment Coordinator Heather Moss representing church, family, and community; GCMS Principal Steven Thomas praying on behalf of education and business; Green County PVA Sean Curry, the government and military; Trammell Creek Baptist Church Music Director Jim Frank, arts, entertainment, and the media; and

Greensburg Global Methodist Church Pastor Jordan Abell, leading the audience in The Lord's Prayer to conclude the service.

"I am excited once again to have the opportunity to serve as

the coordinator of this year's National Day of Prayer service. We are blessed to be able to come together at this time to lift up our special prayers for areas in our everyday lives," said local National

Day of Prayer Coordinator Debbie J. Bagby. "Prayer is a wonderful tool that we have been blessed with. May we all take this moment to lift up our community in prayer."

PUBLIC NOTICE:

AN ORDINANCE RELATING TO THE GREEN COUNTY FISCAL COURT CREATING A FRANCHISE FOR THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A TELECOMMUNICATIONS (NON-CABLE) SYSTEM IN GREEN COUNTY KENTUCKY, SETTING FORTH CONDITIONS ACCOMPANYING THE GRANT OF FRANCHISE AND PROVIDING FOR THE REGULATION AND USE OF SAID SYSTEM
ORDINANCE NO. 26-04-16-2026

Notice is hereby given that an ordinance relating to GREEN COUNTY FISCAL COURT CREATING A FRANCHISE FOR THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A TELECOMMUNICATIONS (NON-CABLE) SYSTEM IN GREEN COUNTY KENTUCKY, SETTING FORTH CONDITIONS ACCOMPANYING THE GRANT OF FRANCHISE AND PROVIDING FOR THE REGULATION AND USE OF SAID SYSTEM was given a second reading and adopted by the Green County Fiscal Court on Thursday, April, 23, 2026. The ordinance establishes those parties liable for any unauthorized release of hazardous materials and sets forth the conditions for the application for and award of such a franchise and provides for the regulation and use of such a system by a franchisee. The ordinance was passed in accordance with the mandates of KRS 67.045 and other applicable law. The full text of the proposed ordinance is available for public inspection in the Green County Judge Executive's Office located at the Green County Courthouse, 203 West Court Street, Greensburg, Kentucky, during normal business hours.