CAPITOL UPDATE

NEWS FROM THE KENTUCKY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

This Week at the State Capitol



Bills on concealed carry, education, health care and human trafficking all made headway during the third week of the 2026 legislative session in Frankfort.

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 23 2026) — Though short, the third week of the 2026 legislative session had all the hallmarks of a general assembly in full swing – crowds in the halls, committees meeting back-to-back and bills passing in multiples off the chamber floors.

Friday marked day 13 of the 60-day session, and now that lawmakers have settled into a steady rhythm inside the new, temporary chambers of the House and Senate, all indications are pointing toward another robust year for the legislature.

More than a dozen bills moved out of committee on Wednesday – the busiest day of the session so far – and another half dozen moved on Thursday. Among them were measures on dyslexia, workplace violence, human trafficking, health care, fishing, sexual assault nurses and educational pathways for teachers.

One measure in the spotlight this week was House Bill 312 on concealed firearms. It would allow Kentuckians aged 18 to 20 years old to obtain a provisional concealed carry permit after undergoing a background check and firearms training.

The bill received approval Wednesday from the House Judiciary Committee and cleared the House floor on a 73-17 vote following nearly an hour of debate Friday.

Supporters said the measure would address inconsistencies in Kentucky gun laws for young adults who can already possess firearms but not carry them in a concealed manner. Critics argued that lowering the age limit would only increase gun violence, particularly among a vulnerable age group.

The bill now heads to the Senate.

For its part, the upper chamber acted on several bills this week related to education.

Senate Bill 181 seeks to clarify and improve an existing law adopted last year that was designed to prevent unauthorized communication between students and school personnel. The measure cleared the Senate Education Committee on Thursday.

The legislation would clarity what types of communication are considered authorized versus unauthorized and create exemptions for certain communications, such as virtual school instruction, communications that involve parent participation and phone calls from an official school telephone number, among others.

Legislators said the changes were needed to address questions that emerged in the wake of the original law, which has sought to stem inappropriate relationships between students and school employees.

Meanwhile, Senate Bill 22 is seeking to address shortages in the teaching profession by establishing educational pathways that create little to no student debt, according to supporters.

The proposal, which won support on the Senate floor Thursday afternoon, would allow school districts to establish a "grow-your-own" teacher apprenticeship program registered with the state Education and Labor Cabinet.

The Senate rounded out the week on Friday by advancing Senate Bill 76 off the chamber floor on a 28-6 vote. The measure seeks to address a recent controversy over an occupational tax increase that the Fayette County Board of Education sought to pass last year.

SB 76 would raise the population threshold required for the school board to pass such increases going forward, and during debate Friday, supporters raised concerns over public transparency and financial practices in the district.

Opponents of the bill questioned the need, arguing that the district has received clean audits and has raised graduation scores among other metrics.

Many other bills received action this week, either in committees or on the chamber floors. Here's a look at some of the measure gaining ground:

Firefighter Death Benefits – House Bill 34 would expand the list of cancers that are recognized as occupational risks for firefighters and, as a result, covered under line-of-duty death benefits. The measure cleared the House Veterans, Military Affairs and Public Protection Committee on Tuesday.

Accessibility Ramps for Veterans – House Bill 214 would create a program to help veterans with disabilities purchase accessibility ramps for their residences. The House Veterans, Military Affairs and Public Protection Committee advanced the legislation on Tuesday.

Gubernatorial Pardons – Senate Bill 10 proposes to amend the state constitution and limit the governor's ability to grant pardons and commutations for 90 days surrounding a gubernatorial election. The Senate passed the bill on Tuesday.

Distracted Driving – Senate Bill 28 seeks to curb distracted driving by limiting the use of hand-held mobile devices behind the wheel with some exceptions for navigation devices, certain types of radios and emergencies. The measure cleared the Senate on Tuesday.

Food is Medicine Initiatives – Senate Joint Resolution 23 would declare Kentucky as a "Food is Medicine" state and direct state agencies to advance Food is Medicine initiatives. The Senate Health Services Committee passed the measure Wednesday.

Dyslexia and Dysgraphia – House Bill 389 calls on the Kentucky Department of Education to annually update its guidance and evidence-based strategies for identifying and supporting students with both dyslexia and dysgraphia. The

House Primary and Secondary Education Committee voted in favor of the bill on Wednesday.

Workplace Violence – House Bill 306 would strengthen laws against violence in the workplace by clarifying legal definitions and increasing penalties for repeat offenses. The House Judiciary Committee advanced the bill Wednesday.

Human Trafficking – House Bill 320 would enhance the penalty for promoting human trafficking from a class C felony to a class B felony. If the victim is a minor, the penalty would increase from class B felony to a class A felony. The legislation cleared the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday.

Child Pornography – House Bill 366 would require someone convicted of possessing or viewing child pornography to serve 85% of their criminal sentence. The bill would also expand child pornography prohibitions to include computer-generated images of a minor. The House Judiciary Committee passed HB 366 on Wednesday.

Cremation – Senate Bill 27 would provide a cremation option for fiscal courts or local governments that are tasked with caring for the remains of indigent individuals. The Senate State and Local Government Committee advanced the bill Wednesday.

Health Insurance – House Bill 176 seeks to streamline the prior authorization process for health insurance claims by creating exceptions for certain health care providers. The bill cleared the House floor on Wednesday.

Mental Health Care – House Bill 178 aims to support the psychiatric collaborative care model, allowing primary care providers, care managers and consulting psychiatrists to work together on a patient's mental health care. The House voted in favor of the measure Wednesday.

Medicaid Delivery Model – Senate Concurrent Resolution 9 calls for a study of accountable care models used for Medicaid programs in other states. The study would also look at opportunities to implement such a model in Kentucky through a pilot program. The effort is seeking to control costs and improve health outcomes. The Senate passed the bill Wednesday.

Impaired Boating – House Bill 168 would more closely align the legal standards and penalties for boating under the influence with the standards and penalties for driving under the influence. The House Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee passed the legislation on Thursday.

Fishing on Private Property – Senate Bill 39 would exempt private landowners from most statewide fishing regulations while fishing on their own property, including creel and size limits. The Senate Economic Development, Tourism and Labor Committee advanced the bill Thursday.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners – House Bill 134 aims to expand the availability of sexual assault nurse examiners across Kentucky. It calls for a statewide coordinator to recruit nurses, facilitate training and improve collaboration between hospitals, law enforcement and rape crisis centers. The bill received approval from the House Health Services Committee on Thursday.

Homeowner Tax Exemptions – Senate Bill 51 proposes a new section of the state constitution that would exempt homeowners who are 65 and older from paying increased property taxes that result from higher assessments on their permanent residence. The bill cleared the Senate on Thursday.

The House and Senate are scheduled to reconvene on Monday. However, legislative leaders have signaled that they are monitoring a massive winter storm that will move across the state over the weekend and potentially disrupt the session calendar.

Kentuckians are urged to check the general assembly's **calendar** for updates. Kentuckians can also track the action through the **Legislative Record webpage**, which allows users to read bills and follow their progression through the chambers.

Citizens can also share their views on issues with lawmakers by calling the general assembly's toll-free message line at 1-800-372-7181.

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