



**Issues/Program List for Withers Broadcasting
Paducah, Kentucky, Studios**

**WREZ-FM (Metropolis, Illinois)
WZZL-FM (Reidland, Kentucky)
WGKY-FM (Wickcliffe, Kentucky)
WRJJ-FM (LaCenter, Kentucky)**

The following programs are weekly broadcasts provided as timely and pertinent information or the community needs of Paducah, Kentucky, and the surrounding region in western Kentucky and southern Illinois.

Sundays at 5:00 am, the stations air InfoTrak.

Sundays at 5:30 am, the stations are Kentucky News Connection

Weekly program information can be found on the proceeding pages.



Call Letters: WILY-AM, WRXX-FM, WZZL-FM, WGKY-FM, WRJJ-FM, WMOK-AM, WREZ-FM, KGMO-FM, KREZ-FM, WKIB-FM, KAPE-AM, KJXX-AM, KYRX-FM, KBXB-FM, KRHW-AM, KBHI-FM, WDML

Weekly Public Affairs Program Time Aired: 5:00 AM WEEKLY

QUARTERLY ISSUES REPORT, APRIL-JUNE, 2023

Show # 2023-14

Date aired: Sunday, April 2, 2023

H Penny Mishkin, Columbia University occupational therapist, author of *"How I See It: A Personal and Historical View of Disability"*

Ms. Mishkin discussed the difficulties faced by disabled children, and the crucial importance of therapy, services and support to help them. She shared her personal story of severe vision disabilities as a child, and eventual blindness as an adult. She said living with a disability is akin to taking a detour in life, and that with the right outlook, disabled people can still live a purposeful and happy life.

Issues covered:

Length: 8:40

Disability Awareness and Support

Rob Docters, Partner and Head of Ethics Practices at Abbey Road, LLP, co-author of *"Ethics and Hidden Greed: Your Defense against Unethical Strategies and Violations of Trust"*

Consumer scams, frauds, and unethical gouging are on the rise, causing significant financial and emotional harm to unsuspecting individuals and exacerbating economic inequalities. Mr. Docters discussed the factors behind the jump in fraud. He explained why it is often hard to recognize fraud or scams on social media.

Issues covered:

Length: 8:43

**Crime
Consumer Matters
Ethics**

Beau Kilmer, PhD, McCauley Chair in Drug Policy Innovation, at the RAND Corporation and Co-Director, RAND Drug Policy Research Center

Alcohol is the third-leading cause of preventable death in the US, with alcohol-impaired driving alone claiming 11,654 lives in 2020. Dr. Kilmer shared the results of a RAND study of a unique statewide alcohol-monitoring program in South Dakota. The 24/7 program requires repeat drunk drivers to be tested twice per day for alcohol use. The study found that the participants in the program had a roughly 50% lower chance of death.

Issues covered:

Length: 5:09

**Drunk Driving Prevention
Substance Abuse**

Show # 2023-15

Date aired: Sunday, April 9, 2023

Stephen Kohn, attorney, Executive Director of the National Whistleblower Center, author of "*The Whistleblower's Handbook: A Step-By-Step Guide To Doing What's Right And Protecting Yourself*"

Every year, criminals and fraudsters rip off the federal government by committing tax fraud—stealing billions of taxpayer dollars in the process. However, it's becoming much more difficult to do so, thanks to a massive increase in whistleblower disclosures. Mr. Kohn discussed recent changes in laws that have made it much easier to report wrongdoing. He also explained what steps to take to weigh the pluses and minuses of blowing the whistle.

Issues covered:

Length: 8:53

Whistleblowing

Crime

Government Regulations

Mary Norris, longtime copy editor at "The New Yorker," author of "*Between You & Me: Confessions of a Comma Queen*"

Ms. Norris discussed the most common mistakes in spelling, punctuation and word usage, and why it is so important. She explained how new technologies and changes in our nation's education system have made proper grammar less "cool."

Issues covered:

Length: 8:21

Education

Career

Kevin Fiscella, MD, MPH, Associate Professor of Family Medicine and Community & Preventive Medicine at the University of Rochester School of Medicine & Dentistry

Dr. Fiscella discussed his groundbreaking research that found that the lives of nearly 8,000 black Americans could be saved each year if doctors could figure out a way to bring their average blood pressure down to the average level of whites. He talked about the reasons behind the gap between the races in controlling blood pressure, and the possible ways to reduce that gap.

Issues covered:

Length: 4:54

Personal Health

Minority Concerns

Show # 2023-16

Date aired: Sunday, April 16, 2023

ChatGPT, an artificial-intelligence (AI) chatbot

ChatGPT was launched as an artificial intelligence prototype on November 30, 2022, quickly gaining global attention for its detailed responses and articulate answers across many topics. It explained how it was trained and learns, and what its biggest weakness are. It acknowledged that the concerns about potential biases in its answers are legitimate. It also outlined the top 5 human endeavors in which it anticipates making the biggest impact.

Issues covered:

Length: 9:29

Artificial Intelligence

Technology

Employment

Andrew Houtenville, PhD, Professor of Economics at the University of Hampshire, Research Director of the UNH Institute on Disability

Prof. Houtenville discussed recent findings from the National Trends in Disability Employment report, issued by Kessler Foundation and the University of New Hampshire. He explained what is driving historic highs in employment of people with disabilities, and why disabled employment has outstripped the non-disabled since the start of pandemic lockdowns.

Issues covered:
Disabilities
Employment

Length: 7:59

Erin Dooley, PhD, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health

Prof. Dooley was the lead researcher of a study that measured the number of daily steps that may make a difference in the risk of heart problems in senior citizens. Her study of people ages 70 and older found walking an additional 500 steps per day (that is, an additional quarter mile of walking) was associated with a 14% lower risk of heart disease, stroke or heart failure.

Issues covered:
Personal Health
Senior Citizens

Length: 5:06

Show # 2023-17

Date aired: Sunday, April 23, 2023

Matthew Berger, Executive Director of the non-profit Foundation to Combat Antisemitism

According to FBI statistics, Jews make up approximately 2.4% of the U.S. population yet are victims of nearly 1 in 10 of all hate crimes. Mr. Berger's organization launched a \$25 million national effort to combat indifference and ignorance surrounding antisemitism. He explained how people can stand up to fight antisemitism, the same way they would fight racism, gender inequality or other injustices in their community.

Issues covered:
Antisemitism
Crime

Length: 7:59

Mark R. Rank, PhD, Herbert S. Hadley Professor of Social Welfare at Washington University in St. Louis, author of "*The Poverty Paradox: Understanding Economic Hardship Amid American Prosperity*"

Prof. Rank discussed the reasons why the wealthiest country in the world also has the highest rates of poverty among industrialized nations. He said an average of 10-15% of the US population is below the poverty line at any given time. He blames low-paying jobs that make it difficult to escape poverty, plus what he views as an inadequate social safety net.

Issues covered:
Poverty
Economy
Government Policies

Length: 9:24

Sarah J. Clark, MPH, Research Scientist in the Department of Pediatrics and Co-Director of the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health at the University of Michigan

For many teens, that first formal job is a rite of passage. Prof. Clark shared the results of her organization's survey of parents, exploring their views of the pluses and minuses of teenage employment. She said 3/4s of parents of working teens believe a job has had a positive impact on the teen's money management skills and self-esteem.

Issues covered:
Teen Employment
Parenting

Length: 5:12

Show # 2023-18

Date aired: Sunday, April 30, 2023

Malia Hollowell, National Board-Certified teacher, Founder/CEO of The Reading Roadmap, which develops literacy training for teachers, author of "*The Science of Reading in Action: Brain-Friendly Strategies Every Teacher Needs to Know*"

67% of American students are unable to read at grade-level. Ms. Hollowell said there are decades of research available to improve reading programs, but it is generally ignored. She said it's critical that teachers and parents learn about the research. She also addressed the special challenges faced by children whose native language is not English.

Issues covered:
Child Literacy
Education

Length: 7:50

Laura Tremaine, podcaster, author of "*The Life Council: 10 Friends Every Woman Needs*"

Ms. Tremaine discussed the complexities of friendships. She said making, keeping, and even releasing friends doesn't need to be as hard as we make it. She explained the importance of creating a circle of genuine friends over a lifetime, as opposed to social media "acquaintances."

Issues covered:
Personal Relationships
Mental Health
Women's Issues

Length: 9:26

Joseph Alton, MD, board-certified obstetrician and pelvic surgeon, co-author of the "*The Survival Medicine Handbook: The Essential Guide for When Help is NOT on the Way*"

Dr. Alton offered tips to be prepared in the event that a natural disaster took away the high-technology medical services we take for granted. He outlined the basic supplies that every household should have on hand in a medical kit. He also explained the steps need to provide emergency assistance to someone who is bleeding badly.

Issues covered:
Emergency Preparedness
Personal Health

Length: 4:57

Show # 2023-19

Date aired: Sunday, May 7, 2023

Sarah Foster, Analyst and Principal U.S. Economy Reporter at Bankrate.com

While inflation may be cooling, Ms. Foster explained why Americans could be feeling its impact for years to come. She discussed the economy's impact on emergency savings, retirement contributions and covering day-to-day expenses. She also explained why even when inflation eventually slows, prices won't necessarily fall across the board.

Issues covered:

Inflation

Personal Finance

Length: 7:23

Paul McLane, Editor in Chief of Radio World, a publication for technology-minded broadcast owners, managers and engineers

Automakers like Tesla, BMW and Ford have recently announced their intentions to cut AM radio from new models, particularly electric vehicles. Mr. McLane discussed the valuable service AM radio still provides for public safety and entertainment, and explained what AM's 84 million listeners can do to voice their opinion to automakers and legislators. He also discussed the potential danger posed to FM radio by the new trend.

Issues covered:

Media

Emergency Preparedness

Consumer Matters

Length: 9:54

Robert Hyldahl, PhD, Assistant Professor of Exercise Sciences, Brigham Young University

Dr. Hyldahl co-authored a study that found that running appears to reduce inflammation in the knee joint—not increase it, as commonly believed. He said his research suggests that running may actually protect knees during the aging process, and safeguard against degenerative diseases like osteoarthritis.

Issues covered:

Personal Health

Aging

Length: 5:01

Show # 2023-20

Date aired: Sunday, May 14, 2023

Sarah J. Clark, M.P.H., Associate Research Scientist, Department of Pediatrics at the University of Michigan's C.S. Mott Children's Hospital

Ms. Clark co-authored a poll that found that 62 percent of parents report difficulties finding childcare facilities that meet their health and safety standards. The poll also found that only half of parents considered themselves "very confident" at discerning which childcare options were truly safe and healthy. She outlined the most important questions that parents should ask when evaluating childcare providers. She said 82% of parents would be in favor of a national standard for health and safety for childcare centers and in-home childcare providers.

Issues covered:

Child Safety

Parenting

Length: 9:27

Benjamin H. Schnapp, MD, Assistant Professor, Assistant Emergency Medicine Residency Program Director in the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health

Medical errors cause roughly 250,000 deaths per year in the U.S. Dr. Schnapp co-authored a study that examined errors in Emergency Rooms. He found that, even in chaotic ERs, doctors typically have the right medical information but might not act on it in the best way. He talked about the patterns he found in patients who are most vulnerable to errors. He offered suggestions for patients who want to prevent errors when they visit an ER.

Issues covered:

Length: 7:44

**Medical Errors
Emergency Care**

Jill Gonzalez, Senior Analyst at WalletHub, a personal finance website

Ms. Gonzalez discussed her report that examined today's at-risk youth. She said about one in nine young Americans today is neither working nor in school, exposing them to greater risk of poverty, violence, drug abuse and homelessness. She explained how these risk factors follow young people into adulthood. She discussed the importance of education and social services.

Issues covered:

Length: 4:50

**Youth At Risk
Violence
Poverty**

Show # 2023-21

Date aired: Sunday, May 21, 2023

Burton Malkiel, Chemical Bank Chairman's Professor of Economics at Princeton University, author of the classic finance book "*A Random Walk Down Wall Street: The Best Investment Guide That Money Can Buy*"

Mr. Malkiel's book, written 50 years ago, pioneered the advent of index mutual funds for the average investor. He explained why an individual who saves consistently over time and buys a diversified set of index funds can achieve above-average investment results. He believes that most average investors do not need an investment advisor in order to prepare for retirement.

Issues covered:

Length: 8:30

**Personal Finance
Retirement Planning**

Theresa Gildner, PhD, Assistant Professor of Biological Anthropology in Arts & Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis

Most Americans view parasitic infections as a problem of the past or one that only impacts low-income countries. However, Prof. Gilder shared new research that discovered that the problem is likely widespread in low-resource communities throughout southern US. Her study found that environmental conditions, combined with infrastructural neglect and inadequate access to health care, create the perfect breeding ground for these infections. She explained how to recognize the infection and what treatments are available.

Issues covered:

Length: 8:37

**Public Health
Poverty
Food Safety**

Eduardo Coteilla-Sanchez, PhD, Associate Professor in the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at Oregon State University

Prof. Coteilla-Sanchez outlined his concerns that the nation's power transmission grid is at risk of cyber-attack. He has researched a scenario in which hackers manipulate smart meters to create an oscillation in electricity demand, potentially creating brown-outs or even a massive power outage affecting much of the country. He outlined steps that power companies need to take to guard against this form of attack.

Issues covered:
Infrastructure
Cyber Attacks

Length: 5:10

Show # 2023-22

Date aired: Sunday, May 28, 2023

Catherine Hodder, estate planning attorney, author of "*Estate Planning for the Sandwich Generation: How to Help Your Parents and Protect Your Kids*"

Ms. Hodder explained the importance of estate planning for those who are caring for both kids and aging parents. She outlined the critical documents that everyone should have in addition to a basic will. She also talked about the importance of communication with aging parents, and the usefulness of an emergency binder that organizes important documents in one place.

Issues covered:
Estate Planning
Senior Citizens
Parenting

Length: 8:22

Caitlin Cavanagh, Assistant Professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University

Prof. Cavanagh led a study at Michigan State that found that mothers don't lose hope to see their sons graduate from high school, get married, find a good job and so on— even if they are arrested as a minor. Her findings were consistent, even for higher income families.

Issues covered:
Juvenile Crime
Parenting

Length: 8:54

Noreen Springstead, Executive Director of WhyHunger, a non-profit organization that focuses on grassroots solutions to end hunger and poverty

Ms. Springstead discussed the current scope of the hunger problem in the U.S. She explained why, even in a booming economy, the issue of hunger and food insecurity rarely changes. She outlined how people can get assistance if they are in need, and how volunteers can get involved in their local communities.

Issues covered:
Hunger
Poverty
Government Programs
Volunteerism

Length: 4:58

Show # 2023-23

Date aired: Sunday, June 4, 2023

Adam Katchmarchi, PhD, Executive Director of the National Drowning Prevention Alliance, Assistant Professor in the Department of Kinesiology, Health, and Sport Sciences at Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Drowning is the leading cause of death among children ages 1-4 and the second leading cause of injury-related death among children up to age 14. As the busiest water activity season is upon us, Prof. Katchmarchi offered five recommendations for parents to keep their children safe.

Issues covered:
Drowning Prevention

Length: 8:31

Heidi K. Gardner, PhD, Distinguished Fellow at Harvard Law School's Center on the Legal Profession and Program Chair of the Sector Leadership Master Class and Smarter Collaboration Master Class, author of "*Smarter Collaboration: A New Approach to Breaking Down Barriers and Transforming Work*"

Prof. Gardner discussed recent research and offered advice to help companies thrive by collaborating more effectively. She said collaboration skills are surprisingly rare, especially among men. She explained why firms that collaborate smarter consistently generate higher revenues and profits, boost innovation, strengthen client relationships, and attract and retain better talent.

Issues covered:
Workplace Matters
Diversity
Career

Length: 8:52

Susan Carpenter, Native Plant Garden Curator at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum

"No mow" initiatives are becoming an increasingly popular springtime effort to help support bees, butterflies and other pollinators. Ms. Carpenter explained why mowing grass too short can cut the tops off flowering plants, creating lawns that are inhospitable for pollinators seeking habitats in which to feed, rest and nest. She said a good first step to help pollinators is to stop treating a lawn with chemicals, then allow grass to grow to around six inches before it's cut to roughly four inches.

Issues covered:
Environment

Length: 5:08

Show # 2023-24

Date aired: Sunday, June 11, 2023

Andres Lares, Managing Partner at Shapiro Negotiations Institute, co-author of "*Persuade: The 4-Step Process to Influence People and Decisions*"

Millions of college students have graduated recently and are ready to enter the workforce. Mr. Lares said the more a job applicant prepares, the more confident they will feel — and projecting confidence is essential to doing well in a job interview. He explained how to research a company and the position prior to a job interview, how to negotiate the compensation and how prepare questions for the interviewer.

Issues covered:
Employment
Career

Length: 8:35

Jean M. Twenge, PhD, Professor of Psychology at San Diego State University, author of *"Generations: The Real Differences between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents—and What They Mean for America's Future"*

Prof. Twenge outlined the unique characteristics and experiences of different generations, explaining how they shape America's future. She said the era in which person grows up has a much greater influence than their parents on their personality traits. She also talked about the huge influences of technological advances on each generation and the recent increase in clinical depression in teens, which directly correlates with the advent of smartphones and social media.

Issues covered:

Length: 8:45

**Parenting
Mental Health
Substance Abuse**

Karen Tiber Leland, Marketing and Management Consultant, Founder and President of Sterling Marketing Group, a branding and marketing strategy firm, author of *"The Brand Mapping Strategy: Design, Build and Accelerate Your Brand"*

Ms. Leland said ignoring the trend of AI and chatbots in business and personal branding is a significant mistake. She offered seven tips to optimize the value of AI language models (such as the hyper-popular ChatGPT) to build thought leadership, raise capital, find investors, sell a company, entice potential employees or convert customers.

Issues covered:

Length: 5:00

**Entrepreneurship
Career**

Show # 2023-25

Date aired: Sunday, June 18, 2023

Martin J. Schreiber, former Governor of Wisconsin, Alzheimer's caregiver and advocate, author of *"My Two Elaines: Learning, Coping, and Surviving as an Alzheimer's Caregiver"*

More than 11 million Americans currently care for someone with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia. Gov. Schreiber took care of his wife, Elaine, for nearly 20 years, until her death from Alzheimer's in 2022. He shared their story, and offered advice and encouragement for the millions of Americans in similar circumstances.

Issues covered:

Length: 8:40

Alzheimer's Disease

Jessie Ryan, Vice President of The Campaign for College Opportunity

Each year, hundreds of thousands of students start at community colleges, hoping to transfer to a university later. However, for some students, the transfer process becomes a maze so confusing, it derails their college plans. Ms. Ryan explained a problem described as "credit loss," when students take classes that never end up counting toward a degree. She discussed the reasons that universities refuse to accept credits, sometimes from classes that utilize the identical textbook as the university's class.

Issues covered:

Length: 8:44

**Community College
Higher Education**

Robert Wilson, PhD, Assistant Professor of Psychology and Cognitive Science, Arizona State University

Educational scholars have long recognized that there is something of a "sweet spot" when it comes to learning. Prof. Wilson led a study using artificial intelligence that determined the sweet spot is when failure occurs 15% of the time. Put another way, it's when the right answer is given 85% of the time. He explained what parents and teachers can learn from the study.

Issues covered:
Education
Parenting

Length: 5:06

Show # 2023-26

Date aired: Sunday, June 25, 2023

Read Hayes, PhD, Research Scientist at the University of Florida, Director of the Loss Prevention Research Council

Retailers, politicians and police departments have sounded the alarm about a rapid increase in retail theft, and are calling for stricter enforcement and prosecution to fight it. Prof. Hayes outlined the scope of the problem, and the role of organized theft rings in its growth. He also explained the multiple impacts on consumers, and what steps may slow down the problem.

Issues covered:
Crime
Consumer Matters

Length: 8:40

Kevin Lanza, PhD, Assistant Professor at UTHouston School of Public Health at The University of Texas

Prof. Lanza led a recent study that found that children and teenagers who had volunteered in the past year were in better physical health, had a more positive outlook on life, and were less likely to have anxiety, depression, or behavioral problems compared to their peers who did not volunteer. He outlined the many volunteering opportunities available to young people.

Issues covered:
Volunteerism
Youth
Parenting

Length: 8:44

Beth C. Truesdale, PhD, Research Fellow at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, Visiting Scholar at the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies, co-editor of "*Overtime: America's Aging Workforce and the Future of Working Longer*"

Many retirement planners advise clients to try to delay retirement to age 70 and spend more years in the paid labor force. Prof. Truesdale discussed the myriad of reasons that goal may be impossible for many people in their 50s and 60s, particularly those who are already disadvantaged.

Issues covered:
Employment
Retirement Planning

Length: 5:06

Kentucky News Connection

4/2

March 30, 2023

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

EPA's New PFAS Standards Could Overhaul Kentucky's Drinking Water

Nadia Ramlagan

Kentucky cities and towns could soon start ramping up water monitoring for PFAS chemicals in response to the latest nationwide **limits proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency**.

In 2019, **Kentucky tested 81 drinking-water systems statewide** and found at least one out of eight different PFAS chemicals in more than half.

Betsy Sutherland - the former director of the EPA Office of Science and Technology and current member of the Environmental Protection Network - explained that the EPA now wants to set strict limits on six types of PFAS in water.

"That's all going to change if EPA finalizes drinking water standards for these chemicals that are similar to what they just proposed," said Sutherland. "And that's because they're all much lower than what Kentucky thought was a problem back in 2019."

Found in non-stick cookware, fast-food packaging, dental floss, fire-fighting foam and other products, mounting evidence shows PFAS chemicals can accumulate in the body over time and have been linked to cancer and other health problems.

The EPA plans to hold a public hearing on the standards May 4. Members of the public can register to attend and provide comments.

More information is on **the agency's website**.

Sutherland said that while the EPA works to finalize the rules, there's already money available - a total of \$5 billion in **federal money through the bipartisan Infrastructure Law** - for the Commonwealth and other states to start addressing contamination.

She added that beginning in 2025, the agency is also requiring every public water supply system in the country serving 3,300 or more residents to regularly monitor for PFAS compounds.

"So by the end of 2025," said Sutherland, "we're going to have much more detailed information on all the drinking-water systems in the country, as to whether they're contaminated with these chemicals at a level of health concern."

The Association of State Drinking Water Administrators says while the new standards are a step in the right direction, federal funding won't be enough to cover construction projects - as well as ongoing increased operation and maintenance costs.

Kentucky News Connection

4/9

April 3, 2023

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

As COVID Subsides, Kentuckians Focus on Healthy Habits

Nadia Ramlagan

The "Raise Your Guard" Campaign is encouraging Kentuckians to be more physically active, minimize stress, load up on fruits and vegetables, and practice other healthy behaviors as the pandemic wanes.

Data shows rates of diabetes, obesity and heart disease have risen over the past few years - especially among the state's Black residents.

At age 25, Bowling Green resident Harlan Holmes found out he had high blood pressure. He said the diagnosis scared him, and he began running, eventually training for a local marathon.

"I was never athletic in school," said Holmes. "I didn't start running until my 20s or exercising, doing anything. My career, it's more of a sedentary lifestyle, in information technology."

Kentucky is one of just five states where more than 30% of residents report being physically inactive, according to 2022 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Raise Your Guard is a partnership between the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

Holmes now regularly completes marathons and he said endurance running has become a way of life.

"It does a lot for my mental health as well as my physical health," said Holmes. "I like to run early in the morning because it shows me, hey, I can accomplish difficult things, I can take on any challenges."

Ben Chandler - CEO of the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky - said now is the time for residents to take action to stay healthy, and be in better condition to fight the next virus, whether that's the flu or a new COVID variant.

"We have chronic conditions here in Kentucky, like diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, those sorts of things," said Chandler. "But they have actually gotten worse as a result of the pandemic. And we feel like we need to point that out and encourage people to do the things that they need to do to be healthy."

Other "Raise Your Guard" recommendations include quitting smoking or vaping, scheduling preventive checkups, and staying up to date on immunizations.

Kentucky News Connection

4/16

April 11, 2023

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

Louisville Shooting Shifts Focus to Crisis Aversion, Rights Retention Bills

Nadia Ramlagan

After a man killed four employees and wounded at least nine others in a shooting he livestreamed on social media in downtown Louisville, gun-violence prevention groups cited the need for better ways to legally allow law enforcement to take guns from people in crisis, before tragedy occurs.

Cathy Mekus, Kentucky chapter lead for the group Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, explained **legislation** known as Crisis Aversion and Rights Retention has been filed in the past several years by three state representatives, but has largely been ignored. It would mean after hearing from a concerned community member, police could petition a judge to have a person's firearms transferred out of their possession until it is determined the individual is no longer a threat to themselves or others.

"In some of the cases, there are people who know something and who can say something," Mekus explained. "In those cases, this provides a tool to stop that person before they commit this act."

Mekus added volunteers with her group had originally planned to travel to Nashville to support the moms affected by the recent elementary school shooting there. Now, she said plans may change as Louisville grapples with a mass shooting at home.

Marcy Timmerman, executive director of Mental Health America of Kentucky, said the Disaster Distress hotline, available by calling or texting 988, is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to help Kentuckians navigate their emotions and mental health in the weeks to come.

"They have been trained in this already helping people process," Timmerman noted. "If you've been through gun violence before, and this has triggered you, they can help you kind of talk through what your needs might be."

According to the Gun Violence Archive, there have been more than **29 mass shootings** in Kentucky since 2014.

Kentucky News Connection

4/23

April 18, 2023

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Latest Census Data Shows Kentucky's Child Population on Decline

Nadia Ramlagan

The nation's child population is shrinking, including in Kentucky, according to a new report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation that looks at the latest Census data. Louisville is one of ten cities with the largest reported decreases in kids within the past decade.

John Lyons, Director of the University of Kentucky's Center for Innovation in Population Health, said typically researchers look at the percentage of children as an indicator of whether a society is growing or declining, and added says kids are good for the economy and helping communities thrive.

"I think one of the challenges we have is that we monetize doom," he said. "You can hit very easy to doom scroll on the internet. I think that actually leads people both to not want to have children, it also makes it harder to be a child, because there's not a sense of a positive future. "

The report also found that children of color are a larger share of the total child population, from representing 26% of all kids in 1980 to 53% in 2020.

Lyons added societal expectations and shifting cultural norms, birth-control access and federal and local policies all impact child population changes.

"People are waiting longer before they get married and waiting longer before they find a partner or waiting longer before they have children," he said. "So, there's a number of demographic trends that are all happening at the same time."

According to the report, fewer births will result in a lower number of people entering the labor market in the coming decades.

Kentucky News Connection

4/30

April 27, 2023

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

Kentucky Sees First Drop in Overdose Deaths Since 2018

Nadia Ramlagan

Drug overdose deaths in Kentucky **decreased 5%** between 2022 and 2021, the first drop since 2018.

New data from the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center showed 2,127 Kentuckians died from a drug overdose in 2022 compared with 2,257 the year prior.

Gov. Andy Beshear pointed to a statewide program allowing Kentuckians without health insurance to enter residential treatment programs as a factor potentially driving the decline, and said the state's total number of treatment beds has expanded by more than 50% over the past few years. He added while the opioid epidemic isn't over, a silver lining is emerging.

"It's especially big news in that it's decreasing at a time, when the drugs out there are as powerful as they have ever been, and that means we're getting more people into treatment and keeping more people in recovery," Beshear noted.

Kentucky lawmakers passed two bills this year to strengthen recovery services, including **House Bill 248**, which outlines requirements for the certification, operation and oversight of recovery housing, and **House Bill 148**, which ensures direct payments from health insurance to the facilities providing care to ease the financial burden on individuals receiving treatment and their families.

Beshear pointed out the town of Morehead recently closed its main street to celebrate the opening of a new recovery center, noting communities across the Commonwealth are embracing access to treatment services.

"So what I believe has happened as much as anything else is we have finally reduced if not eliminated the stigma that is addiction," Beshear asserted. "Telling people that as long as they are trying, whether it's their first, fourth or tenth time, we're proud of them, and that the resources are there."

Residents needing recovery assistance can call the Kentucky Help Call Center at 833-8KY-HELP or 833-859-4357 to speak with a specialist and get connected to treatment.

Kentucky News Connection

May 3, 2023

S17

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

Reproductive-Rights Supporters See Path to Victory: Letting Voters Decide

Nadia Ramlagan

*By Belle Taylor-McGhee for Ms. Magazine.**Broadcast version by Nadia Ramlagan for Kentucky News Connection reporting for the Ms. Magazine-Public News Service Collaboration*

When Kansas **forcibly rejected an amendment** this past August that would have removed the right to abortion from the state's constitution, the country was stunned-and abortion-rights advocates were ecstatic, seeing in this victory a way forward to secure new and greater protections for abortion access and bodily autonomy by enshrining the right to abortion into state constitutions.

In the November midterm elections three months later, **voters again sent a strong signal**, not only that they disapprove of the Supreme Court ruling to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, but also that they are willing to cast their ballots to protect the right to abortion and reject attempts to take it away. It was the collective moment post-*Roe* that gave abortion-rights advocates a real pathway to success, and it changed the trajectory, some would argue, of the reproductive health and lives of millions of women across the country.

J.J. Straight, deputy director of the Liberty Division at the American Civil Liberties Union, said voters sent a clear message that abortion is a personal, not a partisan, issue: "The common thread is that folks expect there to be legal access in their state to abortion, and we have seen that they are willing to show up and vote ... to protect that right. And they also expect government not to be involved in that decision."

This is how Americans voted in November:

- More than three-quarters (76.7 percent) of Vermont voters approved the Reproductive Liberty Amendment to the state constitution, which guarantees "personal reproductive autonomy unless justified by a compelling State interest."
- A decisive 66.9 percent of California voters amended the state constitution to protect the right to abortion and contraception.
- A solid majority (56.7 percent) of Michigan voters approved a state constitutional right to reproductive freedom, including all matters relating to pregnancy, such as abortion and contraception.
- Some 52.6 percent of Montana voters rejected a referendum that would have made an infant "born alive" at any gestational age a legal person, thereby criminalizing healthcare providers who do not make every attempt to save a fetus "born during an attempted abortion" (an unlikely occurrence).
- A 52.3 percent majority of Kentucky voters rejected an amendment declaring that there is no right to abortion in the state constitution or any requirement for government funding of abortion.

With a **6-0 record of success** (counting Kansas), abortion-rights advocates are now even more motivated to pursue a state-by-state strategy and take their fight directly to voters.

"Kansas and Michigan were the biggest influencers, especially because Kansas is such a red state," said Dr. Lauren Beene, executive director of Ohio Physicians for Reproductive Rights (OPRR), a nonpartisan coalition formed after *Roe* was overturned, representing more than a thousand doctors across the state. "If it can happen in Kansas, then it can happen in Ohio too."

An onslaught of restrictive and punitive policies have threatened to ban abortion in Ohio, including the so-called heartbeat bill. Now a law, but under a temporary court injunction, it requires the determination of whether there is a "detectable fetal heartbeat" before an abortion can be performed and criminalizes anyone performing or inducing an abortion after this point. (Note: Although what's known as "cardiac activity" can be detected in a 6-week-old embryo, the term "heartbeat" at this stage is misleading. **According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists**, it's not until around 17 to 20 weeks, when the four chambers of the heart have developed and can be detected on an ultrasound, that the term "heartbeat" is accurate.)

In response, OPRR and its coalition partners, under the umbrella of **Protect Choice Ohio**, are pursuing a citizen-initiated ballot amendment to the state constitution to protect the right to abortion.

The group has reason to be optimistic: Polling conducted after *Roe* was overturned and before the 2022 midterms found that 59.1 percent of Ohioans would vote yes on an abortion-rights amendment.

But getting there will not be easy. Republican state lawmakers are already working to push through what appears to be an attempt to thwart the coalition's efforts by passing a bill (HJR 6) to modify the requirements for the referendum and initiative process by raising the threshold to pass from a simple majority vote of more than 50 percent to a 60 percent supermajority. The measure-which, in theory, could be the last ballot measure to require support from only 50 percent of voters to pass-would go before voters in a special election this August, and Republicans in Ohio have openly admitted that efforts to make ballot measures harder to pass are explicitly aimed at restricting abortion access.

Meanwhile, abortion opponent Dave Yost, the Ohio state attorney general, is fighting the legal challenges to the heartbeat law, arguing that the lower court erred when it issued a preliminary injunction.

"If our reproductive freedom amendment is on the ballot in 2023, we will need to meet the existing standard for passage: 50 percent plus 1," Beene said. "If the amendment is not on in '23 and the 60 percent [requirement passes], the repro-rights issue is dead because few ballot measures garner 60 percent of the vote. Ensuring that we are working under the current rules is just one of the many reasons we believe the amendment must be on in '23. We just want our patients to be able to access necessary medical care."

Across the U.S., a patchwork of laws govern abortion, and access depends on where you live. As of this week, **19 states have banned or restricted abortion**: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia and Wyoming. And **in Wisconsin**, abortion is unavailable because there are no providers offering care due to an uncertain legal environment.

It's because of this landscape that the Fairness Project, a national organization that supports progressive ballot measures, is looking ahead at where it can realize the most impact on abortion rights.

"Where we are really focusing our attention is on ballot measure efforts that can create a protection beyond the reach of political change-beyond the reach of who gets elected into office and what their motivations are around reproductive rights-which is especially important in red and purple states where abortion rights are so under attack," said Kelly Hall, executive director of the Fairness Project. Her group and others are already working to put abortion initiatives on the 2024 ballot in Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

However, fewer than half of U.S. states (24) allow some form of citizen-initiated ballot measures, and only 18 states allow citizens to amend the state constitution by collecting signatures on a petition. According to Hall, deciding which strategy to employ in each state depends on several factors, including asking the right questions.

"We ask what is necessary in order to achieve our common goal, which is restoring meaningful access to abortion," Hall said, pointing to South Carolina, which does not have a ballot measure process but where abortion advocates did achieve enormous success through litigation.

There, the state Supreme Court recognized the constitutional right to privacy to include the right to abortion, and on Jan. 5 permanently struck down the legislature's law banning abortion after approximately six weeks of pregnancy. The 3-2 decision represented a major victory for abortion-rights advocates, who are hoping to find more success as they prepare to take this issue through the other state courts.

According to Amy Myrick, senior staff attorney for judicial strategy with the Center for Reproductive Rights, a global human rights organization of lawyers and advocates that seeks to advance reproductive rights as fundamental human rights, all state constitutions provide extremely strong protections for the right to abortion-if the courts interpret them correctly.

"State constitutions broadly protect crucial rights, including liberty, equality and privacy, which we know encompass reproductive autonomy and our freedom to make deeply personal decisions about our own bodies, lives and futures," Myrick said. "They will continue to be an important tool to restore or establish people's fundamental rights."

Upcoming court decisions will determine the fate of abortion rights in Kentucky; in Indiana and Utah, where near-total bans have been blocked from enforcement while legal challenges are pending (though Utah still has an 18-week ban in place); and in Georgia, where the state Supreme Court has reinstated an abortion ban despite a pending legal challenge.

Clearly not all state Supreme Courts will recognize abortion rights as constitutionally protected. Just hours after the South Carolina case was decided, the Idaho Supreme Court dismissed a lawsuit brought by Planned Parenthood, upholding the state's three bans, including one that outlaws abortion from conception. In a 3-2 decision, the court ruled that the state constitution does not implicitly grant a right to abortion.

While abortion advocates pursue legal, political and policy strategies to protect and secure the right to abortion, opponents persist in their efforts to make abortion illegal on all fronts, including ramping up attacks on medication abortions, which account for 54 percent of all abortions.

Abortion opponents recently sued the Food and Drug Administration to take mifepristone, one of the drugs used in medication abortion, off the market. The Supreme Court has intervened-for now: On Friday, April 21, the Supreme Court decided to block a previous ruling from the Fifth Circuit, **allowing the abortion pill mifepristone to remain on the market** under current rules. If the Fifth Circuit ruling had gone into effect, access to mifepristone would have decreased significantly across the country. Such a ruling would end telemedicine abortion, which has expanded significantly since the FDA approved it in 2021. If anti-abortion advocates eventually succeed, abortion pills will no longer be available in *any* state in the U.S., including where abortion is legal. According to Myrick, it would effectively be a nationwide ban.

"Eliminating access to mifepristone endangers people's health and lives, but we will surely continue to see efforts to target medication abortion across the country," Myrick said.

Despite the certainty of further anti-abortion lawsuits and legislation, the Fairness Project's Hall said abortion-rights advocates remain motivated and energized to meet the challenge with strategies that have already seen success. "My vision is that abortion-rights advocates feel empowered by the fact that there is a direct democracy process in so many places where they can take matters into their own hands and make policy change for themselves," Hall said. "So many people have felt despair in reaction to the fall of Roe and feel like there are so few things we can do to protect our own rights and the rights of the people we love around the country. Ballot measures offer a really important work-around when our elected leaders are acting so far outside of our strong policy opinions as citizens.... I hope that that empowerment then leads to real policy change through the ballot box."

Andrea Miller, president of the National Institute for Reproductive Health, said there is great reason to look at direct democracy as an opportunity to address the disconnect where the elected leadership does not reflect the needs and the will of the voters-and there is a reason conservative lawmakers want to close that window, as they are attempting to do in Ohio.

"They know that reproductive freedom and voting rights, all the issues that they have been attacking, are widely popular," Miller said. Yet she admits that she worries about the direct harm that continues at the individual level-for women in need of abortion care, and for those seeking reproductive healthcare across the board.

Belle Taylor-McGhee wrote this article for Ms. Magazine.

Kentucky News Connection

5/14

May 8, 2023

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In Kentucky, Cancer Deaths Among Highest in Nation

Nadia Ramlagan

The latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data show **Kentucky continues have among the worst cancer rates** in the nation - with lung, colorectal, breast and cervical cancer making up the majority of cancer deaths.

More than 30,000 Kentuckians will be diagnosed with cancer this year, **according to the American Cancer Society**.

Groups that are part of the Kentucky Partnership for Health Improvement say they're working to identify gaps and barriers that **may cause people to miss recommended cancer screenings**.

Allison Adams - chief operating officer of the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky - said **lack of insurance and high co-pay costs, along with transportation**, pose challenges.

"Some people don't live near medical offices," said Adams. "That makes it more difficult to get cancer screenings. And also, locations are usually only open during traditional workday hours."

The CDC says **the number of Americans screened for cancer decreased** from, about 27% in 2012 to around 21% in 2020 - a more than five percentage point decrease that represents nearly 4 million people.

Adams pointed to policies that should help increase screening, including **a new law establishing biomarker-testing** coverage requirements for health-benefit plans - tests that help doctors customize cancer treatment.

"Breast cancer, colorectal cancer and lung cancer, cervical cancer," said Adams, "those cancers that are caught earlier have the best opportunity for treatment. The Partnership for Health Improvement wants to focus on those barriers."

The American Association for Cancer Research estimates the nation's total cancer-care costs will reach more than \$245 billion by 2030.

Kentucky News Connection

May 15, 2023

S/21

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KY Road Show Highlights Programs that Improve Community Well-Being

Nadia Ramlagan

A traveling roadshow highlighting changes to Medicaid, Kentucky Children's Health Insurance Program (KCHIP), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and other public assistance programs comes to Owensboro next month.

The "ThriveKY" series is aimed at educating community health workers, legal aid professionals, librarians, social workers and others working directly in communities on aspects of the public safety net.

Emily Beauregard, the executive director of Kentucky Voices for Health, explained that public assistance programs are critical for many Kentucky families living in counties with primarily low-paying jobs.

She said community professionals are on frontlines helping residents meet basic needs.

"We want community professionals to have the skills to advocate for whatever their communities need," said Beauregard. "So in one community, that may be housing, and another, it may be transportation, or child care. Of course, in most communities, it's going to be all of the above."

The ThriveKY Roadshow will be held June 13 at Owensboro Technical Community College.

The series makes stops in Hazard on July 18 and Morehead on August 15, with dates scheduled this fall for Louisville and Lexington.

For more information and to register, visit kyvoicesforhealth-dot-org.

Brenda Rosen, the executive director of the National Association of Social Workers of Kentucky, said social workers especially can benefit from getting up to speed on available resources.

"The goals are to bring to regions across the state," said Rosen, "an opportunity to learn more about updated policies' impact on everything from housing and food insecurity to talking about the importance of mental health."

Beauregard added that, increasingly extreme weather events are leaving even more residents vulnerable.

"We realize that, you know, there are events that happen in people's lives," said Beauregard, "like the tornadoes in Western Kentucky, the flooding in Eastern Kentucky - that can just take the feet right out from under a community."

According to [a report by the Ohio Valley River Institute](#), around 60% of eastern Kentuckians affected by last summer's floods make \$30,000 a year or less.

Kentucky News Connection

S 128

May 22, 2023

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Some Kentuckians Risk Losing SNAP Benefits in Debt-Ceiling Talks

Nadia Ramlagan

More than 17,000 Kentuckians could lose food assistance when pre-pandemic SNAP work requirements go back into effect this summer, for adults between ages 18 and 49.

That's on top of a proposal House Republicans are pushing in the debt-ceiling bill in Congress that would implement work requirements for people up to age 55.

Groups working to fight hunger say the combination could trigger a food insecurity crisis.

Cassidy Wheeler, advocacy coordinator for the nonprofit Feeding Kentucky, said the Commonwealth ranks second nationwide for food insecurity among people in their 50s.

She said rural communities left behind in the tech era have made finding employment difficult.

"We have a lot of blue-collar workers here in Kentucky," said Wheeler, "who maybe have worked in factories their whole lives, farmed, or they've done some sort of physically intensive job that they're not able to do anymore. And they may not have the skill set now, to transition into a different field."

Backers of work requirements say it's one way to reduce fraud and trim the budget by providing aid only to those who need it most.

Anyone concerned about their eligibility should call the Department of Community Based Services at 1-885-306-8959 or visit the Kentucky SNAP Benefits website through 'kynect.ky.gov.'

According to an American Economic Association study, work reporting requirements could mean more than half of a state's SNAP participants losing assistance - and are most likely to affect people without stable housing.

Wheeler added that many older Kentuckians are living with conditions that make it challenging to meet work requirements, but they don't qualify for disability benefits.

"Taking away someone's SNAP benefits is not going to make them find a job faster or easier," said Wheeler. "They will just be hungry while they're doing it."

The Kentucky Center for Economic Policy estimates more than 9,000 people in 39 counties, largely in eastern Kentucky, would be exempt from reporting work hours due to higher-than-average unemployment rates.

Kentucky News Connection

May 30, 2023

614

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KY Foster Youth Transitioning into Adulthood Face Resources Gap

Nadia Ramlagan

Kentucky's former foster youth have a steeper climb into adulthood than their peers, [according to new research](#).

Among 21-year-olds with foster-care histories, the data show 63% reported having stable housing, 64% said they have secure employment, and 16% reported being enrolled in college or tech school.

Former foster youth and a current member of the True Up Peer Network, Tia Humphrey, said long-term housing continues to be a challenge for young people beginning life as an adult without traditional support systems.

"A lot of these youth are falling short because they are not having permanent housing," said Humphrey. "And that's a major theme in their life - because of foster care, a lot of these youth are having housing instability. It takes a toll on their lives and their mental health, as well."

While the share of Kentuckians age 14 and older in foster care has decreased since 2006, [this population still accounted](#) for nearly one in three of the young people in care in 2021 - according to [the Annie E. Casey Foundation report](#).

Carli Mosby-Smith - director of strategic initiatives with Kentucky Youth Advocates - pointed out that transition services are available for youth aging out of foster care, but gaps remain in the number of young people who use them.

"There are a lot of services out there and there are dollars tied to that," said Mosby-Smith. "We just need to make sure that young people know that those services are available and are able to access them without additional barriers."

Former foster youth and current True Up Peer Network member, Keisha Lyon - now a college student at the University of Louisville - said she believes the state should streamline funds directly into the pockets of these young people once they turn 18.

"A lot of resources and financial assistance that could be going to these foster youth," said Lyon, "are having to kind of be trickled down through these private care agencies."

There are more than 8,500 children in Kentucky's foster-care system, [according to state data](#).

Kentucky News Connection

6/11

June 5, 2023

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Push to Get KY Kids Back on Track for Routine Vaccinations

Nadia Ramlagan

Two regional pediatric immunization symposiums are being held this month in **Morehead** and **Owensboro**, where experts will share strategies to promote vaccine dialogue and resources - as families get back on track for routine vaccinations disrupted by the pandemic.

Amber Mallot - health communicator program manager for the Immunize Kentucky Coalition and Kentucky Rural Health Association - encouraged families to check up on what routine vaccinations are needed before kids head back into the classroom.

"We want parents and caregivers to start thinking and planning for that," said Mallot, "because we know that it can be overwhelming to get into a provider's office and get those appointments scheduled, sometimes a month out."

The pandemic disrupted many kids' routine vaccination schedules - and **according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, the number of kindergartners nationwide who received routine childhood vaccinations during the 2020-'21 school year dropped by around 1% compared with the previous school year.

For more information on the symposia, visit 'immunizeky.org.'

Kelly Taulbee, director of communications and development with Kentucky Voices for Health, pointed out that kids can resume their routine immunizations that were disrupted when the pandemic hit.

"They can pick right back up where they left off," said Taulbee. "There's not any sort of delay in the care now. So please talk to your pediatrician. Get into the doctor. Tell them you're interested, if you want to talk and go through questions first. "

Malott said the Coalition is currently focused on building competence among providers to address vaccine questions with patients.

"Be able to address any of the particular questions that caregivers may have specifically in regard to making the informed choice to vaccinate their children," said Mallot, "not just for required vaccines, but recommended vaccines - HPV, COVID, flu, things of that nature."

A Pew survey released last month found most adults have a lot or some confidence in their own health care provider to give an accurate picture of the health benefits and risks of childhood vaccines.

Kentucky News Connection

6118

June 12, 2023

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Buyout Program Provides Millions for Flood-Prone Eastern KY Properties

Nadia Ramlagan

Nearly a year after the historic flooding in eastern Kentucky, residents of Breathitt, Knott, Letcher, and Perry counties now have the option to participate in buyouts for homes and properties located on flood-prone land.

Officials say they estimate around 3000 residents in the region are eligible.

Tony Nott - assistant state conservationist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service - said **the \$14 million program** aims to prevent damage, keep residents safe, and turn flood regions into open green spaces - which can help buffer the impact of future flooding events.

"We're not encouraging people to leave their communities," said Nott. "In fact, we've encouraged them to stay in the community. What we're trying to do is get people out of the floodway and out of harm's way."

He added that the agency will purchase properties at their pre-flood appraisal price.

Applications will be accepted until June 30. Interested residents should call their local county judge's office or Regional Conservation District.

Nott added that the purchased properties will be removed from those areas and converted into natural spaces maintained by local governments.

"The sponsor," said Nott, "in this case, it's the fiscal courts of each of those counties - will then manage it and can use as that green space."

Mountain Association's Lending Director Robert Allen said an ongoing problem since the last year's devastating floods is awareness of resources. He encourages people to learn more about the program and apply - even if they think they aren't eligible.

"We sure hope people can receive some of the assistance they need to get back on their feet," said Allen, "whether that's residential, commercial or church properties."

More than 250,000 properties in Kentucky are at risk of being severely affected by flooding over the next 30 years, according to **the First Street Foundation's Risk Factor Tool**.

Kentucky News Connection

6/12/23

June 19, 2023

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New Data Shows Well-Being of Kentucky Kids Worsens

Nadia Ramlagan

The latest Annie E. Casey Foundation's **Kids Count Data Book** shows Kentucky, along with other Appalachian and Southeastern states, ranks in the **bottom tier** nationwide for overall child well-being.

Terry Brooks, executive director of Kentucky Youth Advocates, explained Kentucky's childhood poverty rate had been declining for the last several years. But he said the new findings reveal a troubling reversal in poverty trends and other indicators of a thriving childhood.

"When we look at the measures in economic well-being and education and health, and community and family, the overall picture shows that not only are we falling behind other states, but we're falling behind Kentucky's own track record," Brooks observed.

The report also highlighted the nation's widespread lack of affordable and accessible child care. Kentucky's average child care center cost for toddlers in 2021 was around \$7,000 dollars per year or 27% of a single mom's income. The data showed in recent years, 12% of young children in the Commonwealth lived in families in which an adult quit, changed, or refused a job because of child care issues.

Brooks added the findings should send a signal to the state's gubernatorial candidates, Republican Attorney General Daniel Cameron and Democratic incumbent Gov. Andy Beshear, supporting kids should be the focus of policy.

"And it should send a message to both the House and Senate," Brooks emphasized. "Unless we want our kids to fall further behind, they have to be prioritized in terms of the policy action and budget decisions about to be made in Frankfort in 2024."

American Rescue Plan funds have helped expand the Child Care Assistance Program, education programs for early educators, and family child care homes, as well as the Employee Child Care Assistance Partnership program. Advocates said more federal funding is needed to ensure the programs can continue to reach those who need them the most.