



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.



Weekly Public Affairs Program

QUARTERLY ISSUES REPORT, JULY-SEPTEMBER, 2021

Show # 2021-27

Date aired: July 4, 2021

Gregory Plemmons, PhD, Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt University

Dr. Plemmons led a study that found the percentage of younger children and teens hospitalized for suicidal thoughts or actions in the United States has doubled over the past decade. He talked about the possible reasons for such a steep increase, what ages are at the greatest risk, and how parents can recognize signs of suicidal thoughts in their children.

Issues covered:

**Teen Suicide
Parenting**

Length: 7:46

Jeff Stalnaker, President and Co-Founder of First Orion, a provider of data and phone call transparency solutions

Mr. Stalnaker's company commissioned a survey that found that Millennials are more likely than any other generation to give away personal information to scammers over the phone. He said nearly 40 percent of those surveyed have been contacted by someone impersonating the IRS. He talked about other current scams, and offered advice on how to avoid falling prey to scammers.

Issues covered:

**Consumer Matters
Crime**

Length: 9:17

Kara Lusk-Dudley, Public Affairs Manager, Biomedical Communications, American Red Cross

Summertime is one of the most challenging times of the year for blood donations. Ms. Lusk-Dudley explained why, and outlined the process that a new blood donor can expect. She explained how to locate a donation center or blood drive nearby. She noted that the Red Cross is also in greater need of organizations to host blood drives during the summer months.

Issues covered:

**Blood Donation
Personal Health**

Length: 5:10

Show # 2021-28

Date aired: July 11, 2021

Darrin Grondel, Vice President of Traffic Safety and Government Relations for the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility

Although there were far fewer vehicles on the roads during the pandemic, traffic deaths rose more than 7% in 2020 to a 13-year high. Mr. Grondel discussed grants awarded by the Governors Highway Safety Association and the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility to help states keep Americans safe from alcohol- and drug-impaired drivers.

Issues covered:

**Drunk/Drugged Driving
Traffic Safety**

Length: 8:58

Marshall Allen, reporter for ProPublica, where he covers the health care industry, author of *"Never Pay the First Bill: And Other Ways to Fight the Health Care System and Win"*

Americans pay about twice as much per person for healthcare than the citizens of other developed nations, and about 1 in 6 has medical debt in collections. Mr. Allen advised consumers to make sure each medical bill is itemized, and to check the billing codes to make sure the bill is accurate and priced fairly, before paying it. He also explained how doctors are incentivized to perform many treatments and tests whether they are needed or not.

Issues covered:

**Consumer Matters
Personal Health**

Length: 8:11

David Rabadi, mental health advocate, National Speaker for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, author of *"How I Lost My Mind and Found Myself"*

41 percent of Americans reported anxiety and depression symptoms in 2020, up from 11 percent in 2019. Mr. Rabadi explained why many people struggling with mental illness try to hide it from others. He offered encouragement to seek help.

Issues covered:

**Mental Illness
Suicide**

Length: 5:07

Show # 2021-29

Date aired: July 18, 2021

Carmen Piernas, MSc, PhD, University Research Lecturer at the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences at the University of Oxford

Dr. Piernas was part of a group of British researchers that examined the strong connection between COVID 19 and obesity. She said they found that younger people with a Body Mass Index of 30 or more, which is considered obese, are at a significantly higher risk of being hospitalized or dying of COVID-19, while those with a BMI of 23 are at the lowest risk. Interestingly, they found that obesity made no difference at all in COVID risks for the elderly.

Issues covered:

**COVID-19
Obesity
Public Health**

Length: 9:17

Rebecca Johnson, PhD, Co-Director of Citizen Science and Research Associate in the Department of Invertebrate Zoology and Geology at the California Academy of Sciences

In recent years, community science--also known as citizen science--has become a global phenomenon, as millions of amateurs with an interest in science contribute unparalleled amounts of data on the natural world. Ms. Johnson said community science data remains widely underutilized by the scientific community due to its perception as being less reliable than expert-collected data. She said community science may be the only practical way to answer important questions about our planet's biodiversity and how it is changing.

Issues covered:
Science
Climate Change

Length: 7:58

Shannon M. Robson, PhD, MPH, RD, Assistant Professor in the Department of Behavioral Health and Nutrition, Principal Investigator of the Energy Balance and Nutrition Laboratory at the University of Delaware

89% of Americans believe it's important for families to have as many family meals as possible each week. Dr. Robson led a study that showed that more frequent family meals were associated with better dietary outcomes and improved family relationships. She offered suggestions for families to overcome obstacles to gathering for dinner.

Issues covered:
Nutrition
Parenting

Length: 4:38

Show # 2021-30

Date aired: July 25, 2021

Elizabeth Rosenthal, MD, former reporter and senior writer at The New York Times, Editor in Chief of Kaiser Health News, former ER physician, author of "*An American Sickness: How Healthcare Became Big Business and How You Can Take It Back*"

Dr. Rosenthal discussed the rapidly rising costs of healthcare in the past few decades and the reasons behind them. She gave examples of some of the more egregious differences in healthcare costs in the US, compared to other countries. She explained how healthcare consumers can learn to negotiate with hospitals and doctors.

Issues covered:
Personal Health
Consumer Matters

Length: 8:39

Jodie Plumert, PhD, Professor in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at the University of Iowa

For adults, crossing the street by foot seems easy. Yet it is anything but simple for a child. Dr. Plumert led a study that found that perceptual judgment and motor skills are not fully developed in most kids until age 14. She explained what parents can do to help children learn these life and death skills as early as possible.

Issues covered:
Traffic Safety
Parenting
Children's Issues

Length: 8:27

Adriana Zuniga-Teran, architect, postdoctoral research associate in the University of Arizona's Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy.

Ms. Zuniga-Teran conducted a study that examined how the design of a neighborhood can affect health and wellness. She found that those who live in traditional neighborhoods do the most walking, while those who live in suburban developments report the highest levels of mental well-being.

Issues covered:

Mental Health

Personal Health

Community Issues

Length: 5:02

Show # 2021-31

Date aired: August 1, 2021

Sally Erny, National Stakeholder Engagement Officer of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association

Ms. Erny explained how court-appointed special advocates (CASAs) look out for the interests of abused or neglected children. She discussed how CASA volunteers work with attorneys and other court officers to ensure the youngsters are in safe and healthy foster care, and eventually, permanent homes. She also outlined the training that these volunteers receive, and how someone can volunteer.

Issues covered:

Child Abuse

Foster Care

Volunteerism

Length: 8:26

Clint Emerson, retired Navy Seal, author of "*100 Deadly Skills: Survival Edition: The SEAL Operative's Guide to Surviving in the Wild and Being Prepared for Any Disaster*"

Mr. Emerson offered numerous tips on how to crime-proof a house and how to avoid becoming a victim of crime in other environments, as well. He explained the importance of being aware of your environment, in order to react to dangerous situations or avoid them in the first place. He also talked about the options available to people caught in active shooter incidents or terrorist attacks.

Issues covered:

Crime Prevention

Terrorism

Length: 8:46

Tracy Mehan, Manager of Translational Research for the Center for Injury Research and Policy at the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio

On an average day in the US, 13 children receive emergency treatment for a lawn mower-related injury. Ms. Mehan talked about the most common injuries and how they typically vary, depending on the age of the child. She offered suggestions for parents on how to prevent lawn mower-related injuries.

Issues covered:

Child Safety

Product Safety

Parenting

Length: 5:02

Show # 2021-32

Date aired: August 8, 2021

Helen Horyza, career coach, founder of the Career Coach Entrepreneur Academy certificate programs, author of *"Elevate Your Career: Live a Life You're Truly Proud Of"*

Nearly 60% of middle-income workers are asking the question: Am I really where I want to be? Ms. Horyza explained why so many people stay in unrewarding careers and how to find a happier path. She shared real-world examples of people who found their true passion in life and created a career that perfectly suited their interests and talents.

Issues covered:

Career

Unemployment

Length: 7:50

Maria J. Prados, PhD, Economist at the University of Southern California's Center for Economic and Social Research

Social Security benefits are a critical component in planning and saving for retirement. Prof. Prados co-authored a study that found that the average American overestimates their future monthly Social Security check by more than \$300. She explained why this is a serious problem and how consumers can find out how much their future Social Security benefit will be.

Issues covered:

Retirement Planning

Personal Finance

Length: 9:19

David Finkelhor, Director of the University of New Hampshire's Crimes against Children Research Center

Mr. Finkelhor shared the results of a recent study from the University of New Hampshire that found that close to 1.5 million children each year visit a doctor, emergency room or medical facility as a result of an assault, abuse, crime or other form of violence. This is four times higher than previous estimates. He outlined the most common types of abuse.

Issues covered:

Child Abuse

Youth at Risk

Government Policies

Length: 5:17

Show # 2021-33

Date aired: August 15, 2021

Loretta Alkalay, former FAA eastern regional counsel, Adjunct Professor at Vaughn College of Aeronautics & Technology, a private college in East Elmhurst, New York, specializing in aviation and engineering education

Incidents of violence at airports and during flights have been on the rise in recent months. Prof. Alkalay discussed the problem and how the increasingly stressful experience of flying has fueled it. When an aircraft's doors are closed, any criminal activity falls under federal jurisdiction, but she believes changes are needed to allow local authorities to make arrests and prosecute.

Issues covered:
Transportation
Law Enforcement
Mental Health

Length: 8:53

Jenn Donahue, leadership coach, engineer, entrepreneur

The leadership gender gap in American business is glaring; even today, women fill just 6% of CEO positions at Fortune 500 companies. Ms. Donahue explained how those women who have broken the glass ceiling can determine their leadership style, and also seek ways to bring other women up through mentoring.

Issues covered:
Women's Concerns
Career

Length: 8:26

John G. Boyle, patient and health advocate who relies on plasma-derived therapies, former CEO & President of the Immune Deficiency Foundation

The national blood shortage has been widely reported, but Mr. Boyle talked about another life-threatening donation crisis. He said the critical need for plasma donors right now in the U.S. will have lasting consequences if it isn't addressed. He explained what sorts of patients are in dire need of plasma donations, and how to make a donation.

Issues covered:
Plasma & Blood Donation
Personal Health

Length: 5:09

Show # 2021-34

Date aired: August 22, 2021

Clifford Bassett, M.D., FAAAAI, FAAAAI, Founder and Medical Director of Allergy and Asthma Care of New York, author of *"The New Allergy Solution: Supercharge Resistance, Slash Medication, Stop Suffering"*

Allergies are on the rise. Dr. Bassett explained why the problem and its underlying causes are quite complex. He believes in many cases, allergic reactions can be prevented, with proper medical advice that examines the interplay of diet, mindset, and environment.

Issues covered:
Personal Health

Length: 7:28

Cornelius N. Grove, Ed.D., education expert, author of *"The Drive to Learn: What the East Asian Experience Tells Us About Raising Students Who Excel"*

American students are currently ranked #25 in education globally, significantly behind countries such as Singapore, China and Japan. He believes that American children are less receptive to classroom learning, compared to East Asian children. He said a different approach to parenting is a major factor.

Issues covered:
Education
Parenting

Length: 9:51

Laurence J. Kotlikoff, PhD, William Fairfield Warren Distinguished Professor, Professor of Economics at Boston University, President of Economic Security Planning, Inc, author/co-author of 16 books on retirement planning, economics and personal finance

Dr. Kotlikoff has developed the first retirement planning software built by economists. He explained how the "Economist Approach" differs from traditional retirement advice. He said the new approach can help consumers determine the highest level of spending their household can sustain over time, in order to live within their means for the remainder of their lives.

Issues covered:
Retirement Planning
Senior Citizens

Length: 4:56

Show # 2021-35

Date aired: August 29, 2021

Gal Wettstein, PhD, Senior Research Economist at the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College

Dr. Wettstein co-authored a report entitled "*Are Older Workers Capable of Working Longer?*" He explained why recent worsening health trends raise the question of how long people will be able to work, and why it matters. He noted that gains in "working life expectancy" have slowed in the past 15 years. He said many black workers, as well as whites with less education, may not be capable of working to Social Security's full retirement age of 67.

Issues covered:
Retirement Planning
Poverty

Length: 7:49

Glenn N Levine, MD, Master Clinician and Professor of Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, Chief of the cardiology section at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, both in Houston

Dr. Levine was chair of the writing committee for a new American Heart Association Scientific Statement, entitled "*Psychological Health, Well-Being, and the Mind-Heart-Body Connection.*" He outlined the latest research that examines why and how psychological health can positively or negatively impact a person's physical health, and risk factors for heart disease and stroke.

Issues covered:
Mental Health
Personal Health

Length: 9:22

Catherine Athans, PhD, Certified Trauma Therapist, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist for more than 25 years with Doctorate Degrees in both Clinical and Health Psychology, along with a Master's Degree in Clinical Community Psychology

It's not going to be a normal fall, as both students and parents must deal with a second school year of uncertainty and concerns connected to the pandemic. Dr. Athans discussed the array of challenges faced by students and explained how parents can help. She said it is crucial for parents to recognize and deal with their own anxieties.

Issues covered:
Mental Health
Parenting

Length: 5:06

Show # 2021-36

Date aired: September 5, 2021

Rachael Stickland, Co-Founder and Co-Chair of the Parent Coalition for Student Privacy

Schools and third-party vendors collect and share an astonishing amount of personal data on nearly every student in America. Ms. Stickland explained why parents should be concerned and what they can do about it. She believes laws protecting student privacy need to be strengthened.

Issues covered:

Length: 8:56

Parenting
Privacy Concerns
Education

Vijay R. Varma, PhD, researcher and post-doctoral fellow at the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health

Dr. Varma recently co-authored a study that found an alarming decrease in physical activity in youngsters at every age. 19 year olds now get as much exercise and activity as 60 year olds. Dr. Varma explained why this is a major problem. He offered suggestions of ways to encourage both younger and older Americans to become more physically active.

Issues covered:

Length: 8:02

Physical Fitness
Personal Health
Aging

Jim Hedlund, consultant for the Governors Highway Safety Association, former researcher for 22 years at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Mr. Hedlund conducted a study for the Governors Highway Safety Administration that found that for the first time, more drivers who were tested after fatal crashes had drugs in their system than had alcohol. He discussed the role that the increasing legalization of marijuana may play in this trend. He also explained why laws targeting drivers under the influence of alcohol cannot easily be amended to include drug users.

Issues covered:

Length: 5:09

Impaired Driving
Substance Abuse
Government Legislation

Show # 2021-37

Date aired: September 12, 2021

Susan Stark, PhD, Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy, of Neurology and of Social Work at Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis

Falls are the leading cause of injury, accidental death and premature placement in a nursing home among older adults in the United States. Dr. Stark shared the results of her study that suggested that in-home falls can be reduced by nearly 40% with a community-based program that helps older adults make modifications to their homes such as adding grab bars, shower seating and slip-resistant surfaces in the bathroom.

Issues covered:

Length: 8:23

Elder Care
Aging

Frank Pega, PhD, epidemiologist, health economist, Technical Officer in the Environment, Climate Change and Health Department at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland

Long working hours are killing 745,000 people a year, according to a new report from the World Health Organization. Dr. Pega was the lead author of the study, which found that working more than 55 hours a week is a health hazard that leads to stroke and heart disease. He said the pandemic may have accelerated this trend.

Issues covered:
Personal Health
Workplace Matters

Length: 8:55

Colin Orion Chandler, doctoral student and Presidential Fellow, at Northern Arizona University's Department of Astronomy and Planetary Science

Mr. Chandler is the project founder and principal investigator of the "Active Asteroids" project, which seeks to recruit citizen scientists to assist in an effort to quadruple the number of known active asteroids. He explained how people can volunteer and why the search for these rare space objects is important.

Issues covered:
Science
Volunteerism

Length: 5:03

Show # 2021-38

Date aired: September 19, 2021

Benjamin H. Barton, Helen and Charles Lockett Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of Tennessee, author of *"Rebooting Justice: More Technology, Fewer Lawyers, and the Future of Law"*

Professor Barton discussed what he sees are longstanding problems in our judicial system. He said that laws are too complex and legal advice is far more expensive than necessary. He outlined a series of reforms which he believes would make the courts much fairer and more accessible for poor and middle-class Americans.

Issues covered:
Legal Reform
Poverty

Length: 8:31

Steve Casner, PhD, research psychologist, NASA scientist, author of *"Careful: A User's Guide to Our Injury-Prone Minds"*

Dr. Casner has devoted his career to studying the psychology of safety. He said after a hundred years of steady decline, the rate at which people are being injured or killed in everyday accidents, such as car crashes, pedestrian fatalities, home-improvement projects gone wrong, medical mistakes and home fires, is increasing. He explained why few of us are as careful as we think we are, and what we can do about it.

Issues covered:
Accident Prevention
Personal Health

Length: 8:36

Robin Behrstock, entrepreneur, author of *"Adventures Of Women Entrepreneurs: Stories That Inspire"*

Dr. Behrstock shared some inspiring examples of women who overcame both personal and professional setbacks to turn their dreams of starting their own business into reality. She offered advice for aspiring entrepreneurs who are reluctant to take that first step.

Issues covered:
Women's Issues
Career

Length: 4:50

Show # 2021-39

Date aired: September 26, 2021

William Lastrapes, PhD, Professor of Economics, Bernard B. and Eugenia A. Ramsey Chair of Private Enterprise in the Terry College of Business at the University of Georgia

Professor Lastrapes led a study that suggests that eliminating \$20, \$50 and \$100 denominations of physical currency might benefit average US families. He explained that although cash is popular, transactions are largely untraceable by the government and are sometimes used to pay for under the table or illegal goods or services. He believes that less cash means less tax evasion and that the government could theoretically reduce other taxes.

Issues covered:
Government Policies
Economy

Length: 8:17

Nora Volkow, MD, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, part of the National Institutes of Health

Marijuana use continued to rise among college students over the past five years, and remained at historically high levels even among same-aged peers who were not in college, according to survey results from the 2020 Monitoring the Future panel study. Dr. Volkow, who has led the National Institute on Drug Abuse since 2003, discussed the potential reasons for the trend. She added that the survey found that there was also a significant increase in the annual use of hallucinogens such as LSD, and a significant drop in current alcohol use among college students.

Issues covered:
Substance Abuse
Government Policies

Length: 9:01

Sangeetha Abdu Jyothi, PhD, Assistant Professor in the Department of Computer Science at the University of California, Irvine

Prof. Jyothi said a severe solar storm could plunge the world into an "internet apocalypse" that keeps large swaths of society offline for weeks or months at a time, by damaging long undersea internet cables that connect continents. She said that although coronal mass ejections are relatively rare, the global internet infrastructure is relatively new, and its vulnerabilities remain largely unstudied.

Issues covered:
Internet Infrastructure
Technology
Business

Length: 4:54

July 1, 2021

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Experts Call Child Tax Credit a Game Changer for KY Families

Nadia Ramlagan

FRANKFORT, KY. - Starting July 15, **nearly a million Kentucky kids and their families** could get extra income support through the federal child tax credit.

As part of the American Rescue Plan Act, Congress increased this year's credit from \$2,000 per child to \$3,600 for children younger than 6 years old, and \$3,000 for children between 6 and 17 years old.

Dustin Pugel, senior policy analyst with the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, explained that because the tax credit is not counted as income, folks will continue to be eligible for public-assistance benefits.

He said that to receive the credit, families will need to file a 2020 tax return, even if they don't usually pay federal taxes.

"If you didn't get a stimulus check recently or if you didn't file a tax return anytime recently," said Pugel, "the IRS has created **an online portal** where folks can go in and put their information and sign up for the tax credit."

Improvements to the tax credit this year could reduce child poverty by 40% nationwide, according to **an analysis by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**. For more information on the Child Tax Credit, Kentuckians can visit childtaxcredit.gov.

Pugel said the credit will make it easier for families in the Commonwealth to afford housing, food and clothing, as well as health care and child care, which research shows makes a huge difference in the well-being of children.

"I think this is a really big deal for Kentucky," said Pugel. "It'll be around - a little over - 90% of Kentucky children that receive this benefit, and it's going to make a huge difference for them and their families."

He added that around 65 million American children will benefit from the new child tax credit including roughly half of all Black and Hispanic children, whose families, along with other families of color, are disproportionately employed in low-income jobs.

July 8, 2021

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Lawmakers May Ask USPS to Delay Rate Hike Until Next Year

Nadia Ramlagan

FRANKFORT, Ky. - Some lawmakers say they want the Postal Service to delay until next year a mail price hike slated for the end of this summer. The move would raise the price of first-class mail from 55 to 58 cents.

The letter sent this week to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy comes as Congress considers major postal-reform legislation.

Earlier this month the House Committee on Oversight and Reform unanimously passed the [Postal Service Reform Act of 2021](#), which would restructure employee pension and health-care obligations.

Former New York Congressman and Chairman of the [Package Coalition](#) John McHugh said without the bill, there will be serious consequences for package affordability.

"It would be a stunning blow to those particularly small businesses who rely upon the Postal Service for the timely delivery of their packages to their customers," said McHugh. "And it would be a stunning blow to customers, who obviously would have to foot the bill."

The bill is estimated to save the Postal Service around \$40 to \$50 billion over the next decade. If passed, it would be the first major overhaul to the Postal Service in fifteen years.

McHugh added that USPS especially is critical for rural states such as Kentucky, where private carriers don't always deliver.

"The ability for the Postal Service to get back on the right path is predicated in large measure on that integrated delivery network," said McHugh, "and the ability and the promise of going to every household six days a week."

He said if the changes aren't enacted, the Postal Service could lose \$160 billion over the next ten years.

Earlier this year, DeJoy said the agency could run out of cash by the end of 2022 without major reforms.

7/18

July 12, 2021

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KY Regulators Rein In Utilities' Proposed Rate Hikes

Nadia Ramlagan

FRANKFORT, Ky. -- The Kentucky Public Service Commission has **rejected proposed rate hikes** by Louisville Gas and Electric Company and Kentucky Utilities, instead setting new rate increases lower than what the companies had asked for.

Advocates called the decision a win for consumers.

Cathy Kuhn, executive director of the Metro Housing Coalition, explained the average bill of a typical customer will increase by around 7% per month, or an additional \$8.

"We don't like to see any increase in our gas or electric rates, but we were very pleased to see that the increase was much less than what the company was initially asking for," Kuhn stated.

The companies also must comply with a so-called stay out provision, which prevents another rate increase from being implemented before July 2025. Several community groups were interveners in the case, including the Metro Housing Coalition, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, and the Kentucky Solar Energy Society.

Charlotte Whittaker, volunteer state president of AARP Kentucky, said fifty-plus residents across the Commonwealth are already struggling with rising living costs and economic stability coming out of the pandemic.

She pointed out many residents couldn't have afforded the proposed 12% rate hike in their electric bills and 9% increase for gas.

"We have so many seniors that are on a very fixed income," Whittaker noted. "And it's a choice they will have to make. Do they not buy their medicine? Do they try to buy fewer groceries?"

Whittaker added over the last few months, AARP Kentucky has mobilized its volunteers to call on the Public Service Commission to carefully consider if the rate increase was reasonable.

Kuhn noted the commission also decided against raising the companies' basic monthly charge.

"Which is really the amount that customers pay regardless of how much energy they use," Kuhn explained.

The commission also approved a one-year economic relief surcredit totaling \$38.9 million for LG&E's electric customers, \$2.7 million for LG&E's natural-gas customers, and \$11.9 million for K-U's customers.

July 21, 2021

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KY County Jails' Profits from Phone Calls Soar During Pandemic

Nadia Ramlagan

FRANKFORT, Ky. -- A new report finds county jails made more than \$9 million from payments made for phone calls by incarcerated people, the year before and during the pandemic.

The report by Mike Harmon, the state's auditor of public accounts, examined more than 70 county jails' communication services and equipment contracts that were active between July 2019 and November 2020.

Marcus Jackson, smart justice organizer and coordinator at ACLU Kentucky, said inmates' families foot the bill for marked-up prices on a number of services, including food purchased from commissary vendors. He added it is commonplace for jails to receive financial perks from vendors.

"No one that's incarcerated has the money to pay these high phone bills," Jackson asserted. "It's their family members that are already in bad situations and barely making it paycheck to paycheck that are also paying taxes, that's paying these high bills."

Jackson noted in addition to financial burdens, high costs for phone calls cause emotional distress and makes it harder for inmates and their families to maintain social ties, all of which research shows can boost successful re-entry into society.

Some municipalities, such as New York City, have introduced legislation to provide communication services in jails and prisons at no cost.

Jackson noted in Kentucky, inmates can be charged upwards of \$10 for a 15-minute phone call.

"Let's say if a person calls home every day, once a day. Three hundred dollars per month added to a struggling family," Jackson explained.

The report also found some contracts with telecommunications companies were based on verbal agreements. Auditors say unwritten contracts raise serious policy issues and can obscure the flow of money from county governments, taxpayers and officials.

July 26, 2021

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After DACA Court Ruling, Advocates Call on Congress for Immigration Overhaul

Nadia Ramlagan

FRANKFORT, Ky. -- In a **recent ruling**, a federal judge in Texas **blocked new applications** for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Now some advocates say action rests on Congress to provide a permanent solution for individuals unlawfully brought to the U.S. as children, most often by their parents or relatives.

Oscar Chacon, executive director of Alianzas Americas, said the decision means federal immigration officials can no longer process new DACA applications, effectively halting the program.

"What ultimately continues to cause so much harm is the fact that we have an immigration law that is completely divorced from reality," Chacon argued. "Divorced from the fact that immigration and immigrants have been extremely vital for the well functioning of the United States of America."

According to the American Immigration Council, Kentucky was home to more than **2,700 DACA recipients** as of March of last year, and 62% of DACA-eligible immigrants have submitted applications to the program.

Chacon added while the decision means first-time DACA applicants, currently more than 81,000, face uncertainty, there is no cause for alarm for individuals already awarded DACA status.

"And I surely hope that people do not get thoroughly discouraged by this development because pursuing education is something that the very creation of DACA changed significantly," Chacon remarked.

DACA has withstood **numerous legal challenges** since its inception during the Obama administration in 2012.

Last summer the **Supreme Court ruled** the Trump administration's attempt to end the program was, quote, "arbitrary and capricious," and a violation of federal law.

August 3, 2021

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Experts: Wellness Visits More Urgent as Kids Head Back to School

Nadia Ramlagan

PRESTONSBURG, Ky. -- A **new report** by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Georgetown University Health Policy Institute, urged parents to get their children caught up on missed doctor visits and vaccinations, to protect themselves and their communities before they return to school.

Emily Beauregard, executive director of Kentucky Voices for Health, said wellness visits for kids under age five dropped 75% last March nationwide, mirroring the trend seen in the Commonwealth.

She noted kids are less protected than ever, increasing the odds of measles or hepatitis outbreaks during the school year.

"And I think any parent who has a child in daycare right now has seen the spread of viruses come back in force since mask mandates have ended," Beauregard asserted. "So, if we don't get immunization rates back up to herd immunity levels again, we're going to be facing the possibility of multiple outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illnesses."

According to the report, Black children are least likely to receive all recommended vaccines, while Asian children are the most likely. Some parents don't immunize children for religious reasons. Others worry about potential health risks of some vaccines, although those are reported to be extremely rare.

In addition to their vaccination status, Dr. Alexander Saurer, pediatrician at Frontier Medical Associates in eastern Kentucky, said kids who miss wellness visits are less likely to receive needed therapies and treatments.

"The earlier we get these kids enrolled in early interventions, the better their outcomes are as they get older," Saurer emphasized.

Saurer also pointed to a worsening obesity epidemic among children in the state, and said wellness visits can ensure kids stay healthy.

"We're seeing growth charts just jumping up and seeing a lot of kids in the obese category currently," Saurer reported. "So, we're really working on that right now, getting kids back on track to being physically active."

For information on recommended childhood immunizations in the Commonwealth, parents can visit the state's **Cabinet for Health and Family Services website**.

August 9, 2021

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Groups Launch New Statewide Effort to Reduce KY Childhood Adversity

Nadia Ramlagan

LOUISVILLE, Ky. -- A new initiative called **Bloom Kentucky** is focused on statewide policy change to prevent and mitigate the impact of childhood adversity.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events that occur before the age of 18, such as physical or sexual abuse, substance-use issues in the household, or having a parent in jail.

Sara Hemingway, executive director of the Marilyn and William Young Charitable Foundation in Owensboro, said experiencing ACEs have lifelong effects on health, mental wellness, and the ability to function as an adult.

"It compounds the issues that they already are facing," Hemingway explained. "And it takes them twice as long, three times as long, to get back on track, and so, we can't possibly do it by ourselves."

The **latest data** showed 22% of kids in the Commonwealth have experienced at least two ACEs. Kentucky also has the highest rate of child victims of abuse and neglect in the nation for the third year running, and more than one in ten Kentucky children have had a parent separated from them **due to incarceration**, the fifth-highest rate in the nation.

Research hints the pandemic and accompanying social isolation, job loss, school closures and other stressors may be amplifying childhood trauma.

Gerry Roll, CEO of the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky in Hazard, pointed out it is more important than ever to raise community awareness about the harmful effect of ACEs.

"You don't start with the money, you start with the people and the community," Roll advised. "Then we can use our dollars to work more effectively in those communities."

Barry Allen, president and treasurer of the Gheens Foundation in Louisville, said for the first time in the Commonwealth, more than thirty grant makers from around the state have agreed to come out of their comfort zones to tackle ACEs.

"And get into the business of educating, encouraging, and enabling our legislative, judicial and executive leadership in Frankfort, to enact policy changes that are necessary to prevent and mitigate this whole impact of childhood adversity on our children and families," Allen urged.

Nearly half of children in the U.S. have experienced at least one adverse childhood event prior to age 18, with a higher prevalence among children of color and low-income children.

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Study: Children Returning to School 4-5 Months Behind

Suzanne Potter

FRANKFORT, Ky. - A new study from the consulting firm McKinsey finds that American kids are returning to school on average 4 to 5 months behind in their education - and 5 to 7 months behind for children from low-income areas and communities of color.

As a result, many non-profits have stepped in to help, providing meals, school supplies, tutoring and after-school programs.

Shane Garver, associate vice president for Save the Children's rural education programs, said COVID-19 took away a sense of normalcy and advises parents to help kids with stuff they can control.

"Those healthy routines," said Garver. "Healthy sleep patterns at night. And keeping that positive attitude as they're walking out the door each day. Believing in their kids and helping, encouraging them that, you know, they have what it takes to get through that day and make the most of it. "

Parents can go to [savethechildren.org](https://www.savethechildren.org) to find more tips on helping their kids feel safe and secure, and stay engaged in learning. They can check with their school district to access tutoring and after-school and home-visiting programs.

Alissa Taylor, state director for Kentucky programs with Save the Children, said the group has helped 100,000 kids in rural parts of the Bluegrass State with food and supplies - because so many families struggle to meet basic needs, and that hurts school readiness.

"So if children are hungry, or they're not getting enough sleep, or they don't have a quiet space to learn," said Taylor, "it really impacts their ability to focus on their education. "

The McKinsey study also found that the disruption has exacerbated pre-existing disparities, especially for students without broadband access.

It also found that high schoolers in the pandemic era have become more likely to drop out and seniors from low-income families are less likely to go on to college.

KY Groups Rally for Infrastructure, Climate, Jobs Investments

Nadia Ramlagan

LOUISVILLE, Ky. - When U.S. House lawmakers return to Washington this week, they're expected to vote on advancing President Joe Biden's \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill and \$3.5 trillion budget bill.

Kentucky groups have had recent rallies in Louisville and Lexington, to urge lawmakers to support the major federal investments in both pieces of legislation.

Kentucky AFL-CIO Vice President Ashley Snider said she believes the spending plan would provide relief - like extending child tax credits, and paid family and medical leave - for families facing overlapping stressors in the pandemic.

"People are really struggling, they're being evicted from their homes," said Snider. "It's just, you know - COVID has really taken a toll on the working class. Legislation that can benefit folks like that would really be helpful."

The U.S. Senate recently passed the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill that would fund road and bridge repair and jumpstart renewable-energy investment. Kentucky stands to receive \$4.6 billion for highway repairs and \$438 million for bridges.

But critics of both spending packages, including Republicans and some Democrats, argue the cost is too high and could have economic consequences.

Residential Energy Coordinator with the Mountain Association Chris Woolery said Kentuckians are already seeing some positive effects of clean-energy investment.

He pointed out the infrastructure bill includes \$65 billion to modernize the nation's electric grid - if it doesn't get stuck in congressional gridlock.

"Until those things happen, it's on us to make sure they happen," said Woolery. "It's on Kentuckians and Americans to hold our legislators - decision-makers - accountable, to a decision that will impact generations."

A poll by the group Data for Progress found 66% of likely voters support Congress passing a \$3.5 trillion spending plan, while 26% said they oppose it.

Experts: Pandemic EBT Grocery Money for Families Will Boost KY Economy

Nadia Ramlagan

FRANKFORT, Ky. -- September is **Hunger Action Month**, and advocates say the latest round of federal Pandemic EBT and Summer EBT will give Kentucky's economy a boost of more than \$267 million, while helping families put food on the table.

Pandemic EBT is the national program established last year at the beginning of the COVID crisis. It provides cash for groceries to low-income families of young children whose daycare and preschool may have been disrupted by COVID-19.

Summer EBT is a one-time grocery benefit, reimbursing families who qualify for free and reduced-price lunches for the extra cost of food they incurred during the summer.

Eric Friedlander, secretary of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, said the programs will directly affect more than 600,000 children.

"Whatever happens to one of us in the community affects us all," Friedlander contended. "And this is a great example of that. Because this Pandemic EBT goes to an individual, but then what happens is it supports the retailers in our local communities. And that is critical for everyone in a community."

For more information about requirements and qualifications, call the Department of Community Based Services hotline at 1-855-306-8959. Families who lost their EBT or P-EBT card can call 888-979-9949 to receive a new one.

Steve McClain, director of Communications and Public Affairs for the Kentucky Retail Federation, said increased grocery purchases can have a big impact, especially in rural communities.

"It's not just the grocery store workers," McClain explained. "These are dollars that go back to the folks that produce the food, to deliver the food, to the stores."

Last month, **households nationwide** reported the lowest levels of food insecurity since the start of the pandemic, according to Census data. But SNAP enrollment **continues to spike**, with six million more people relying on food benefits compared to 2019.

Pregnant? Medical Experts Urge Getting COVID-19 Vaccine

Nadia Ramlagan

PRESTONSBURG, Ky. -- Health professionals are concerned misinformation may be leading some people who are pregnant to choose not to get the COVID-vaccine, despite universal recommendations that they do so.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and other medical groups are all in agreement.

Dr. Jessica Branham, DO/OB-GYN at Appalachian Regional Healthcare, said she understands people may have anxiety around the safety of the vaccine. But she pointed out the research is strong that getting the shot can help ensure a healthy pregnancy, at a time when the uptick in COVID cases continues to strain Kentucky hospitals.

"We have tons and tons of good data showing that women who are pregnant, have received their COVID-19 vaccine, that they are not only doing well," Branham reported. "It is actually showing protective effects for the newborn baby as well."

Today, in a special legislative session, Gov. Andy Beshear and state lawmakers are considering extending the pandemic state of emergency until January.

They may also make decisions about the governor's authority to require masks in indoor settings, provide flexibility for school districts, and use American Rescue Plan funds to support testing and vaccine distribution.

Caitlin Bottoms, a resident of Anderson County, said she found out she was pregnant about a week before considering getting the shot earlier this year. Bottoms recalled she waited until the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists released its recommendation in late July, then spoke with her doctor and immediately scheduled an appointment.

"I'm very glad I got vaccinated," Bottoms stated. "It's definitely a relief for the rest of my pregnancy, knowing that I'm protected, but that my baby will have some protection as well when they arrive in November."

Branham added research also shows women who receive COVID-19 mRNA vaccines generate an immune response against the coronavirus and pass protective antibodies on to their babies.

"And those babies are actually showing natural immunity to COVID, because the maternal antibodies are crossing the placenta," Branham explained.

Studies of breastfeeding women have also indicated those who are vaccinated against COVID while breastfeeding pass protective antibodies to the baby through their breast milk. Antibodies against other infectious diseases, like the flu and pertussis, have previously been found in nursing parents who were vaccinated against those diseases.

EPA's Chlorpyrifos Ban Spotlights Future of Agricultural Pesticide Use

Nadia Ramlagan

FRANKFORT, Ky. - Experts say most agriculture producers in Kentucky won't be affected by the Environmental Protection Agency's recent decision to ban a common pesticide, widely used since the 1960s on fruits and vegetables, because it has been linked to neurological damage in children.

The new rule takes effect in six months and follows an order in April by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals that directed the EPA to halt the agricultural use of the chemical unless it could demonstrate its safety.

University of Kentucky Extension entomologist Rick Bessin said the phaseout of chlorpyrifos won't be a huge loss to the state's produce industry.

"We did use some chlorpyrifos in Kentucky," said Bessin. "But when I look at the national map of where it was used, we were very much a lower-use rate than many other states."

Chlorpyrifos is commonly applied to corn, soybeans, apples, broccoli, asparagus and other produce. Numerous studies have shown the chemical can cause damage in kids' developing brains, leading to reduced IQ, attention deficit disorder and loss of memory.

Bessin added that newer pesticide products are increasingly selective, meaning they target one particular pest without affecting honeybees and other ecologically important wildlife.

"They may not kill all insects out in the field," said Bessin. "They may just target a few. They may get aphids and white flies, and they won't touch the caterpillars or beetles."

Bessin also added that climate change potentially could affect the quantities of pesticides used on food crops in the future.

"So if climate change results in we have more frequent pest problems," said Bessin, "where pests get above what we call an economic threshold, we're going to end up using more pesticides."

The Division of Environmental Services in the Kentucky Department of Agriculture regulates federal and state pesticide laws, and requires that applicators keep detailed records of pesticide use.

Commercial and non-commercial pesticide applicators in the state must be certified and licensed.

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Poll: 1 in 5 Unvaccinated Kentuckians Open to Getting COVID-19 Vaccine

Nadia Ramlagan

LOUISVILLE, Ky. -- One in five unvaccinated Kentuckians say they are open to getting the COVID-19 vaccine, according to a **new poll** from the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky.

The state's hospitals are filled with COVID patients, and according to **Gov. Andy Beshear**, about 90 beds are left in Intensive Care Units. Sixty-six Kentucky hospitals report "critical" staffing shortages, and at least two dozen will soon receive backup help from the National Guard.

Ben Chandler, CEO of Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky, sees the poll results as encouraging, showing there are still people open to learning more about the vaccine, so they can be better protected against serious illness and death.

"That's really good news, I think," Chandler remarked. "We've got a chunk of people there who have yet to be vaccinated, but who plan to get vaccinated."

State data showed the week of Sep. 12, the state's seven-day average COVID-19 positivity rate was 13.88%, the highest recorded since Kentucky had adequate testing supplies.

In the poll, one in three Kentuckians reported "always" wearing a mask in an outdoor, crowded public space. More than one-quarter of those who have received the COVID-19 vaccine said they never wear a mask, while almost four in ten who are not vaccinated stated they never wear a mask.

"But the vast majority, 70% of Kentuckians, think that the kids ought to wear masks in schools if they're not vaccinated," Chandler reported.

While some are keeping an open mind, more than one third of the unvaccinated people surveyed said "nothing" will motivate them to get the shot. Around 14% of unvaccinated respondents said they want "more time and research to be conducted" before they'd roll up a sleeve.

Chandler contended it is important communities focus outreach efforts on those individuals.

"And I think we need to reach out to those people and make sure that they know these shots are available, and let them know how they can get the shot," Chandler urged.

He added the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky is offering \$20,000 "mini-grants" to help local groups create new or expand their COVID-19 vaccination outreach efforts.