

# **INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT**

## **Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the 2025 Interim**

**August 21, 2025**

### **Call to Order and Roll Call**

The third meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on State Government was held on August 21, 2025, at 12:30 PM in the Kentucky Exposition Center. Representative DJ Johnson, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

### **Present were:**

Members: Senator Michael J. Nemes, Co-Chair; Representatives David Hale, Co-Chair; DJ Johnson, Co-Chair; Senators Julie Raque Adams, Greg Elkins, Keturah J. Herron, Scott Madon, Robby Mills, Steve Rawlings, and Lindsey Tichenor; and Representatives Shane Baker, Ryan Bivens, Josh Calloway, Beverly Chester-Burton, Anne Gay Donworth, Jim Gooch Jr., Erika Hancock, John Hodgson, Thomas Huff, Mary Beth Imes, Matthew Koch, Matthew Lehman, Chris Lewis, Matt Lockett, Savannah Maddox, Mary Lou Marzian, Rebecca Raymer, T.J. Roberts, James Tipton, Joshua Watkins, and Wade Williams.

Guests: John Steffen, Executive Director, Kentucky Registry of Election Finance (KREF); Carlos Luna, General Manager, Kentucky Interactive, LLC (KI); Carmine G. Iaccarino, Member, Sturgill, Turner, Barker & Moloney, PLLC; and Karen Sellers, Executive Director, State Board of Elections (SBE).

LRC Staff: Shannon Tubbs, Daniel Carter, Jesse Farler, and Peggy Sciantarelli.

### **Approval of Minutes - July 29 Meeting**

The minutes of the July 29, 2025, meeting were approved without objection by voice vote.

### **Update on Campaign Finance Electronic Reporting System**

Carlos Luna, General Manager, KI, and John Steffen, Executive Director, KREF, gave an update on the Election Finance Management System (KEFMS), the registry's campaign finance electronic reporting system. System updates are approximately 68 percent complete, with an estimated completion date of February 3, 2026. Updates include export functionality, expenditure filing capability, and updates based on 2024 RS HB 595 and 2025 RS HB 45.

Mr. Luna discussed KEFMS statistics, system usage, and contract costs. The total amount of the original contract is \$453,114, plus a yearly maintenance fee of \$89,000. To date, KI has been paid \$309,804. As the project moves forward, KI is billing approximately \$4,700 monthly, based on elements completed. KI does not bill or receive payment for uncompleted work. He discussed staffing problems and other factors that have caused delays.

Mr. Steffen said Mr. Luna summarized the project well. With ongoing operational support, the system can continue to be improved.

Representative Lockett commented about the confusing filing number system. Mr. Steffen said when a candidate first runs for office, they are assigned a permanent candidate number. Filer numbers subsequently assigned to a candidate are based on individual elections.

In response to Representative Lehman, Mr. Luna said the original contract for the project was signed in 2017, but the system did not go live until September 2019. KI has approximately 19 employees and, since 2023, is doing business as Tyler Technologies. The Commonwealth of Kentucky is its only customer.

In response to Representative Hodgson, Mr. Luna said as each feature is completed, it is tested and released for use, and pertinent information is posted on the KREF website. Mr. Steffen noted that the website includes information about the changes required by 2025 RS HB 45.

Chair Johnson stated lack of operational support has caused delays in the system. Mr. Luna said KI's goal is to have a separate maintenance team. Multiple staff members are versed in the system, including KI's director of technologies.

When Chair Johnson asked about the timetable for completion of the project, Mr. Steffen said he believes completion was anticipated to take 30 months. He requested KREF to keep members of the General Assembly informed by providing brief quarterly updates. He suggested, in order to avoid fines, KEFMS include an automated process to notify candidates and elected officials of report due dates.

In response to Senator Elkins, Mr. Luna said when the two remaining milestones are accomplished, the system will be more than 80 percent complete. Mr. Steffen said under the master agreement, work completed by KI and paid for, becomes property owned by the Commonwealth.

Representative Watkins requested Mr. Luna to provide him information about the KEFMS messaging system software used by KI.

Chair Johnson requested a quarterly update be provided to the committee in advance of its November 2025 meeting.

### **Update on President Trump's Executive Order on Elections**

Carmine Iaccarino, Outside Counsel for SBE, and Karen Sellers, Executive Director, SBE, gave an update on President Trump's executive order addressing federal elections. The March 25, 2025, executive order seeks to safeguard elections by enacting reforms in voter registration, ballot handling, and election security.

Mr. Iaccarino said the executive order requires the federal Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to require proof of United States citizenship in all federal elections. Nineteen states have sued to enjoin the executive order, but the executive order does not affect Kentucky. He discussed the executive order's requirements relating to voter identification, citizenship verification, election day deadlines, election system security, voting technology standards, prosecution of election crimes, implementation of the executive order, and legal challenges. The President has not yet issued an executive order relating to mail-in ballots and the use of vote tallying machines—topics which are being closely watched by election system administrators.

Representative Hodgson spoke in favor of the executive order's mandate to prohibit barcode-based vote counting. He said it is not acceptable to have a computer interpret a nonhuman readable barcode to tally votes, and it is his intention to make it illegal in Kentucky. He suggested SBE put its vendors on notice to update their systems in that regard.

Representative Roberts expressed concern about the deadlines for compliance with the barcode provision. Mr. Iaccarino said SBE stands ready to help county clerks comply with applicable portions, depending on the outcome of the pending national litigation.

Senator Mills said he agrees with President Trump's statements against mail-in voting, but that does not include absentee balloting, nor does the President intend to end mail-in ballots for military officials and persons who are disabled. He thanked SBE for its work to ensure election integrity.

Chair Johnson brought forth concerns about recent allegations of illegal and fraudulent drivers' licenses being sold from regional driver license offices and its potential impact on Kentucky's voter rolls. He has reached out to the Attorney General's office, which has

opened an active investigation in coordination with Kentucky State Police and federal law enforcement.

Senator Herron appreciated the Chair's comments. One of the driver licensing incidents was in Jefferson County, which she represents, and she stated concern because it relates to overall identification. She is also concerned about driver licensing positions being subcontracted out to third parties. She stated the positions should be occupied by state employees, for adequate pay.

### **Adjournment**

Chair Johnson announced the next meeting would be held September 23. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:37 PM.