

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2026 Interim

September 15, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fourth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on State Government was held on September 15, 2026, at 11:00 AM ET/10:00 AM CT in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Michael J. Nemes, 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, Cassie Chambers Armstrong, Greg Elkins, Keturah J. Herron, Scott Madon, Amanda Mays Bledsoe, Robby Mills, and Lindsey Tichenor; and Representatives Shane Baker, Josh Calloway, Jennifer Decker, Anne Gay Donworth, Jim Gooch Jr., Peyton Griffie, Erika Hancock, John Hodgson, Thomas Huff, Mary Beth Imes, Matthew Lehman, Chris Lewis, Matt Lockett, Marianne Proctor, Rebecca Raymer, James Tipton, Nick Wilson, and Susan Witten.

Guests: Robert Long, Deputy Secretary and General Counsel, Personnel Cabinet; Chris Chamness, Commissioner, Department of Employee Insurance, Personnel Cabinet; Craig A. Potts, Executive Director/State Historic Preservation Officer, Kentucky Heritage Council - Tourism, Arts & Heritage Cabinet; Venus Evans, Commissioner-at-Large, KY Native American Heritage Commission (KNAHC), Kentucky Heritage Council - Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet; and citizen Dwight Cropper, former member of KNAHC.

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

Approval of Minutes - August 18, 2026 Meeting

A motion was made by Senator Madon to approve the minutes of the August 18, 2026, meeting. The motion was seconded and minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

Consideration of Referred Administrative Regulations

Eight Department of Treasury administrative regulations were referred to the committee on August 11, 2026: 20 KAR 1:020, 20 KAR 1:030, 20 KAR 1:040, 20 KAR 1:050, 20 KAR

1:060, 20 KAR 1:070, 20 KAR 1:080 and 20 KAR 1:090. Motion was made and seconded to approve amendments to 20 KAR 1:050, 20 KAR 1060, and 20 KAR 1:080. The motion passed by roll call vote. There was no discussion.

2027 Kentucky Employees' Health Plan

Robert Long, Deputy Secretary, Personnel Cabinet, and Chris Chamness, Commissioner of the Department of Employee Insurance, Personnel Cabinet, updated the committee regarding the 2027 Kentucky Employees' Health Plan (KEHP). They discussed membership, expense trends and benchmarks, wellness and cost avoidance programs, 2027 open enrollment, and plan design changes.

Mr. Chamness advised KEHP is a self-funded plan with membership in every Kentucky county and several other states. The plan administers health, pharmacy, and spending account benefits for over 300,000 covered lives, oversees more than 15 vendors, and bills more than 600 participating employer entities. Castlight is the vendor for the wellness program with the program having a positive effect, with prevention and screening rates exceeding benchmarks. Carrum, an optional surgical center benefit, is a shared savings program in which members can participate with no cost share.

According to Mr. Chamness, the federal government anticipates KEHP individual drug claims will reach over \$10 million in the near future. And medical claims spending continues to reflect a larger proportion of claims on a total dollar basis.

Open enrollment for the 2027 plan year will take place October 5-26 and is mandatory for all participants. The department will conduct a coordinated communication campaign to notify and remind members, and letters will be sent for failure to make a plan election. An appeal process will be available.

In response to Representative Lehman, Mr. Long explained why the new plan year will not provide automatic default to a previously selected plan when members fail to enroll. Upon close of open enrollment a letter will be mailed to every person in danger of defaulting. The information will be shared with the Kentucky Public Pensions Authority and the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System, and there will be an expanded exception period through January 31, 2027 to help those members enroll in a plan. Mr. Chamness stated he would obtain information of the percentage of retirees in recent years that have required a default option.

In response to Representative Tipton, Mr. Chamness said the average increase in premium cost in 2027 will be 3% for employees and 8½% for employers. The employer premium rate increased in multiple years when employee premiums did not increase.

Senator Nemes expressed approval for the department's decision to extend the default exception period through January, coinciding with the upcoming legislative session.

Kentucky Native American Heritage Commission - Overview

Craig Potts, Executive Director, Kentucky Heritage Council, and Venus Evans, Chair, Kentucky Native American Heritage Commission (KNAHC), provided an overview of the Commission. Mr. Potts discussed membership, administration, funding, mission, duties, initiatives, activities, and goals of the Commission.

The 17-member Commission receives no general fund appropriation, and members receive no compensation for their services. However, in conjunction with the America 250 statewide program, the Commission received \$40,000 pass-through funding from the Kentucky Historical Society, to be reallocated in the form of grants to promote Native American heritage.

The Commission intends to raise awareness of the contributions of Native Americans to Kentucky's cultural heritage through education, outreach, and programming and promote increased awareness about the role native peoples have played in Kentucky's collective heritage; address misconceptions regarding indigenous people; and serve as a clearinghouse for information and resources for preserving the places and culture that reflect Kentucky's Native American history and prehistory.

Representative Donworth expressed appreciation for the Commission's work and for bringing awareness of available resources.

In response to Senator Mays Bledsoe, Mr. Potts stated that with no budget allocation, physical preservation efforts focus primarily on advocacy, education, outreach, and opportunities to connect organizations. Choctaw Academy is likely eligible for classification as a national historic landmark, but private ownership and lack of funding would make it difficult to acquire such status.

In response to Representative Tipton, Mr. Potts said 92,000 citizens in the Commonwealth claim Native American ancestry based on the last census, but the number is likely higher. Kentucky does not have any federally recognized tribes that own tribal land within the state, and Kentucky does not recognize state tribal affiliations.

In response to Senator Herron, Mr. Potts said the African-American Heritage Commission has received funding for the past 6-8 years.

Senator Nemes commended the Commission for its efforts and thanked Mr. Potts and Ms. Evans for speaking to the committee and noting the good work entities can accomplish with little or no budget funding.

Dwight Cropper, a member of the audience from Greenup County, addressed the committee. Mr. Cropper said he has served on KNAHC for a number of years and expressed his concerns regarding the focus of the commission and lack of protection laws. Senator Nemes thanked Mr. Cropper and encouraged him to feel free to contact his legislative representative with his concerns and suggestions.

Adjournment

Chair Nemes announced that the next meeting of the committee would be on Tuesday, October 20, 2026. There was no further business, and the meeting was adjourned.