INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the 2026 Interim

October 15, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fifth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Economic Development and Workforce Investment was held on October 15, 2026, at 9:00 AM ET/8:00 AM CT in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Phillip Wheeler, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Phillip Wheeler, Co-Chair; Representative Josh Branscum, Co-Chair; Senators Gary Boswell, Shelley Funke Frommeyer, Rick Girdler, Jason Howell, Scott Madon, Matt Nunn, Mike Wilson, and Max Wise; and Representatives Adam Bowling, Josh Bray, Robert Duvall, Al Gentry, Peyton Griffee, Thomas Huff, Kevin Jackson, Kim King, Matthew Lehman, Matt Lockett, J.T. Payne, and Wade Williams.

Guests: Chad Mills, Director, Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council; Erik Elzy, Executive Director of Government Relations, Kentucky Pipe Trades; Jerald Adkins, Lobbyist, Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council; Ellen Yonts Suetholz, Lobbyist, Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council; Frank Manzo IV, Economist, Midwest Economic Policy Institute; Tami Wilson, Vice President of Government Relations and Business Advocacy, Northern Kentucky Chamber; Representative Stephanie Dietz, House District 65; Julien Rosenbloom, Senior Associate, Lafayette Square Institute; and Norman Desmarais, CEO and Co-Founder, Tier 1 Performance Solutions.

LRC Staff: Peter Wright, Janine Coy, Austin Johnson, and Samantha Gerhart.

Approval of Minutes of September 17, 2026 Meeting

A motion was made by Senator Boswell and seconded by Co-Chair Branscum to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2026, meeting. Minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

The Economic Multiplier: Quantifying the Impact of Eliminating the UI Waiting Period

Chad Mills, Director, Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council, Erik Elzy, Executive Director of Government Relations, Kentucky Pipe Trades, Jerald Adkins, Lobbyist, Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council, and Ellen Yonts Suetholz, Lobbyist, Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council, presented proposed legislation to waive the waiting week for unemployment claimants should the unemployment trust fund be above $1 billion, which would result in an influx of $33 million per year.

In response to Representative Lehman, Mr. Adkins explained that once the trust fund falls below a certain dollar amount, there is potential for increased employer contribution rates.

In response to Chair Wheeler, Mr. Adkins stated he will have to do more research on the relationship between inflation and the minimum balance needed in the trust fund to waive the one-week waiting period on unemployment insurance.

In response to Representative Gentry, Mr. Adkins explained that the $33 million per year goes into consumers' pockets and is spent in the Commonwealth.

In response to Senator Boswell, Mr. Adkins explained how he is aware of the current issues within the new unemployment systems but believes the employer side is a stronger model.

Consequences of Current Wage Laws for Public Construction in Kentucky

Chad Mills, Director, Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council, Erik Elzy, Executive Director of Government Relations, Kentucky Pipe Trades, Jerald Adkins, Lobbyist, Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council, Ellen Yonts Suetholz, Lobbyist, Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council, and Frank Manzo IV, Economist, Midwest Economic Policy Institute, discussed the negative impact the repeal of prevailing wage has had on both union and non-union construction industries.

In response to Chair Wheeler, Mr. Manzo stated that his information came from the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) and other publicly accessible data.

In response to Chair Wheeler, Mr. Manzo explained how he is not sure of the exact history regarding adjusting the threshold of prevailing wages to account for inflation, but he will provide the information to the Chair.

In response to Representative Gentry, Mr. Mills stated that he is not aware of any current data, but he knows there is a lot of under-the-table payrolls happening.

In response to Senator Funke Frommeyer, Mr. Mills explained how they have grown their apprenticeships since 2017.

Preserving Kentucky's Businesses, Jobs, and Communities through Employee Ownership

Tami Wilson, Vice President of Government Relations and Business Advocacy, Northern Kentucky Chamber, Representative Stephanie Dietz, House District 65, and Julien Rosenbloom, Senior Associate, Lafayette Square Institute, discussed Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs) and developing legislation to expand ESOP opportunities across Kentucky.

In response to Representative Lehman, Mr. Rosenbloom explained that Kentucky Economic Development Finance Authority (KEDFA) already administers revolving loan funds.

In response to Representative Lehman, Mr. Rosenbloom explained how the employees will never put up their own personal capital but will have an ESOP trust instead.

In response to Chair Wheeler, Mr. Rosenbloom stated that 4 other states have implemented a similar policy, but New Jersey is the only one about to capitalize.

In response to Chair Wheeler, Mr. Rosenbloom explained that no ESOP can pay more than fair market value for the firm.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned.