

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2025 Interim

September 18, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fourth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary was held on September 18, 2025, at 11:00 AM in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Daniel Elliott, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Daniel Elliott, Co-Chair; Senator Brandon J. Storm, Co-Chair; Senators Danny Carroll, Matthew Deneen, Michael J. Nemes, Reginald L. Thomas, and Phillip Wheeler; and Representatives Kim Banta, Jared Bauman, John Blanton, Lindsey Burke, Jennifer Decker, Stephanie Dietz, Patrick Flannery, Peyton Griffie, Nima Kulkarni, Chris Lewis, Savannah Maddox, Mary Lou Marzian, Jason Nemes, Jason Petrie, T.J. Roberts, Mitch Whitaker, and Nick Wilson.

Guests: Russell Bedsole, State Representative, State of Alabama; Phillip Ensler, State Representative, State of Alabama; Paul Humphrey, Police Chief, Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD); Drew Fox, Lieutenant, LMPD; Representative Marianne Proctor; Louis Kelly, Commonwealth's Attorney, 54th Judicial Circuit; Representative Ken Fleming; Rich Storm, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources; Heather Yelton, Constituent; Aaron Yelton, Constituent; Damon Preston, Public Advocate, Department of Public Advocacy (DPA); and Melanie Lowe, Deputy Public Advocate, DPA.

LRC Staff: Roberta Kiser, Stephanie Larkin, Matissa Robinson, Eric Rodenberg, Randall Roof, Joshua Shelepak, and Robert Wright.

Approval of Minutes of August 29, 2025 Meeting

A motion was made by Representative Bauman and seconded by Co-Chair Storm to approve the minutes of the August 29, 2025, meeting. Minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

26RS BR 8 - AN ACT relating to machine gun conversion devices

Representative Nemes; Russell Bedsole, State Representative, State of Alabama; Phillip Ensler, State Representative, State of Alabama; Paul Humphrey, Police Chief, LMPD; and Drew Fox, Lieutenant, LMPD, discussed 2026 RS BR 8, otherwise known as "AN ACT relating to machine gun conversion devices." Representative Nemes discussed the provisions of, the circumstances surrounding, and the significance of the proposed bill; described machine

Committee meeting materials may be accessed online at <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/8>

gun conversion devices; and clarified the purpose of the proposed bill.

Chief Humphrey described machine gun conversion devices; provided statistics regarding machine gun conversion device seizures and possession in Louisville and Kentucky from 2023 to 2024; and the impact the proposed bill would have on LMPD's ability to prosecute individuals in possession of machine gun conversion devices.

Representative Ensler detailed why legislation similar to the proposed bill was needed in Alabama.

Representative Bedsole discussed the bipartisan effort to pass Alabama's machine gun conversion bill; stressed that the Alabama bill did not create new gun laws; and discussed statistics regarding machine gun conversion device seizures in Alabama since June 2024.

In response to Chair Elliott, Representative Nemes confirmed provisions of the proposed bill relate to the penalty for the possession of a machine gun conversion device. Chief Humphrey discussed the manufacturing source of seized machine gun conversion devices.

In response to Representative Roberts, Chief Humphrey stated the proposed bill relates to machine gun conversion device seizures; discussed circumstances in which a machine gun conversion device would be returned to its owner and the current legality of owning a machine gun conversion device; and clarified what is considered to be a machine gun conversion device. Representative Nemes discussed the potential impact of litigation in federal courts on the proposed bill.

In response to Representative Blanton, Lieutenant Fox agreed to provide information regarding the percentage of federal prosecutions of machine gun conversion device possession. Chief Humphrey detailed his familiarity with fully automatic weapons.

In response to Representative Flannery, Chief Humphrey confirmed the purpose of a machine gun conversion device; that a semi-automatic handgun converted into an automatic handgun by a machine gun conversion device violates the National Firearms Act of 1934; and the purpose of the proposed bill is to enable LMPD to charge an individual with possession of a machine gun conversion device. Lieutenant Fox confirmed the need for state authority to charge this offense.

In response to Senator Carroll, Lieutenant Fox discussed online sources for purchasing machine gun conversion devices. Representative Nemes agreed to provide information regarding legal ramifications for manufacturers, retailers, and carriers who create, sell, or deliver machine gun conversion devices; and clarified a provision of the proposed bill related to registration.

In response to Senator Wheeler, Chief Humphrey and Lieutenant Fox discussed LMPD's policy related to referring individuals possessing a machine gun conversion device to federal authorities.

In response to Senator Nemes, Chief Humphrey confirmed LMPD's purpose with the proposed bill is only to enforce current gun laws.

In response to Representative Maddox, Representative Nemes stressed that the proposed bill does not create new restrictions.

In response to Senator Thomas, Representative Nemes confirmed the purpose of the proposed bill is related to the intentional conversion of a handgun into a machine gun. Chief Humphrey confirmed prior testimony related to the age of individuals found in possession of machine gun conversion devices.

In response to Representative Petrie, Representative Nemes voiced no opposition to amending the proposed bill to include intentional possession of a machine gun conversion device.

In response to Co-Chair Storm, Lieutenant Fox agreed to provide information regarding the percentage of federal prosecutions of machine gun conversion device possession; and confirmed prior testimony related to having no opposition to amending the proposed bill to include intentional possession of a machine gun conversion device.

Department of Public Advocacy Update

Damon Preston, Public Advocate, DPA; and Melanie Lowe, Deputy Public Advocate, DPA, discussed the value of the public defender system; agency personnel and challenges; an agency reform plan; other challenges facing the DPA; and expected legislation related to criminal justice and the DPA.

26RS BR 126 - AN ACT relating to boating under the influence

Representative Fleming; Rich Storm, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources; Heather Yelton, Constituent; and Aaron Yelton, Constituent, discussed 2026 RS BR 126, otherwise known as "AN ACT relating to boating under the influence." Representative Fleming discussed the provisions of 2026 RS BR 126 and the circumstances surrounding the proposed bill.

Mrs. Yelton recounted the events surrounding her son Keegan Peterson's death and spoke in favor of the proposed bill. Mr. Yelton read a prepared statement written by Chris Peterson, Keegan's father, discussing the impact the proposed bill would have relating to

serious injuries or deaths on waterways.

Representative Fleming discussed provisions of the bill related to altering Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources policy to increase response time when emergency services are contacted regarding serious injuries or deaths on waterways.

26RS BR 60 - AN ACT relating to grooming

Representative Proctor and Louis Kelly, Commonwealth's Attorney, 54th Judicial Circuit, discussed 2026 RS BR 60, otherwise known as "AN ACT relating to grooming."

Representative Proctor discussed the provisions, circumstances surrounding, and significance of the proposed bill, specifically stating the proposed bill seeks to define grooming. Mr. Kelly further discussed the circumstances surrounding the need for the proposed legislation.

In response to Representative Roberts, Mr. Kelly voiced no opposition to amending the proposed bill to include a provision regarding the age of a grooming victim.

In response to Representative Burke, Mr. Kelly discussed amending the proposed bill to include a provision regarding the age of a grooming perpetrator.

In response to Senator Carroll, Mr. Kelly discussed how the proposed bill's language is similar to legislation in other states.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:49 PM.