

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the 2026 Interim

July 2, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call

The second meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary was held on July 2, 2026, at 11:00 AM ET/10:00 AM CT 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: Senator Brandon J. Storm, Co-Chair; Representative Daniel Elliott, Co-Chair; Senators Danny Carroll, Matthew Deneen, Gerald A. Neal, Michael J. Nemes, Reginald L. Thomas, and Phillip Wheeler; and Representatives Jared Bauman, John Blanton, Lindsey Burke, Jennifer Decker, Stephanie Dietz, Patrick Flannery, Peyton Griffie, Chris Lewis, Savannah Maddox, Kimberly Poore Moser, Jason Nemes, Jason Petrie, Mitch Whitaker, Wade Williams, and Nick Wilson.

Guests: Cookie Crews, Commissioner, Department of Corrections (DOC); Scott Jordan, Deputy Commissioner of Adult Institutions, DOC; Kiernyn Fanin, Director, Division of Population Management, DOC; Kristin Porter, Director, Division of Reentry Services, DOC; Ladeidra Jones, Chair, Kentucky Parole Board (KPB); Representative John Hodgson; Representative Jim Gooch; and Senator Steve Rawlings.

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

Approval of Minutes of June 9, 2026, Meeting

A motion was made by Senator Carroll, and seconded by Representative Moser, to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2026, meeting. Minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

26 RS HB 60 - AN ACT related to geoengineering

Representative Hodgson, Representative Gooch, and Senator Rawlings discussed 2026 RS HB 60 related to geoengineering. Representative Hodgson defined geoengineering; identified processes used to intentionally modify climate and/or temperature; and distinguished intentional climate modification processes from widely accepted practices, such as crop dusting and airport fog mitigation. He also discussed disclosures made by

the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of historical examples of weather modification research and operations; federal reports addressing geoengineering; similar legislation in other states; and concerns regarding the potential effect of intentional climate modification efforts on public health and agriculture.

Senator Rawlings highlighted the need for this legislation, also citing concerns regarding the potential effect of intentional climate modification efforts on public health and agriculture. He further discussed the bill's definitions, exemptions, and penalties.

Representative Gooch discussed the development of 2026 RS HB 60 and expressed support for prohibiting geoengineering activities in Kentucky.

In response to Chair Elliott, Representative Hodgson discussed similarities and differences between 2026 RS HB 60 and legislation enacted or considered in other states; highlighted the bill's exemptions developed in collaboration with agricultural, aviation, utility, and military stakeholders; and discussed the estimated costs and equipment necessary to conduct geoengineering activities.

In response to Representative Moser, Representative Hodgson discussed federal studies related to geoengineering. Senator Rawlings discussed concerns regarding potential environmental and public health impacts associated with atmospheric contaminants from intentional climate modification efforts.

In response to Senator Carroll, Representative Hodgson discussed available research regarding geoengineering and stated the long-term effects of intentional climate modification efforts remain uncertain. Senator Rawlings discussed concerns regarding unintended consequences of intentional climate modification and emphasized the bill's focus on preventing experimentation by bad actors in Kentucky.

In response to Co-Chair Storm, Senator Rawlings discussed the relationship between cloud seeding activities conducted in neighboring states and the proposed prohibition in Kentucky. Representative Hodgson reiterated the bill's purpose to assert Kentucky's authority over intentional climate modification efforts in its airspace and encourage federal action. Representative Gooch distinguished intentional climate modification efforts from approved agricultural activities, such as cloud seeding.

Department of Corrections Update

Cookie Crews, Commissioner, DOC, discussed DOC's responsibilities and priorities related to institutional safety, employee recruitment and retention, offender rehabilitation, and reentry efforts. She also highlighted ongoing efforts to improve current correctional

facilities, enhance security, and expand educational and vocational programming in addition to efforts to reduce recidivism through evidence-based practices and community partnerships.

Kristin Porter, Director, Division of Reentry Services, DOC, discussed educational opportunities available to incarcerated individuals, highlighting improvements in educational certificate attainment and newly forged workforce development partnerships. She detailed the implementation of the reentry campus authorized by 2026 RS HB 5.

Kieryn Fanin, Director, Division of Population Management, DOC, provided an overview of inmate population trends, institutional capacity, controlled-intake procedures, and probation and parole operations. She also discussed ongoing facility renovation and construction projects, population management strategies, DOC's statutory obligation to house some incarcerated individuals in county jails, and efforts to address aging facilities while maintaining operations in those facilities.

Scott Jordan, Deputy Commissioner of Adult Institutions, DOC, discussed efforts to prevent contraband from entering correctional facilities through enhanced searches, intelligence gathering, and employee training and disciplinary action, including criminal prosecution related to contraband trafficking in coordination with state and federal law enforcement. He also discussed ongoing facility renovation and construction projects.

In response to Chair Elliott, Deputy Commissioner Jordan stated he cannot comment on ongoing cases related to homicides at the Eastern Kentucky Correctional Complex (EKCC) as they remain under investigation. He discussed reforms implemented to increase contraband confiscation and deter inmate violence. Commissioner Crews discussed ongoing facility renovation, construction projects, and future budget priorities aimed at modernizing institutional efficiency.

In response to Representative Blanton, Deputy Commissioner Jordan discussed criminal investigations and disciplinary actions related to employees and visitors who have been caught smuggling contraband or attempting to bring in contraband.

In response to Representative Moser, Commissioner Crews discussed staffing levels and initiatives to improve employee mental health services and workplace safety throughout DOC. She also provided an update related to the implementation of the Medicaid Section 1115 waiver. Director Porter discussed reentry programming and community partnerships to reduce recidivism and improve employment opportunities for individuals returning to their communities.

In response to Senator Carroll, Commissioner Crews discussed efforts related to reentry for recently released geriatric individuals and Director Fanin discussed efforts in other states related to reentry for recently released geriatric individuals.

In response to Co-Chair Storm, Commissioner Crews agreed to provide information related to the number of incarcerated geriatric individuals receiving care.

Kentucky Parole Board Update

Ladeidra Jones, Chair, Kentucky Parole Board (KPB), provided an overview of KPB's organization, statutory responsibilities, and parole decision-making process. She expressed thanks for the passage of 2026 RS HB 529. She detailed KPB's responsibilities, including parole revocation reviews, victim hearings, warrant issuance, parole eligibility requirements, hearing types and procedures, and factors considered during parole decisions.

Chair Jones discussed KPB's use of 2-member hearing panels, the referral of unresolved decisions to the full board, the board's authority to grant parole, defer for future consideration, or order an offender to serve out their entire sentence, victims' rights throughout the parole process, and KPB coordination to ensure victims have the opportunity to participate in parole proceedings.

In response to Senator Carroll, Chair Jones discussed efforts to maintain consistency and transparency when board members determine whether to grant parole. She further discussed board member compensation.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.