INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Minutes of the Third Meeting of the 2025 Interim

August 26, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call
The third meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Local Government was held on August 26, 2025, at 9:00 AM in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Michael J. Nemes, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:
Members: Representative Patrick Flannery, Co-Chair; Senator Michael J. Nemes, Co-Chair; Senators Julie Raque Adams, Greg Elkins, Keturah J. Herron, Scott Madon, Robby Mills, Steve Rawlings, and Lindsey Tichenor; and Representatives Jared Bauman, Josh Bray, George Brown Jr., Beverly Chester-Burton, Ken Fleming, Tony Hampton, Mark Hart, Mary Beth Imes, Chris Lewis, Savannah Maddox, Michael Meredith, Amy Neighbors, Rebecca Raymer, Rachel Roarx, Sarah Stalker, and Susan Witten.

Guests: Senator Jimmy Higdon; Bruce Roberts, Executive Director, Kentucky Fire Commission; and Chuck Bonta, Training and Compliance Investigator, Kentucky Fire Commission.

LRC Staff: Mark Mitchell, Christopher Jacovitch, and Faithe Wheatley.

Approval of Minutes from July 29, 2025 Meeting
A motion was made, and seconded, for the approval of the minutes from the July 29, 2025, meeting. The minutes were approved.

Consideration of Referred Administrative Regulations
Bruce Roberts, Executive Director, Kentucky Fire Commission and Chuck Bonta, Training and Compliance Investigator, Kentucky Fire Commission, explained referred administrative regulations: **739 KAR 002:140** relating to fire department reporting requirements and **739 KAR 002:050** relating to volunteer fire department aid. The Kentucky Fire Commission proposed an agency amendment to **739 KAR 002:050.** Representative Hart motioned, seconded by Co-Chair Flannery, for the approval of the adoption of the agency amendment to **739 KAR 002:050**. The motion carried by voice vote.

Discussion of the Restoration of Voting Rights

Senator Higdon and Senator Herron discussed legislation for a constitutional amendment that would restore voting rights to felons, with some exceptions, five years after sentences and probationary and parole time have been served.

In response to Senator Madon, Senator Higdon stated a constitutional amendment is needed to restore voting rights to felons because Kentucky's Constitution only gives this power to the governor.

In response to Representative Hart, Senator Higdon clarified the proposed constitutional amendment is only for the restoration of voting rights.

In response to Senator Rawlings, Senator Herron stated the fiscal impact would be similar to other constitutional amendments on the ballot in the past.

Representative Brown congratulated Senators Higdon and Herron for bringing the constitutional amendment forward. He stated Kentucky is only one of three states that does not restore voting rights to felons after time served, and it is time for this to be rectified.

In response to Senator Elkins, Senator Herron clarified that expungement and voting rights are not the same. Voting rights are in the constitution and expungement is not. Senator Higdon mentioned expungement only goes so far due to the fact some felonies and misdemeanors cannot be expunged.

In response to Senator Elkins, Senator Higdon stated the proposed constitutional amendment would restore voting rights to all levels of felonies, with certain exceptions.

Chair Nemes commented that the constitutional amendment does not go beyond expungement. Expungement means the crime never happened and it is no longer on the record. The constitutional amendment does not take the crime off the record. It only restores voting rights to those who have served their allotted time.

In response to Senator Mills, Senator Higdon stated bribery in an election is a felony that is an exception in the proposed constitutional amendment. Senator Mills stated all felonies relating to elections should be exceptions.

In response to Senator Madon, Senator Higdon stated the ACLU was originally the biggest group that supported this constitutional amendment, but others have joined.

Senators Higdon and Herron commented most groups agree with the concept of restoration of voting rights, but the problems come in the details of the language.

Discussion of the Application of Non-Traditional Instruction (NTI) Days for Schools Designated by County Clerks as Polling Locations for Elections

Chair Nemes discussed NTI days for schools designated by county clerks as polling locations for elections. County clerks have the right to use any tax funded buildings during voting days, and some schools are seeing conflicts with early voting and school testing days. The main goal of the discussion is to find possible solutions.

Representative Meredith suggested the General Assembly direct the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to not set testing dates at the same time as elections.

Representative Hart discussed his understanding that school systems can utilize NTI days as they choose. Chair Nemes commented he believed there were parameters for their usage.

Senator Elkins commented early voting should be done in courthouses and not in schools. Chair Nemes replied that county clerks have the authority to use schools for early voting. Senator Elkins questioned whether the General Assembly should take that authority from the county clerks.

Senator Tichenor asked if using schools for voting primarily started in 2020. Representative Meredith responded that using schools as voting places began as a result of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Representative Meredith stated elections are set constitutionally and KDE should be able to set testing dates that do not conflict.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:34 AM.