

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the 2025 Interim

November 20, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The sixth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Local Government was held on November 20, 2025, at 3:00 PM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Patrick Flannery, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Patrick Flannery, Co-Chair; Senators Scott Madon, Amanda Mays Bledsoe, Robby Mills, Steve Rawlings, and Lindsey Tichenor; and Representatives George Brown Jr., Steven Doan, Ken Fleming, Chris Freeland, Peyton Griffiee, Mark Hart, Mary Beth Imes, Savannah Maddox, Amy Neighbors, Rachel Roarx, and Sarah Stalker.

Guests: Adam O'Nan, Union County Judge/Executive, President, Kentucky Association of Counties (KACo); Dan Mosley, Harlan County Judge/Executive, Immediate Past President, KACo; Jim Henderson, Executive Director, KACo; Shellie Hampton, Director of Government Affairs, KACo; Representative Kim Banta; Jeff Taylor, Legislative Affairs/Political Director, Kentucky Professional Fire Fighters (KPF); Ashley Spence, Founder, DNA Justice Project; Representative T.J. Roberts; Keith Taul, Larry Hicks, and Phil Baker

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

Approval of minutes from October 21, 2025, meeting.

A motion was made by Senator Madon and seconded by Representative Imes to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2025, meeting. Minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

Presentation of the Kentucky Association of Counties' (KACo) Legislative Platform for the Upcoming 2026 Session of the General Assembly

Adam O'Nan, Union County Judge/Executive, President, KACo; Dan Mosley, Harlan County Judge/Executive, Immediate Past President, KACo; Jim Henderson, Executive Director, KACo; and Shellie Hampton, Director of Government Affairs, KACo, discussed KACo's top legislative priority for the 2026 Session of reshaping the shared responsibility of county jails in Kentucky. The three main ways to achieve this reshaping

are: to incentivize regional jails, clarify responsibility for pre-trial felony detainees, and to redefine the state inmate housing model.

In response to Chair Flannery, Ms. Hampton stated she would provide the committee with the amount the daily average cost to house inmates has increased over the last five years. Ms. Hampton confirmed the per diem has increased by four dollars.

In response to Representative Maddox, Mr. Mosley responded his earlier comments in a different forum were his own and not representative of any held by KACo.

In response to Representative Griffee, Ms. Hampton stated regionalization of jails would remain a local decision.

In response to Senator Bledsoe, Ms. Hampton confirmed Fayette and Jefferson counties were not included in the 2019-2025 jail support graph. Regarding the fiscal impacts of potential legislation, KACo is working on jail-oriented legislation and plan to have a fiscal note prepared on the relevant portions of the legislation.

In response to Senator Tichenor, Ms. Hampton stated KACo does not have information on the number of non-citizens housed in county jails. Mr. Henderson stated there are around 10-12 counties that have contracts with the federal government to house federal inmates, which would include illegal immigrants.

In response to Senator Mills, Mr. O’Nan and Mr. Mosley stated there were many things they would like to spend general funds on rather than jails, including: roads, economic development, water issues, enhanced ambulance services, parks, infrastructure, broadband, and more. Mr. O’Nan noted that building a new jail to the maximum extent of the county's bond limits would curtail the number of programs counties could offer inmates.

In response to Representative Freeland, Mr. Henderson stated the county jail financial crisis is not unique to Kentucky, but Kentucky is somewhat unique when it comes to county jails contracting with the state to house state inmates.

In response to Senator Madon, Mr. Mosley stated in Harlan County’s case, inflation and less revenue from housing fewer state inmates are the biggest reasons for the rise in incarceration costs.

Discussion of Legislation Concerning Firefighter Death Benefits

Representative Banta and Jeff Taylor, Legislative Affairs/Political Director, KPFF, discussed proposed legislation to add certain cancer diagnoses to allow firefighters to be eligible for state line-of-duty death benefits.

Representative Roarx stated her support of firefighters and the proposed legislation.

Discussion of DNA Collection in Jails for Felony Arrests

Ashley Spence, Founder, DNA Justice Project, advocated for the required collection of DNA during the booking of felony arrestees in jails.

Chair Flannery commented he had proposed legislation regarding this topic in the past and stated Kentucky was behind other states in the area of required DNA collection of felony arrestees.

In response to Senator Madon, Chair Flannery stated he was considering filing similar legislation.

Discussion of Federal Immigration Law Enforcement

Representative Roberts discussed legislation proposing the task force model for the use of local law enforcement officers in federal immigration enforcement activities via contract with the federal government while conducting primary law enforcement duties.

Chair Flannery stated this not an unfunded mandate, but a chance to utilize resources from the federal government into the communities we serve.

In response to Senator Mills, Representative Roberts said that local enforcement occurs when there are available federal immigration officers available for local law enforcement to consult. Consultation does not need to occur in person.

In response to Representative Stalker, Representative Roberts stated conversations had been had with the Kentucky League of Cities, Chiefs of Police Association, and the Sheriff's Association. Popular prior to 2021, when the program stopped. Since resuming this year, 10 counties have signed up for the program. Statewide rollout has happened in four states. The documentation needed to prove citizenship has not changed. The task force model allows for access to available Social Security program data to assist in verifying citizenship. However, law enforcement will not be conducting pure immigration enforcement. Law enforcement must have another reason for stopping an individual. Plain clothes or undercover law enforcement is a common, necessary

practice, but to conduct immigration enforcement in this instance, the officer must have another reason to stop the individual first.

In response to Representative Roarx, Representative Roberts confirmed law enforcement agencies are permitted to enter into these agreements without passing the proposed legislation. He stated legislation making this a requirement would help areas that need it the most. Representative Roberts stated the lack of knowledge of the revival of the task force model is the reason many counties are not participating.

In response to Representative Brown, Chair Flannery stated one of the purposes of interim committees is to discuss potential pieces of legislation, and further conversations concerning this proposed legislation are forthcoming.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:22 PM.