

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Minutes of the First Meeting of the 2026 Interim

June 23, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call

The first meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Local Government was held on June 23, 2026, at 9:00 AM ET/8:00 AM CT 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 Rague Adams and Keturah J. Herron; and Representatives George Brown Jr., Beverly Chester-Burton, Ken Fleming, Chris Freeland, Peyton Griffiee, Mary Beth Imes, Amy Neighbors, Sarah Stalker, and Susan Witten.

Guests: Gracie Kelly, Director of Government Affairs, Kentucky League of Cities (KLC); Chief Shawn Butler (Ret.), Executive Director, Kentucky Association of Chiefs of Police (KACP); Shellie Hampton, Director of Government Affairs, Kentucky Association of Counties (KACo); Chris Haddix, Montgomery County Judge/Executive, KACo; Johnny Bivens, Lewis County Sheriff, President, Kentucky Sheriffs Association (KSA); Colonel Jaimie L. Henson, Commander, Civil Air Patrol, Kentucky Wing; David Charles, Montgomery County Sheriff; and Walt Sholar, Bullitt County Sheriff.

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

Discussion of Local Law Enforcement Issues

Gracie Kelly, Director of Government Affairs, KLC, and Chief Shawn Butler (Ret.), Executive Director, KACP, provided an overview of recruitment and retention of Kentucky's local police departments at the municipal level that included reasons recruitment and retention matter to cities, the significant investment in recruiting a police office, a breakdown of the municipal police workforce and police pipeline, staffing challenges facing cities, cities' responses to recruitment and retention issues, and past helpful legislative actions.

In response to Senator Herron, Chief Butler stated most police officers are staying an average of 6 or 7 years and reasons for leaving included burn-out and better jobs and

benefits. Ms. Kelly referred committee members to the Department for Criminal Justice Training's 2024 Law Enforcement Comprehensive Survey report.

In response to Senator Herron, Chief Butler stated police officers are often the first line of defense in situations involving individuals in mental health crises. Chief Butler stated social workers have begun to be integrated into response teams, but, in most communities, police officers will still be the first line of defense.

In response to Senator Herron, Chief Butler stated insurance beginning on day 1 of a police officer's job is common as part of recruitment.

In response to Representative Chester-Burton, Chief Butler stated community involvement activities, explorer and cadet programs, and citizen police academies are recruitment tactics.

In response to Representative Chester-Burton, Chief Butler stated smaller agencies must, and do, work together. He provided an example of smaller police agencies in Northern Kentucky pooling their resources to start a wellness program.

Shellie Hampton, Director of Government Affairs, KACo; Chris Haddix, Montgomery County Judge/Executive, KACo; and Johnny Bivens, Lewis County Sheriff, President, KSA, provided an overview of recruitment and retention of police personnel at the county level that included reasons law enforcement agencies struggle to recruit and retain officers, successful recruitment strategies, and differences in sheriff's offices and other law enforcement agencies.

In response to Representative Stalker, Mr. Haddix stated in the past, police officers might have been hired with relaxed standards just to fill a vacancy, but with professional standards legislation passed in 1998, this is no longer the case.

In response to Representative Chester-Burton, Sheriff Bivens stated sign-on bonuses could not be offered, but they do offer contracts that are often bought out. He also stated additional money cannot be offered to officers for having more education because there is not revenue to fund a pay increase. Sheriff Bivens stated partnerships with schools happen.

Chair Nemes commented the agency buying out the contract is required to reimburse the cost of training. Chair Nemes distinguished between officers receiving hazardous duty pay and officers participating in hazardous duty retirement.

Co-Chair Flannery introduced Sheriff David Charles.

Discussion of Civil Air Patrol Employment Protections (2026 RS HB 339 Representative Thomas)

Colonel Jaimie L. Henson, Commander, Civil Air Patrol, Kentucky Wing, provided an overview of the Civil Air Patrol. Colonel Henson explained all members of the Civil Air Patrol are volunteers and advocated for employee protections for members, such as those given to members in the military reserves, as outlined in 2026 RS HB 339.

Chair Nemes clarified that Colonel Henson was asking for employment protections like those in the military reserves, where employers must keep jobs available for up to a certain period while they serve.

In response to Chair Nemes, Colonel Henson stated any agency could request the Civil Air Patrol's assistance, the request would be filtered through the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center for approval or disapproval.

In response to Representative Stalker, Colonel Henson stated it would be difficult to give an average time volunteers would be deployed because a mission's scope dictates what resources and personnel are needed.

In response to Chair Nemes, Colonel Henson noted members of the Civil Air Patrol, as volunteers, are not mandated to serve when called.

Representative Fleming thanked Colonel Henson and the Civil Air Patrol for all their important work during rescue missions.

In response to Co-Chair Flannery, Colonel Henson stated there are just under 800 members in the Kentucky Wing. The Civil Air Patrol is underrepresented in far eastern Kentucky and there are 19 squadrons in Kentucky that travel within the Wing, the region, and even nationally if needed. The types of missions the Civil Air Patrol might respond to are missing persons and downed or overdue aircraft.

In response to Senator Herron, Colonel Henson stated she was not aware if the employment protections the Civil Air Patrol is requesting are provided for volunteer firefighters on similar missions.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.