

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY

Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the 2025 Interim

August 29, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The third meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Energy was held on August 29, 2025, at 1:00 PM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Jim Gooch Jr., Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Jim Gooch Jr., Co-Chair; Senators Greg Elkins, Scott Madon, Stephen West, Phillip Wheeler, and Gex Williams; and Representatives Shane Baker, Jared Bauman, John Blanton, Randy Bridges, Beverly Chester-Burton, Myron Dossett, Patrick Flannery, Chris Fugate, Erika Hancock, DJ Johnson, Bobby McCool, Adam Moore, Joshua Watkins, Bill Wesley, Mitch Whitaker, and Richard White.

Guests: Representative John Hodgson; Senator Steve Rawlings; and Randall Baker, Aviation Meteorologist.

LRC Staff: Stefan Kasacavage, Kayla Carroway, Tanya Monsanto, and Rachel Hartley.

Approval of minutes for the meeting of July 24, 2025

A motion and a second was made to approve the July 24, 2025, minutes. The minutes were approved by voice vote.

Discussion of the Kentucky Communications Network Authority and Related Legislation

Senator Williams presented a bill draft proposing changes to the Kentucky Communications Network Authority (KCNA) and the Commonwealth Office of Technology (COT). The proposed changes include replacing the director of KCNA with the director of COT to streamline operations and maintain connectivity for rural customers while addressing budget impacts, ongoing lawsuits, and contracts.

In response to Senator West, Senator Williams confirmed technology contracts are already managed by COT, and the changes would not disrupt existing agreements.

Presentation on Geoengineering and Related Legislation

Representative Hodgson defined geoengineering as attempts by governmental and non-governmental actors to modify the climate, specifically through methods like solar radiation modification, stratospheric aerosol injection, and cloud seeding. There have been historical instances of weather modification, including United States military operations and government projects.

Senator Rawlings stated Kentucky does not regulate such activities and there is concern about the potential toxic effects of geoengineering on agriculture and public health. The proposed legislation aims to assert Kentucky's sovereignty by banning atmospheric interventions. Public sentiment reflects a growing apprehension, with a significant majority of adults expressing concern over the use of geoengineering before the effects are fully understood.

In response to Chair Gooch, Representative Hodgson stated there is a distinction between geoengineering and ordinary jet engine exhaust. Cloud seeding is currently practiced in some states, but there are concerns regarding the impact on agriculture and food safety.

In response to Senator Wheeler, Representative Hodgson stated Kentucky will assert its tenth amendment sovereignty to establish its stance against federal interventions in its airspace.

In response to Representative Whitaker, Randall Baker, Aviation Meteorologist, cited the eruption of Mount Tambora as an example of how atmospheric changes can have global repercussions. Weather modification could have unintended consequences that affect not just local areas, but the entire planet.

In response to Representative Watkins, Representative Hodgson stated geoengineering would be difficult to do without detection. The technical demands and observable atmospheric effects would make any effort highly conspicuous. Mr. Baker stated any large-scale release of sulfur dioxide would be detected by geostationary satellite imagery. Senator Rawlings stated there are no experiments on weather modification in Kentucky, although there have been experiments in the United States and abroad.

In response to Senator Wheeler, Senator Rawlings stated there is ongoing litigation related to the effects of geoengineering. A private company, Rain Maker, claims to target specific clouds for seeding and stated their company did not contribute to the

flooding in Texas. Senator Rawlings highlighted the concept of cascading failures, where one action can lead to a series of adverse effects and emphasized the need for caution in weather modification.

In response to Senator Elkins, Senator Rawlings stated there is concern over forever chemicals, nanoparticles, and aluminum particles entering the environment, which could have detrimental effects on agriculture and public health. Representative Hodgson stated weather modification also impacts solar energy production, citing reduced solar output due to smoke from wildfires.

In response to Senator West, Representative Hodgson stated cloud seeding would be prohibited by the proposed bill. Some western states have a permitting process for cloud seeding involving both state and federal approvals, but Kentucky does not have a regulatory framework.

In response to Representative Bauman, Representative Hodgson stated that enforcement would likely rely on whistleblowers to report any unauthorized activities.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.