

# **INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON VETERANS, MILITARY AFFAIRS, AND PUBLIC PROTECTION**

## **Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the 2021 Interim**

**October 20, 2021**

### **Call to Order and Roll Call**

The 5th meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection was held on Wednesday, October 20, 2021, at 10:00 AM, in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Walker Thomas, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator C.B. Embry Jr., Co-Chair; Representative Walker Thomas, Co-Chair; Senators Jimmy Higdon, Alice Forgy Kerr, Stephen Meredith, Robby Mills, Dennis Parrett, Wil Schroder, and David Yates; Representatives John Blanton, Kevin D. Bratcher, Myron Dossett, Chris Freeland, Chris Fugate, Al Gentry, Jim Gooch Jr., Mark Hart, Scott Lewis, Savannah Maddox, Bobby McCool, Patti Minter, Scott Sharp, Pamela Stevenson, Ashley Tackett Laferty, Bill Wesley, and Buddy Wheatley.

Guests: Scarlet Hudson, Founder and Director, Women of Alabaster; Attorney General Daniel Cameron; Representative Nancy Tate, House District 27; Heather Wagers, Office of Trafficking and Abuse Prevention and Prosecution; Representative Steve Riley, House District 23; Susan Liebel, State Policy Director, Susan B. Anthony List; Addia Wuchner, Executive Director, Kentucky Right to Life Association; Representative Melinda Gibbons Prunty, House District 15; Representative Lynn Bechler, House District 4; Tamarra Wieder, Kentucky State Director, Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates; Angela Cooper, American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky; Lindsay LePage, Research Psychologist, Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training; Carissa Smith, Telecommunicator; Sharon Snowden, Mayor, Ravenna, KY; and Amy Crowe, City Clerk, Ravenna, KY.

LRC Staff: Jessica Zeh and Logan Schaaf

Representative Fugate moved to approve the September 22, 2021, meeting minutes. Senator Mills seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

**Distinguished Veteran**

James Edward “Ted” Bassett, 99, of Lexington, was honored as a distinguished veteran. Although not present, Chair Thomas wished to honor his many achievements upon the celebration of his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Mr. Bassett was attending Yale when Pearl Harbor was attacked. He enlisted and the Marine Corps sent him back to Yale, where he graduated and became a second lieutenant. At Yale, Mr. Bassett played basketball and was known for his game winning shot against Harvard. In 1944, Mr. Bassett completed training at Parris Island and went on to Guadalcanal and Okinawa, where he was wounded by an enemy sniper. After recovering, he reunited with the Fourth Marine Regiment and served in mainland Japan as part of the occupying force. He received a Purple Heart and many other honors. When Mr. Bassett returned to Kentucky, he met his wife of over 60 years, Lucy Gay, and in 1964 he became the director of the Kentucky State Police. As director of KSP, he established a police academy, pushed for the hiring of the first African American to work at KSP, established Trooper Island, and formed the Department of Criminal Justice Training, located on the campus of Eastern Kentucky University. Mr. Bassett eventually became the president of Keeneland and of the Breeders’ Cup. He turns 100 next week.

### **Addressing Human Trafficking**

Scarlet Hudson, Founder and Director of Women of Alabaster, spoke about human trafficking in Kentucky. Ms. Hudson noted that the trafficking corridor from Detroit to Miami runs through Kentucky. Ms. Hudson praised the work of the Attorney General’s office in addressing human trafficking but emphasized that it is still a major issue. Ms. Hudson said that is important to find ways to help victims of trafficking, rather than penalize them. She discussed the need for mental health care, drug treatment, and trauma therapy. Ms. Hudson said the focus should be on penalizing the perpetrators, not the victims.

Attorney General Daniel Cameron spoke about combatting human trafficking. He noted that Kentucky ranked ninth in the United States for new federal human trafficking cases in 2019. General Cameron highlighted recent legislative changes to address the issue, including 2020 RS HB 2, which broadened the definition of commercial sexual activity, and 2020 RS HB 79, which requires background checks for massage therapy licensure. General Cameron spoke of Operation United Front as a success. It was a multistate sting carried out by 29 agencies across Kentucky, resulting in the rescue of 21 victims and the arrest of 46 perpetrators. He also spoke about the Your Eyes Save Lives campaign, funded by a grant from the United States Department of Justice. The campaign runs ads targeting Kentucky regions with the largest reported incidences of child trafficking and encourages Kentuckians to look for signs of trafficking and report them.

Representative Nancy Tate, House District 27, and Representative Steve Riley, House District 23, spoke about their work to combat human trafficking. They shared how their knowledge of the issue has evolved and they said they hoped strong legislation could be passed in the 2022 Regular Session.

Responding to a comment from Representative Bratcher suggesting that those working to address human trafficking share more stories to help communicate to the public the gravity of the issue, Ms. Hudson suggested watching the video “Heroine of Hope” on YouTube, which contains the stories of three trafficking victims. Representative Tate commented on the importance of education efforts and Heather Wagers, Office of Trafficking and Abuse Prevention and Prosecution, suggested watching the “Your Eyes Save Lives” video on the Attorney General’s website.

Representative Blanton suggested speaking to Dr. Elizabeth Perkins, Associate Professor of Criminology at Morehead State University, about her research on human trafficking in Kentucky.

Responding to a question from Senator Yates, General Cameron said that they could always use more funding and resources from the General Assembly to assist with their anti-trafficking operations. General Cameron also said he would work with Senator Yates to improve the anti-trafficking efforts of the Louisville Metro Police Department.

Responding to a comment from Senator Meredith, Representative Tate indicated that exploring the possibility of raising the age of consent in Kentucky could assist with getting victims away from trafficking.

### **Pro-Life Omnibus Bill**

Representative Tate provided an overview of the Humanity in Healthcare Act, highlighting parental consent, judicial bypass, and verification and compliance of abortion providers. Representative Tate also spoke about the regulation of both medical and chemical abortions, including informed consent, physician requirements, reporting requirements, fetal remains protocol, and public funding.

Representative Tate noted some of the potential medical complications arising from an abortion. She also emphasized a medical conscience section of the omnibus bill, which would prohibit discrimination against medical care providers who decline to perform procedures that violate their conscience.

Addia Wuchner, Executive Director of the Kentucky Right to Life Association, said it was important to begin crafting this legislation early, before the session is too far along. She also noted that some people living in Kentucky may seek abortions out of state, and said that this reflects the importance of enhancing the collection of abortion statistics.

Susan Liebel, State Policy Director of the Susan B. Anthony List, said that there is an opportunity to solidify the current health and safety protocols for abortion inducing drugs, because the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is poised to remove many of these requirements. Ms. Liebel spoke about the potential medical risks of two specific abortion drugs, Mifepristone and Misoprostol. She also noted that chemical abortions now outpace

surgical abortions in Kentucky and said that chemical is more dangerous than surgical. Ms. Liebel said that abortion providers are targeting people with online advertising.

Representative Melinda Gibbons Prunty, House District 15, said that she brought the parental consent section into the bill.

Representative Bechler, House District 4, said that he believes abortion is murder, and would answer any questions related to his section of the bill.

Responding to a question from Representative Bratcher, Representative Tate said that the medical conscience section would prevent people from losing their jobs for their anti-abortion stance.

Responding to questions from Senator Yates, Representative Tate said that parents would have the opportunity to make a decision on what happens with the fetal remains. Ms. Wuchner said that fetal remains would not be treated as or mixed with medical waste. Representative Tate said that the health of the mother would always be considered.

Responding to a question from Senator Mills, Representative Tate noted that the physician provider, not the facility, would require certification.

Responding to questions from Representative Stevenson, Ms. Wuchner said that she could provide more data on the targeted online advertising of abortion services. Representative Tate added that search algorithms also play a role. Responding to another question from Representative Stevenson, Representative Tate said that she would evaluate any bill designed to reduce infant mortality. Responding to a request to see a copy of the omnibus bill, Representative Tate said that they could discuss the bill outside of the meeting.

Tamarra Wieder, Kentucky State Director of Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates, said that the omnibus bill would make obtaining parental consent for an abortion more difficult. Ms. Wieder said that the United States Supreme Court has ruled that states with parental consent laws must provide a way for people to seek an abortion without parental consent, through judicial bypass. She also noted that organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists oppose mandatory parental consent laws. Ms. Wieder said that the sections of the bill relating to fetal remains would create shame and stigma for those seeking an abortion, and would create hurdles for physicians and clinics. She said that provisions in the omnibus bill were similar to parts of a recent Texas law that was temporarily blocked by a federal judge. Ms. Wieder said that the omnibus bill could threaten funding for healthcare providers, including hospitals, and would impermissibly deny benefits. Ms. Wieder said that medication abortion happens at the two abortion providers in Louisville and not by mail.

Angela Cooper, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Kentucky, said that she was concerned that the omnibus bill would force victims of sex trafficking to carry pregnancies that they do not want. She also expressed concern that the Center for Women and Families and the Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence were disinvited from speaking at the committee meeting because they do not take a stance on abortion, and were told that their funding may be cut.

Representative Wheatley said that he would like to hear from more people involved with this issue, including judges, child advocates, and attorneys.

Responding to a question from Representative Wheatley, Ms. Wieder said that medication abortion reversal is based on faulty science and is not endorsed by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

Responding to a question from Representative Wheatley, Representative Tate said that statistics on judicial bypass are not gathered, but the omnibus bill would require these statistics to be collected.

Responding to questions from Senator Yates, Ms. Wieder expressed concern at the “clear and convincing standard” language, saying that it is a much higher burden than what is typically seen in civil cases.

Representative Gibbons Prunty said that there is evidence from Kentucky that abortion reversal works, highlighting a recent case in Paducah.

### **Addressing Mental Health for Telecommunicators**

Representative Wesley expressed admiration for dispatchers. He said that a common misconception holds that dispatchers do not experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Lindsay LePage, Research Psychologist with the Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training, delivered a presentation regarding duty-related stress and trauma among 911 dispatchers. Ms. LePage said people experience trauma in different ways. Repeated or extreme exposure to details of trauma, especially relevant to dispatchers, can cause PTSD. Symptoms include nightmares, avoidance, depression, lack of ability to feel joy, lack of connection, sleep loss, aggression, and self-destructive behaviors. Ms. LePage said that common sources of telecommunicator duty-related stress include line of duty deaths, events involving infants or children, deaths of adults, suicide, and officer-involved shootings. She also noted that rates of PTSD tend to drop significantly after participation in a post-critical incident seminar.

Carissa Smith, telecommunicator, shared the story of her struggles with duty-related PTSD. She said that the Kentucky Post-Critical Incident Seminar helped save her life. Ms. Smith said that while the average number of traumatic events someone experiences in their lifetime is two to three, for dispatchers the number is closer to 300 over their career. She spoke about the stigma accompanying dispatcher mental health concerns, saying they are often ignored even when they voice their problems.

Representative Wesley said that sheriffs, fire chiefs, EMTs, and public safety directors have expressed their support for telecommunicators. He said that he is working on a bill that will include training for telecommunicators and will grant them access to law enforcement mental health programs.

The committee listened to a recording of a traumatic 911 call as an example of a situation a dispatcher might encounter.

Representative Fugate expressed support for dispatchers, noting that he is a former emergency radio operator and depended on them in his time as a state trooper. He said that dispatchers are unsung heroes.

Representative Stevenson thanked Ms. Smith for her testimony. Responding to a question from Representative Stevenson, Ms. LePage said that there is a general stigma surrounding mental health in the workplace, and the concerns of telecommunicators are often dismissed. She highlighted more education and training as keys to overcoming this stigma.

Representative Wesley said that 911 associations have expressed support for the bill, and he thanked legislative staff for drafting it. Ms. Smith noted some of the difficulties telecommunicators face in seeking out help and training, and said the bill would address them.

With no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 12:15 PM. The next meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection is November 23, 2021, at 10:00 AM.