



Commonwealth of Kentucky
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**Gov. Beshear Outlines Bold Legislative Agenda
in State of the Commonwealth Address**

Governor offers plan to help Kentuckians now, make investments in future

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 4, 2012) – In his fifth State of the Commonwealth address, Governor Steve Beshear laid out a robust and expansive legislative agenda and challenged lawmakers to avoid partisanship and work together in order to improve Kentuckians’ lives.

“Kentucky continues to suffer from the lingering effects of the global recession, but short-term survival cannot be our only goal,” said Gov. Beshear. “This is no time to rest, to be complacent, to hide or to be timid. Rather, it is time to be decisive and aggressive.”

The Governor warned that the upcoming budget would be the most difficult of his administration, and that his upcoming budget proposal would include significant cuts, even in previously protected areas. He warned, however, that a difficult budget should not be used as an excuse to remain complacent, and that it is possible to make changes for the short term and long term benefit of Kentuckians.

“Tonight I will lay out for you some bold steps we can take to continue – in a collective and strategic way – to address the fundamental weaknesses that have hampered our state for generations,” said Gov. Beshear.

Invest in Kentucky's future through expanded gaming, tax reform

Although the Governor announced that his budget proposal would not include revenue from gaming, he urged lawmakers to pass a constitutional amendment that would allow Kentuckians to vote on expanded gaming in November.

Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent in neighboring states' casinos, funding their schools and roads and hiring police officers and teachers. That money belongs in Kentucky, Gov. Beshear said, and should be funding the services Kentuckians need. In addition, Gov. Beshear noted that two recent polls show that more than 80 percent of Kentuckians want the opportunity to vote on this issue.

A more balanced tax code will not only create a more welcoming business environment, Gov. Beshear said, but will also allow the state to invest in the services and priorities that best position our citizens for success. In the coming days, the Governor will unveil a process to thoughtfully and deeply review our tax system. Tax reform must realign the system in a way that is not only fairer for families and businesses, but also improves the state's ability to compete in the 21st century economy.

While neither of these proposals will have immediate financial impact, together they lay the foundation for increased revenue that will support key services like education and job creation efforts in the years to come.

Legislative Initiatives

Gov. Beshear offered a wide-ranging legislative agenda, designed to improve the state's economy, fight prescription drug abuse and better prepare Kentucky's workforce. These initiatives consider not only the present-day needs of Kentuckians, but also make key improvements that will benefit citizens in the future.

- *Expanded Gaming Amendment:* The Governor will soon introduce a bill in the Senate to allow Kentuckians to vote on the issue of expanded gaming – a move which would return millions of dollars to the state to protect and support key priorities such as public protection, education and job creation.
- *Balanced and Strategic Budget:* Later this month, Gov. Beshear will submit his proposed biennial budget. The Governor has warned lawmakers that this will be the most difficult budget of his administration, and will include significant cuts in order to balance. However, Gov. Beshear has also made clear that we must continue to make investments in our future and should not allow a dismal budget to become a barrier to progress in education and job preparation.
- *Prescription Drug Abuse:* Gov. Beshear, along with Speaker Greg Stumbo and Attorney General Jack Conway, will push for legislation to make participation mandatory in the state's electronic prescription reporting program, KASPER. The legislative package will also crack down on pill clinics.

- *Strengthening Tomorrow's Workforce through Education:* The Governor called on legislators to pass the "Graduation Bill," which would incrementally increase the legal dropout age from 16 to 18. This bill has enjoyed bipartisan support and has been passed by the House three times. He also asked legislators to pass a bill that will authorize his Early Childhood Advisory Council, as well as streamline the administration of Career and Technical Education.
- *Encouraging Private Economic Investment:* Gov. Beshear will push for tax credits for so-called 'angel investors' – private investors who provide funding for mid-level entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs are often too small to attract big venture capital and too large for other forms of start-up assistance. This bill would mean that Kentuckians who invest in Kentucky start-ups to create Kentucky jobs would receive a credit on their Kentucky income taxes.
- *Protecting Children:* In light of recent discussions regarding the protection of Kentucky's most vulnerable children, Gov. Beshear will propose the "Child Protection Act of 2012," which includes legislation to formalize what records should be released after the death of a child. The package also includes a bill to create an independent review panel, appointed by the Attorney General, to review all child fatalities and near fatalities where child abuse or neglect is alleged.
- *Supporting Military Families:* Gov. Beshear will support legislation providing a tax credit for Kentucky National Guard families who adopt a child. Currently, all other military branches except the Guard enjoy this benefit.

Call for Bipartisan Cooperation

In his first legislative address since his re-election, Gov. Beshear asked legislators to put aside partisan decision-making to make real and lasting change for Kentuckians.

"We have an opportunity this session to make Kentuckians' lives better, both in the short term and long into the future," said Gov. Beshear. "And we will succeed if we're bold. We will succeed if we put the focus where it belongs – on creating a better Kentucky for the people we serve."

The Governor will next address the full legislative body on Jan. 17, when he delivers his budget address.

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