

KENTUCKY YOUTH ASSEMBLY 2021

YOUTH GOVERNOR'S AGENDA

To help facilitate broader understanding of policy issues facing our Commonwealth, our KYA Governors and their Presiding Officer teams have published the Youth Governor's Agenda.

The Youth Governor's Agenda is a list of policy issues organized into 6 policy areas:

- **Environmental Health**
Developing and managing the economy and resources of our Commonwealth
- **Education and Educators**
Reforming K-12 education systems and rights of educators in our Commonwealth
- **Institutional Reform**
Improving community development and civic and cultural engagement
- **Labor and Economics**
Ensuring the health and well-being of all Kentuckians and Kentucky families
- **Public Health and Safety**
Developing public policy to better protect Kentucky Youth
- **Social Equity**
Reforming and improving the criminal justice system

There are 3-4 issues per policy area on the agenda (20-24 total). Each issue includes a one-page briefing:

- **Background on Issue**
Summary and background information on the issue
- **Questions to Address in Bills**
Guiding questions/problems that any BILLS on the issue should look to answer/solve
- **Sources for Research**
Links to research, articles, and other resources for your delegations

HOW TO USE THE AGENDA

- The best way to use the Agenda is to have bill sponsors review each issue and consider how they would best answer/solve the "Questions to Address".
- While multiple bills may address the same issue, each bill will likely have a different answer or solution to the problems that must be addressed.

YOUTH GOVERNOR'S AGENDA FAQ

Do we have to write bills on these topics?

These topics are not mandatory (only recommended by your KYA Presiding Officers), nor are they tied to awards, but these topics will be taken into account by each Youth Governor when determining which Commonwealth bills they choose to sign into law.

Does the Agenda take a position on an issue?

The agenda does not take positions on issues (or endorse any issue or solution), but rather provides "Questions to Address in Bills" so delegates can research their own positions when drafting their BILLS.

2021 AGENDA ISSUES

Policy Area | Environment Health

Agricultural Runoff
Sustainable Development
Sustainable Farming

Policy Area | Education and Educators

Racial Equity Through Education
Funding for Neurodivergent Education
Civics & Government Education

Policy Area | Institutional Reform

Equity & Fairness in Jury Selection Processes
Prison Reform in Kentucky

Policy Area | Labor and Economics

State Debt
Economic Impact of COVID-19
Legalization of Casinos

Policy Area | Public Health and Safety

Mental Health Impact of COVID-19 Virus
Police Brutality
Drug Addiction in Adolescents

Policy Area | Social Equity & Policy

Child Abuse Prevention
Socioeconomic Inequality in School Districts
Gerrymandering

Prepared by your **2021 KYA Presiding Officers**

Position	HS KYA 1	HS KYA 2	HS KYA 3	HS KYA 4
Governor	Andrew Kelmanson	Sophia Koppensteiner	Lily York	Kyi'Ree Spencer
Speaker of CW House	James Gunsar	Alex Young	Arden Ensor	Callie Wagers
Pres. of CW Senate	Amie Boakye	Anna Hernandez	Chaney Garrison	Josh Groves
Secretary of State	Sadie Townsend	Claire Moore	Kauner Shacklette	Kate Wetherton
Chief Justice	Greta Koszarek	Anamei Walli	Kendall Harper	Bella Stock
Attorney General	Lindsay Whitaker	Darren Grendi	Brit Buchanan	Morrigan McIntosh
Sec. of Exec. Cabinet	Molly Bates	Ean Hill	Rana Abdalla	Addie Dierig
Editor-in-Chief	Aliyah Dotson	Ella Abney	Savannah Dowel	Haley Griebel
Lt. Governor	Annie Dauk	Amy Roblero	Josie York	Cross Dutton
Speaker of BG House	Arushi Bansal	Matthew Gardner	Livi Ray	Ella Bussell
Pres. of BG Senate	Abby Johnson	Gracie Boehnlein	Ally Napier	Clint Chambliss

Policy Area | Environmental Reform

Electric Vehicles

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Ana Hernandez, President of the Senate | HS KYA 2
Kauner Shacklette, Secretary of State | HS KYA 3

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

Agricultural runoff is water from farm fields due to irrigation, rain, or melted snow that flows over the earth that can absorb into the ground, enter bodies of water or evaporate. Runoff can contain pesticides, sediment, nutrients, and metals that can contaminate water sources. Agricultural runoff is a nonpoint source of pollution that makes it extremely difficult to locate where the pollution comes from. This is partially because runoff picks up other pollutants as it travels until it reaches a larger body of water. This can contaminate sources of drinking water, chemicals in fertilizer can be absorbed by aquatic plants, and it can contribute to algae blooms, which affects animals' ability to find food and reproduce.

In times of frequent storms and flooding, farm runoff becomes an even more pressing concern. During these wet seasons, farmers only have a short amount of time to apply pesticides and fertilizers. Nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus are necessities for growing crops, but they can also trigger algae growth in rivers, especially during these wet seasons. Throughout droughts, on the other hand, fields are unable to absorb the fertilizer. This adds an extra load of nutrients flowing into drinkable water making it hazardous to animals and people. In brief, all types of weather impact agricultural runoff so it is imperative that we take action.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What major impacts does agricultural runoff have on Kentucky's economy?
2. How can we go about helping farmers prevent agricultural runoff in a cost-efficient way?
3. What laws/regulations relating to agricultural runoff are currently in place? How can we build off of those?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

2019, *What Is Agricultural Runoff?* Resource Center Powered By Busch System, 1pg.

Swanson, Abbie Fentress (2013), *What is farm runoff doing to the water?* Produce Grower, 1 pg.

EPA (September 27, 2019), *Protecting Water Quality from Agricultural Runoff*, U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency, 1 pg.

Policy Area | Environmental Reform

Sustainable Development

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Lily York, Governor | HS KYA 3
Addie Dierig, Secretary of the Executive Cabinet | HS KYA 4
Gracie Boehnlein, President of the Bluegrass Senate | HS KYA 2

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

Sustainable development is the practice of developing land and construction projects in a manner that minimizes the depletion of natural resources, promotes development without causing harm to the environment, and utilizes environmentally sustainable practices. For example: installing solar panels or wind generators on factory sites, using geothermal heating techniques or even participating in cap and trade agreements. By prioritizing intersectional sustainable development, which advocates for both humanity and the environment, Kentucky can take steps forward by regarding social, economic, and environmental issues as inseparable and interdependent components of human progress. The elements of community are interconnected, thus successful sustainable development must integrate these components.

Sustainable development will tackle one (or more) of the following: climate change and clean energy, sustainable transport, sustainable consumption & production, conservation of natural resources, public health, and poverty. The implementation of sustainable development in Kentucky can take many forms. It could involve partnerships with Kentucky's largest factories to use renewable energy, tackling Louisville's "urban heat island," (which occurs when natural land is covered in pavement, buildings, or other surfaces that retain heat), implementation of accessible and sustainable public transport (such as biofuel buses or electric rails), etc.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How will the incorporation of sustainable development practices affect Kentucky's economy?
2. What is a reasonable timeline to implement sustainable development? Will this timeline be effective in protecting the environment?
3. What specific sustainable development practices will be implemented?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Rinkesh, A. (2016, December 25). What is Environmental Sustainability and Sustainable Development? Conserve Energy Future.
<https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/what-is-environmental-sustainability-and-sustainable-development.php>.

Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development - Environment - European Commission. (n.d.).
<https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/>.

University of Vermont. (n.d.).
What_is_Sustainable_Development.
http://www.uvm.edu/~jashman/CDAE195_ESCI375/What_is_Sustainable_Development.html.

Policy Area | Environmental Reform

Sustainable Agriculture

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Anamei Walli, Chief Justice | HS KYA #2
Arden Ensor, CW Speaker of the House | HS KYA #3

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

One extremely overlooked, yet impactful and all-inclusive environmental issue is sustainable agriculture. Effective agriculture is vital for a well-functioning society, but when approached sustainably, also takes into consideration its impact on the environment as well as its ability to be economically efficient. Rather than consuming finite resources like fossil fuels and toxic pesticides, sustainable agriculture operates on a closed loop cycle that produces its inputs and self-manages the outputs. Rather than using chemical pesticides and fertilizers, sustainable farming uses techniques like crop rotation and cover cropping to increase the organic matter in the soil and support biodiversity. The absence of the chemicals reduces the amount of toxic runoff that pollutes our waterways and coral reefs, as well as increasing public health and curbing other issues created by water pollution.

Sustainable farmers also often raise their animals in more humane ways like allowing them to forage and move more freely. Changes in farming practices that lean towards higher sustainability would allow for environmental protection as well as increased quality of produce and livestock. Agriculture has a wide impact on the environment, and if reformed, would greatly benefit the health and safety of the planet and the citizens of this commonwealth.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

- 1) What kind of governmental programs are already in place to assist the shift towards sustainable agriculture?
- 2) What are the costs going to be to shift towards sustainable farming?
- 3) What are the first and simplest steps in improving farming practices?
- 4) What is the best way for the government to incentivize sustainable farming?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Sustainable Agriculture | National Institute of Food and Agriculture. (n.d.). <https://nifa.usda.gov/topic/sustainable-agriculture>

World Wildlife Fund. (n.d.). [Impact of Sustainable Agriculture and Farming Practices](https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/sustainable-agriculture). WWF. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/sustainable-agriculture>

Sustainable Agriculture vs. Industrial Agriculture. FoodPrint. (2021, February 5). <https://foodprint.org/issues/sustainable-agriculture-vs-industrial-agriculture/>

]

Policy Area | Education and Educators

Racial Equity Through Education

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Britt Buchanan, Attorney General | HS KYA 3
Rana Abdallah, Secretary of the Executive Cabinet | HS KYA 3

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

There is much research which explicitly shows that students of color struggle in comparison to white students in Kentucky schools. Black students specifically have a lower chance of being placed in advanced courses and have a higher chance of suspension and expulsion. Statistically speaking, in the chance that a black student has at least one black teacher by the time they reach third grade, there is a 13 percent higher chance they go to college, while that increases to a 32 percent chance in the case of two black teachers. This is unlikely to happen due to the fact that 95 percent of educators in Kentucky are white. There is an even further disparity in leadership positions in schools, seeing that ten percent of principals and 3.5 percent of superintendents across Kentucky are white. While many black and white students enter grade school at the same academic level, the further into elementary school they go, there can be up to a twenty point difference between mathematical and literary scores.

In terms of college preparedness, black students are much less likely to have ready access to college preparation courses and resources. Specifically, in the 2011 to 2012 school year, black students only had a 57 percent access rate to take math and science college readiness courses, while their white and asian counterparts had 71 and 81 percent access rate respectively. There is also evidence that shows systemic bias in relation to a white teacher's expectations for a black student compared to that of a black teacher. To further the disparity between black and white students, black students are typically placed in schools with few resources in a higher concentration than white students. Those schools, on average, spend up to 733 dollars less on individual students. In comparison to the 9,000 black students who do not have access to a black teacher or staff member at their school, there are over 27,000 latino students who attend a school which does not employ a latino teacher. These statistics also include that three in five of every school across America do not have at least one black teacher, while 85 percent of schools do not have at least one latino school.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What is the most prevalent contributing factor to the lack of black students success in school
2. Why is there a severe lack of black educators in schools?
3. What is a feasible solution to increase the funding to schools which do not have adequate resources for their students.
4. What is the fastest timeframe to resolve the issue of the lack of black educators in schools?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

RACIAL DISPARITIES IN K-12 PUBLIC EDUCATION. (2019, December 30). KET.

United Negro College Fund. (2020, March 20). K-12 Disparity Facts and Statistics. UNCF.

Edelman, Susan. "Black, Hispanic Students Still Struggling despite Rising Graduation Rates." Google, Google, 2 Feb. 2019

Funding for Neurodivergent Education

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Bella Stock, Chief Justice | HS KYA #4
Amy Roblero, Lieutenant Governor | HS KYA #2

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE

The rhetoric of mission and diversity statements of many schools exhibit that the differences that are celebrated tend to be individual and ethnic, rather than neurological. Neurodiversity can produce an unusual set of behaviors that are out of sync with the “reward and punishment” codes that schools abide by. However, if conditions such as autism that fall under the neurodiverse spectrum are not considered as matters of diversity and worth honoring, autistic students along with many other neurodiverse identifying students become constructed as problems that get in the way of education.

The current funding for Extended School Services programs is \$23,916,300 as of the 2020-2021 school year. A report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a think tank in Washington D.C., indicates Kentucky has cut base funding for education more deeply than most other states in the past seven years. Despite a boost in school funding in the current budget, the study says the commonwealth is spending \$561 less per pupil this year than it did in 2008.

Several politicians view mental health in terms of focusing on the prevention of school shootings as an article by AP news discusses. An example of this is President Obama’s appeal for violence-stemming mental health programs during his presidency, during which several mass school shootings occurred according to CNN news.. A pamphlet outlining why “Now Is The Time” to address mental health was released in which President Obama details a plan to better safeguard our kids and communities from tragic mass shootings. It was noted in his plan that almost all people considered mentally ill are nonviolent. But the funding imperative only came after people with severe impairments shot up schools. The neurodiverse and particularly the autistic population is usually interpreted in ways very different from what they intend or might do. Even a leader like Obama, who is very often considered to be empathic and understanding, atypical people are among the threats to school safety that require addressing. But the stress, and thus the stereotype, are on those most out of control, people who become violent and dangerous. Meanwhile, the various students experiencing stress from atypical mental states or neurological makeup get little attention beyond the Individualized Education Program that has some allowances but does little to alter the school institution to create a more accepting and caring environment.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How online learning has affected kids with special education needs?
2. Should there be plans on adding separate funding for the students who need more academic support after the effects of Covid-19?
3. How the negative interpretation of neurodivergent students in the eyes of public officials negatively affects the funding for the special education systems that are necessary
4. Have any funds been saved up from online education during the 2020-21 school year that could be put towards further helping students with special education requirements?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Alonso-zaldivar, R. (2018, February 16). *Budget undercuts Trump focus on mental health, school safety*. AP NEWS. <https://apnews.com/article/shootings-north-america-donald-trump-us-news-health-4db5c3de76d6440fbe35485af6cc0678>.

Education Discussion: Kentucky Tonight. KET. (2019, December 30). <https://www.ket.org/program/kentucky-tonight/education-discussion/>.

- Kendall, J. (2016). *Competitive Grants from KDE*. Competitive Grants from KDE - Kentucky Department of Education.
<https://education.ky.gov/districts/business/Pages/Competitive%20Grants%20from%20KDE.aspx>.
- Raghavapuram, S. (2020). *Kentucky Education Facts*. Kentucky Education Facts - Kentucky Department of Education. <https://education.ky.gov/comm/edfacts/Pages/default.aspx>.
- Ress, D. (2020, April 23). *Budget cuts to hit schools, colleges, mental health services hard*. [dailypress.com](https://www.dailypress.com/government/local/dp-nw-budget-20200423-u3puda5or5cl3dwyrh6f4qynu4-story.html).
<https://www.dailypress.com/government/local/dp-nw-budget-20200423-u3puda5or5cl3dwyrh6f4qynu4-story.html>.
- Turabian, J. L. (2020, May 5). *Implications on mental health by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic: The role of general practitioner*. Archives of Psychiatry and Mental Health.
<https://www.heighpubs.org/hjcap/apmh-aid1016.php>.
- Walker, C. (2019). *10 years. 180 school shootings. 356 victims*. CNN.
<https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2019/07/us/ten-years-of-school-shootings-trnd/>.

Policy Area | Education and Educators

Civics & Government Education

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Livi Ray, Speaker of the Bluegrass House | HS KYA 3
Sadie Townsend, Secretary of State | HS KYA 1

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

Civics and Government Education are extremely necessary for youth. In Kentucky's primary election of 2016, the voter turnout for ages 17-24 was 13.7%. Only 51% of Americans can name the 3 branches of the United States government. 19% of Americans cannot name any of the rights protected under the 1st amendment.

Kentucky's youth need civics and government education. In Kentucky, civics classes are not required in order to graduate high school. Kentucky students need to receive instruction on how their democracy functions. By implementing proper civic education, young voters can understand the importance of voting, leading to increased youth voter turnout and more informed voters. Civic and government education can provide instruction on simple, yet important information, like the 3 branches of government. A course in civics can teach students their rights and responsibilities as a United States citizen, ultimately leading to a more stabilized democracy.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Who will be responsible for teaching these classes?
2. How long should the curriculum be?
3. What specific topics will be on the curriculum?
4. In what grade(s) will the class be taught?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

- Ao Minnis, T., & Shah, N. (2020, February 9). *Voter Registration in Today's Democracy: Barriers and Opportunities*. American Bar Association.
https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/voting-rights/-use-it-or-lose-it---the-problem-of-purges-from-the-registration/.
- Commonwealth of Kentucky. (2016, August 15). *Voter Turnout by Age and Sex*.
<https://elect.ky.gov/statistics/Documents/voteturnoutagesex-2016P-20160815-120448.pdf>.
- Rozansky, M. (1970, January 1). *Amid pandemic and protests, civics survey finds Americans know more of their rights*. Penn Today. <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/amid-pandemic-and-protests-civics-survey-finds-americans-know-more-their-rights>.

Policy Area | Institutional Reform

Equity & Fairness in Jury Selection Processes

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Ean Hill, Sec. Exec. of the Cabinet | KYA 2
Kendall Harper, Chief Justice | KYA 3

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

Jury selection is a complicated and necessary process used to create fair and equitable juries to examine cases and rule on them. Juries are assembled through a process called jury selection that involves random selection of registered voters in a community to call to trial. Random selection is the most common process of selection, other methods such as drivers licenses' records can be used as well. After a number of people are summoned for duty, they undergo a weeding process known as voir dire. In voir dire, potential jurors are subjected to test and question by the judge and attorneys. This is to determine if underlying biases exist that could potentially affect the ability of a juror to hear a case from a neutral standpoint. If a juror is determined to be biased, the court and attorneys can reject them.

Jury selection, however, is greatly flawed. The Constitution of Kentucky and the Constitution of the United States Government both provide the right to trial by your peers. The definition of 'peers' however, has been interpreted in an unintentionally discriminatory and exclusionary way. Jury selection in Kentucky can unintentionally lead to jurors that do not reflect the race, class, and community of the defendant. Potential jurors are discriminated against based on race and class frequently in Kentucky and other southern states. Selection processes also frequently under-represent minorities where voter registration is used in states that have restrictive voting laws predatory to minorities. Multiple studies have found biases by both attorneys and judges, under-representation of minorities is frequent even in areas that are not majority white.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What steps can be taken to make the voir dire process fair and equitable to potential jurors?
2. Are there effective alternatives for selection of juries rather than voter-registration records?
3. Is it constitutional for the legislative branch to impose regulations on the selection processes of the judicial branch?
4. What can the legislature mandate that improves diversity in juror representation on the basis of class and race?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Tetlaw, T. (2011). Granting Prosecutors Constitutional Rights to Combat Discrimination. *U. Pa. J. Const. L.*, 14, 1117.

<https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/upjcl14&div=38&id=&page=>

Albritton, E. M. (2003). Race-conscious grand juror selection: The equal protection clause and strict scrutiny.

Am. J. Crim. L., 31, 175.

<https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/ajcl31&div=10&id=&page=>

Maeder, E. M., Yamamoto, S., & McManus, L. A. (2018). Methodology matters: Comparing sample types and data collection methods in a juror decision-making study on the influence of defendant race.

Psychology, Crime & Law, 24(7), 687-702.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1068316X.2017.1409895>

Policy Area | Institutional Reform

Prison Reform in Kentucky

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Greta Koszarek, Chief Justice | HS KYA 1
Amie Boakye | President of the CW Senate | HS KYA 1

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

In Kentucky 869 out of 100,000 people are incarcerated compared to the national average of 698 out of 100,000. For Black Kentuckians, that number becomes 3,545 out of 100,000, for Native Americans it is 2,490 out of 100,000, and for Hispanic people it is 1,657 out of 100,000. Differences in state & federal prison data (Federal prisons are operated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons while State prisons are operated by state officials)

Federal prisons present longer sentences than that of state prisons. State Prisons tend to hold more violent offenders as federal prisons hold more crimes tailoring towards identity theft and fraud. This is possibly because violent crimes often occur within one state and do not vary between state borders. Federal prisons receive more funding which provides better opportunities for education, food, and healthcare resources. State prisons hold a larger amount of racial disparities than federal prisons where African and Black Americans are incarcerated 5 times more than non colored individuals. In some states rates reach 10%. Latinos are incarcerated 1.4 times more than that of non colored individuals. There are 1,719 state prisons in the United States. The Bureau of Prisons operates 102 federal prisons. There are 3,163 local jails to serve short-term incarceration needs.

Conditions and treatment of mentally ill offenders. Offenders who show symptoms of mental illness in Kentucky are much less likely to receive treatment than in the rest of the United States, and are more likely to reoffend. Kentucky's facilities are unequipped to handle inmates with serious mental illness. There is an average of 1:2762 psychologists to inmates compared to the national average of 1:531.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can we decrease the incarcerated population in Kentucky, and solve the institutional issues causing them?
2. How can we work towards eradicating racial bias in Kentucky's judicial system?
3. How can we improve conditions for prisoners in need of treatment and prevent offenses?
4. How can we improve conditions for juvenile prisoners as well?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Kramer, L. (2020, May 18). *What Are the Main Differences Between State and Federal Corrections?* Legal Beagle. <https://legalbeagle.com/8214304-main-between-state-federal-corrections.html>.

Nellis, A. (2019, January 10). *The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons*. The Sentencing Project. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/color-of-justice-racial-and-ethnic-disparity-in-state-prisons>

Prison Reform and Alternatives to Imprisonment. United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime. (n.d.). <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/justice-and-prison-reform/prison-reform-and-alternatives-to-imprisonment.html>.

Prison Reform: Reducing Recidivism by Strengthening the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The United States Department of Justice. (2017, March 6). <https://www.justice.gov/archives/prison-reform>.

Soderstrom, I., & Smith S. 2009, Treatment Policies for mentally Ill Offenders: A Comparison of Kentucky and the Nation. Eastern Kentucky University. <https://encompass.eku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=kjsrb>

State Debt

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Ally Napier, President of the BG Senate | HS KYA 3
Marilyn Buente, Secretary of the Executive Cabinet | HS KYA 1

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

Kentucky is plagued with a massive state debt at nearly \$16 billion and has acquired financial commitments that total nearly \$50.3 billion (2018). In order to get the commonwealth out of debt, each Kentucky taxpayer would have to pay a staggering \$39,200. This is higher than the average Kentuckian's annual income. Such debt is an accumulation of an underfunded General Assembly, effects of the previous recession, and overall poor money management.

Because of this massive debt, Kentucky does not have the money to run the government efficiently and lacks the funding required for short-term bills as well as the financial cushion to help us if there ever were to be any long-term monetary risks. Basically, there is not enough money in our budget to pay for new bills, government programs, and other commitments without going into further debt. Furthermore, over 80 percent of that debt is estimated to be from unfunded retirement benefits, such as state pensions. These pensions belong to teachers, law enforcement officers, and other state workers. This is one of the factors causing Kentucky to be considered the worst state to retire in.

Over the years many ideas have been suggested to remedy this issue. The legislature has proposed solutions such as retirement for future state workers and teachers being decreased, legalizing marijuana to create a revenue source, and cutting spending in some areas. In recent years, lawmakers and current governor Beshear have proposed legalizing gambling in Kentucky in order to create a new revenue stream. Furthermore, some have advocated for easing certain state taxes to attract more individuals and businesses into the state which could prompt an increase in overall tax revenue. However, none of these proposals have been successfully implemented despite a few attempts by certain lawmakers. Regardless, this is a multi-faceted issue and there are no clear solutions.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What are some underlying problems causing our state to be in such high debt?
2. How could our state find funding to run the government efficiently without putting us into further debt?
3. Are there any investments or legislation we could make that would allow our government to gain funding for future undertakings?
4. How could we get our state out of debt without harming the pensions of state workers now and in the future?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Accounting, T. in. (2018, April 17). *Kentucky earns 'F' grade for its fiscal health: report*. Lexington, KY Patch. <https://patch.com/kentucky/lexington-ky/kentucky-earns-f-grade-its-fiscal-health-report>.

Cheves, J. (2020, March). *Taking \$1.13 billion from teacher pensions a 'very serious problem,' official warns*. Kentucky. Taking \$1.13 billion from teacher pensions a 'very serious problem,' official warns Read more here: <https://www.kentucky.com/news/politics-government/article241433321.html#storylink=cpy>.

Loftus, T. (2018, December 17). *Kentucky is in a \$43 billion pension hole. Here are some reasons why*. Courier Journal.

<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/politics/2018/12/17/kentucky-pension-crisis-reasons-how-we-got-here/2317233002/>.

Mercatus Center. (2019, September 15). *#46: Ranking the States by Fiscal Condition: Kentucky*. Mercatus Center. <https://www.mercatus.org/publications/46-ranking-states-fiscal-condition-kentucky>.

Miller, R. (2020, January 15). *Study Ranks Kentucky Worst State in U.S. to Retire*. WKU Public Radio. <https://www.wkyufm.org/post/study-ranks-kentucky-worst-state-us-retire#stream/0>.

Pinchin, K. (2019). *As a New Governor Takes Office, Kentucky Pensions Still on the Brink*. PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/kentucky-pensions-beshear-bevin/>.

Sonka, J. (2020, February 6). *Gov. Beshear pitches passage of sports betting bill, but Senate president isn't so sure*. Journal. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/politics/ky-legislature/2020/02/06/beshear-pitches-passage-of-sports-betting-bill-for-kentucky/4680930002/>.

Waters, J. (2020, January 6). *Opinion: Kentucky should look to Tennessee to see how to ease taxes that punish productivity*. Journal. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/2020/01/06/kentucky-economy-no-more-income-tax-would-good-bluegrass-state/2807155001/>.

Economic Impact of COVID-19

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Chaney Garrison, President of the Senate | HS KYA 3
Andrew Kelmanson, Governor | HS KYA 1

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

Kentucky has fought hard to keep financial stability over the past year. Far too many local businesses have been left hopeless with the need to close their doors. It is now too common to walk into a restaurant and be given an extended wait time due to the lack of waiters and being understaffed. Statewide initiatives are being started to focus on the financial restart of businesses in Kentucky.

The pandemic left thousands of people without jobs, revenue, and cash flow. Businesses were simply forced to lay off and unemploy many of their employees. The Kentucky Chamber of Commerce surveyed business owners across Kentucky and reported the average of impact as a 7 out of 10, 1 being no impact and 10 being extreme impact. Hotels were fighting to stay open when they had little to no business. According to Spectrum News1, "Nearly 4,000 hotel industry leaders sent an urgent letter to Congress asking for immediate action to help hotels avoid foreclosure and the loss of tens of thousands of jobs." Restaurant owners feared having to close their doors permanently. In order to combat the spread of Covid 19 restaurants had to decrease capacity inside dining areas, leaving many wait staff without a job. The Lexington Harold Leader reports that more than 34 Lexington restaurants have closed permanently during the pandemic.

Although Kentucky "had recovered 67% of jobs lost during the first months of the pandemic", the state still has a long road to recovery. (UK CBER) With 105,000 jobs less than the state accounted for at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, Kentuckians must now focus not only on fixing the faults that were exposed during the pandemic's economic crisis, but laying a strong foundation for future generations to thrive together even through difficult times. The future of Kentucky's economic state after the impact of COVID-19 will depend on how well Kentuckians can come together to address crucial elements of daily life that were completely exposed during the pandemic crisis: Healthcare, Education, Environmental Quality, Institutional Racism, Social Security. Improving these areas will not only lead to a better prepared economy in the face of any pandemic but simply a better quality of life for all Kentuckians.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What is an effective way to address any inequalities in the distribution of economic recovery funds in the future?
2. How can we improve job growth as the pandemic wears down without hurting taxpayers?
3. What are some ways to reduce the cost of much-needed social programs, such as housing assistance and child-care, for Kentuckians whilst still maintaining a high level of quality?
4. What are some ways we can make starting and running a business easier for all Kentuckians?
5. How can we provide quality financial education to Kentuckians from a young age in order to better prepare for financial crises like the COVID-19 pandemic?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

UK CBER Report Details Impact of COVID-19 on Kentucky's Economy. (2021, February 5). UKNow.
<https://uknow.uky.edu/research/uk-cber-report-details-impact-covid-19-kentucky-s-economy>

Pugel, D. (2021, June 11). Tracking the Economic Recovery from COVID-19 in Kentucky. Kentucky Center for Economic Policy. <https://kypolicy.org/tracking-the-economic-fallout-of-covid-19-in-kentucky/>

PODCAST | UK economist says Kentucky needs better data on COVID-19. (2021). WDRB.
https://www.wdrb.com/in-depth/podcast-uk-economist-says-kentucky-needs-better-data-on-covid-19/article_f440afd0-2e84-11eb-94b4-d39008b89c58.html

Kentucky Venues issues layoffs due to Covid-19 pandemic. (2020). Louisville Business First.
<https://www.bizjournals.com/louisville/news/2020/11/19/kentucky-venues-cuts.html>

Roberts, B. (2021, March 24). How COVID-19 Rocked Kentucky's Economy and What the Future Looks Like.
Spectrum News Kentucky.
<https://spectrumnews1.com/ky/louisville/news/2021/03/24/economic-impact-of-covid-in-kentucky>

Policy Area | Labor and Economics

Legalizations of Casinos

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: James Gunasar, Speaker of the CW House | HS KYA 1
Cross Button, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 4
Darren Grendi, Attorney General | HS KYA 2

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

Kentucky's economy time and time again has been beat down by restrictive legislation. We are currently behind on legalizing many products and businesses, one of those includes casinos. There are some forms of gambling in Kentucky, for example, betting on horse racing where there are minimal negative repercussions. In fact, it's very helpful for the economy of Kentucky, especially because we are known as the horse capital of the world. With casinos, we can have another source of revenue for our commonwealth. Not only will we be known for something else, but we can improve our economy ranking which is at an abysmal #40 among all US states.

There may be some red flags in one's brain right now because casinos are often mentioned with gambling addiction, and rightfully so. We'd like to point out that gambling addiction is something that affects 0.2% of the population. This isn't a small amount by any means, but more than likely less than a lot of people would think. Second, gambling addiction is often linked with substance abuse. We can combat this with resources for the abuser by putting counseling in our casinos to make sure everyone has a safe and healthy gambling experience. These red flags may seem very alarming, but you will see that they are minute compared to the upside of casinos. Some of these upsides include more jobs, more tourism, more business to tax, more income to tax, and creating a stronger identity for what Kentucky is. Revenue from Casinos alone made by states ranges from \$110 million to \$12 billion. It's all relative to how much is invested into the casino industry. This is a great opportunity for Kentucky to cash in on.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How can we minimize the effects of gambling addiction?
2. How much will we invest into the industry?
3. Will this damage the horse racing industry?
4. Do the positives outweigh the negatives?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

U.S. News. (2019). Where Kentucky Places in the U.S. News Best States Rankings. Retrieved June 20, 2021, from <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/kentucky>

Psychguides. (2019). The Connection Between Gambling and Substance Abuse. PsychGuides.Com. <https://www.psychguides.com/behavioral-disorders/gambling-addiction/>

Lock, S. (2020, December 11). Casino industry - statistics & facts. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/topics/1053/casinos/>

Mental Health Impact of the COVID-19 Virus

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Claire Moore, Secretary of State | HS KYA 2
Clint Chambliss, President of the BG Senate | HS KYA 4

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the mental health of Americans was increasing. In 2021, 22.14% of Kentuckians currently live with a mental illness. 13.6 % of youth have experienced a depressive episode in the past year, and 9.6% of youth live with major depression. Suicide has become the third leading cause of death in teens in the U.S. and the second leading cause in Kentucky. It is crucial now more than to provide and promote more accessible resources that are available in our state. Among children ages 12-17 in Kentucky during 2016–2019 who had experienced a major depressive episode in the past year, an annual average of 49.1% received treatment for symptoms of depression in the past year. It is also important we further implement current legislation so that we reach a larger variety of age groups and social classes, so all Kentuckians are receiving help.

Currently in Kentucky there is a mental health hotline where anyone can call. There is a website in the Mental Health America of Kentucky that connects you to multiple hotlines depending on the provider you are looking for, ranging from a trans hotline to an assault hotline. Access to find help is generally easy to get because all a person has to do is type into a search engine, where can I find help with mental illness. The top results will be local organizations that one can reach out to through the websites. Below the local organizations and the ads are the national tiplines that a person can go through if wishing not to talk to anyone local. With more money being put into research with mental health more resources are being put forth to better help everyone.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What can be done in schools to prevent the prevalence of mental health issues for future generations?
2. How can current legislation be strengthened to benefit more people?
3. Is there a way to help students that are multi-sport athletes or involved in multiple clubs where they have little free time to focus on their own mental health?
4. How can the local government help young adults and kids with mental health prevention and battles?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

“Behavioral Health Barometer.” *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020*,
www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt32834/Kentucky-BH-Barometer_Volume6.pdf.

“Prevalence Data 2021.” *Mental Health America*,
mhanational.org/issues/2021/mental-health-america-prevalence-data.

Atkins, M. S., Hoagwood, K. E., Kutash, K., & Seidman, E. (2010, March). *Toward the integration of education and mental health in schools*. Administration and policy in mental health.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2874625/>.

Policy Area | Public Health and Safety

Police Brutality

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Annie Dauk, Lt. Governor | HS KYA 1
Sophia Koppensteiner, Governor | HS KYA 2

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

Throughout Kentucky and United States history, police brutality has been seen within the system. In light of recent events, such as the Breonna Taylor case, a lot of attention has been directed towards police actions and protocol. On March 13th, 2020, in Louisville, Kentucky, Breonna Taylor was shot and killed by a police officer in her own home. This was a tragedy and created a lot of upheaval within communities. This was just one of many situations in which police brutality has been seen.

This issue is very complex, and as a result requires a well thought out solution. Over the past year, legislation concerning police protocol and action have been proposed. One example of this is Breonna's Law, which limits the use of no-knock warrants statewide. Of course, other steps must be taken in order to ensure the safety of our Commonwealth.

Police brutality is detrimental to the health and safety of citizens in our Commonwealth. It is imperative that we address this issue now, before more people become victims of police brutality. In order to create a system that all Kentuckians can trust, we must address this situation and provide solutions to the issue.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What rules can be created to address police brutality in Louisville?
2. Should there be changes as to who is able to join the police force?
3. What rules could be added to regulate physical action used by officers?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

- Brown, M., & Ray, R. (2020, September 28). *Breonna Taylor, police brutality, and the importance of #SayHerName*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2020/09/25/breonna-taylor-police-brutality-and-the-importance-of-sayher-name/>.
- Baumann, J. K. and A. (2020, July 17). *Policy Changes to Address Police Violence*. Kentucky Center for Economic Policy. <https://kypolicy.org/policy-changes-to-address-police-violence/>.
- Thomson Reuters. (2021, April 26). *U.S. to probe Louisville, Kentucky, police after Breonna Taylor death*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-launch-review-louisville-kentucky-police-abc-news-2021-04-26/>.
- Breonna's Law – HB21*. ACLU of Kentucky. (2021, March 5). <https://www.aclu-ky.org/en/hb21>.
- Pappas, S. (2020, June 4). *How to actually stop police brutality, according to science*. LiveScience. <https://www.livescience.com/evidence-police-brutality-reform.html>
- Los Angeles Times. (2020, June 24). *Q&A: Congress is about to act on police reform. Here's how the GOP and Democratic bills differ*. Los Angeles Times. <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2020-06-24/qa-what-has-congress-done-about-local-police-brutality-and-what-can-it-actually-do>.
- Wbur. (2020, June 10). *House Of Representatives Hears Testimony On Police Brutality, Racial Profiling*. House Of Representatives Hears Testimony On Police Brutality, Racial Profiling | Here & Now. <https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2020/06/10/house-police-brutality-racial-profiling>.

Policy Area | Social Equity & Policy

Child Abuse Prevention

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Abby Johnson, President of the BG Senate | HS KYA 1
Josh Groves, President of CW Senate | HS KYA 4

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

It's not an unusual experience that citizens of Kentucky hold a great sense of dignity toward their commonwealth. And that comes as no surprise considering that Kentucky is constantly striving to uphold various moral and ethical principles, such as respecting every person, sustaining the importance of family, and continuously leading with positive intentions. But, unfortunately, the regrettable truth is that Kentucky has failed miserably. It is impossible to truly maintain those values with the prevalent status of child abuse within its community. According to the annual report from the U.S. Department for Health and Human Services, Kentucky leads the nation with the highest account of child abuse and neglect for the third year in a row. In 2016, Kentucky had 20,130 child abuse cases. That is about 20 out of every 1,000 children. "To Visualize that, that's filling up the entire Yum! Center and then having children beyond the building." (Wehr, 2021) In 2017 alone, 16 Kentucky Children died from abuse or neglect, and another 56 were so severely injured that they nearly did. 10,000 kids were removed from homes and placed into foster care due to abuse or neglect in late 2018. (Yetter, 2020)

Child abuse isn't the only epidemic plaguing Kentucky as of late; the bluegrass state also begets a widespread drug problem. Attributes such as poverty, substance abuse, and mental health issues exist as critical determinants in child abuse and neglect. Addicted parents are getting high, brutalizing their children, or ignoring them entirely in a drug-induced stupor. According to the federal report, cases motivated by substance abuse accounted for 57% of neglect cases in 2017. Drugs like opioids, among others, are prominent in Kentucky and are only negatively contributing to abuse and neglect cases. (Yetter, 2020)

Around 90% of mistreatment towards a child occurs at home. And if a child does succeed in attaining the strength to disclose the abuse, it's typically to someone on the outside. (Ho, 2021) The Covid 19 Pandemic lockdown has forced families to quarantine inside their houses for months. Whereas this choice was fundamentally intended to keep Kentuckians safe, it exposed numerous children to horrifying dangers with little to no hope of rescue. "Isolation helps keep Secrets." As a result, reports to abuse hotlines plummeted 19% during the pandemic. But because there has not all of a sudden been a cure for child abuse and neglect, many officials suspect the pandemic has been masking the ongoing crisis. (Yetter, 2020) Kentucky has been utilizing a system that responds only after a child is severely injured. That system is ineffective and cannot be relied solely on to protect the youth of the commonwealth; a call to action is imperative.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. What is a feasible approach to implementing a comprehensive curriculum regarding child abuse prevention education for Kentucky teachers and other professionals working closely with youths?
2. What steps can be taken to elaborate upon background checks required for potential employees during job interviews for positions directly associated with children?
3. How does Kentucky's rampant drug issue directly attribute to their one of child abuse?
4. How can child protective services regain momentum post the Covid 19 Pandemic?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

11), A. S. G. (W. H. A. S. (2021, April 1). *Kentucky ranks No. 1 in child abuse cases nationwide for third straight year, Indiana holds highest death rate*. whas11.com.
<https://www.whas11.com/article/news/local/kentucky-child-abuse-cases-indiana-death-rate/417-23e717a6-2b3f-4>

Socioeconomic Inequality in School Districts

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Arushi Bansal, Speaker of the BG House | HS KYA 1
Matthew Gardner, Speaker of the BG House | HS KYA 2
Kate Wetherton, Secretary of State | HS KYA 4

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

Every student in Kentucky faces different personal issues each day. These issues can include differences in household income, social class, and/or neighborhood. Unfortunately, most of these factors determine the quality of education many students receive. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Kentucky ranked 4th-worst in the United States for core school funding per student. Children living in wealthier neighborhoods have an advantage by going to schools receiving an increased amount of funding, mostly due to donations made by parents.

Kentucky Education Association President Eddie Campbell states, "Years of budget cuts have led to larger class sizes, outdated resources and technology,....reductions in classes... And this was all before COVID-19." Too many budget cuts can affect a whole community, as this causes educators to lose their jobs. Typically, art and music classes are the first to go, but many cuts include counselors as well, which can truly impact the wellbeing of students on their school campus. Campbell continues by stating that now public schools are burdened with costs related to the pandemic, such as sanitation equipment and technology issues. Although there are resources available, there are not nearly enough to get thousands of kids through a school year while being as safe as possible. Each year, the gap between Kentucky's wealthiest and poorest school districts increases, but we need to find a solution to close that gap not only for the prosperity of our public school systems, but also in order to build a healthier and more educated next generation.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. Where will increased funding be provided from?
2. How will increased funding help a school or district?
3. Who will divide and decide where the funding goes?
4. What is the estimated cost of providing equal funding for all schools?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Baumann, A. (2020a, September 6). *Inequality between rich and poor Kentucky school districts grows amid COVID costs, revenue losses*. NKyTribune.
<https://www.nkytribune.com/2020/09/inequality-between-rich-and-poor-kentucky-school-districts-grows-amid-covid-costs-revenue-losses/>

Baumann, A. (2020b, October 19). *The Funding Gap Between Kentucky's Poor and Wealthy School Districts Continues to Grow*. Kentucky Center for Economic Policy.
<https://kypolicy.org/funding-gap-kentuckys-poor-wealthy-school-districts-continues-grow/>

Duncan, G. J., Phi Delta Kappan, & Murnane, R. J. (2019, February 21). *Growing Income Inequality Threatens American Education*. Education Week.
<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-growing-income-inequality-threatens-american-education/2014/03>

Policy Area | Social Equity & Policy

Gerrymandering

ISSUE BRIEF AUTHORS: Josie York, Lt. Governor | HS KYA #3
Alex Young, Speaker of the House | HS KYA #2

BACKGROUND ON ISSUE:

Gerrymandering is a common practice in which state legislators and politicians form congressional and legislative districts in a way that benefits themselves, their party, and their agenda. Legislators craft districts based on ideal voters and draw boundaries aimed at minimizing or maximizing certain votes. By choosing which voters fall into which congressional district, politicians can help determine the outcome of a race with the stroke of a pencil. The malpractice of gerrymandering has dominated almost every state at one time or another and is used by both major political parties.

In 2022, the Kentucky General Assembly will have the responsibility of redistricting congressional and legislative districts based on 2020 census data. According to the Census Bureau, the Commonwealth's population slightly increased; the main shift in demographics consisted of Kentuckians increasingly moving to urban areas and away from rural ones. Legislators are legally required to draw districts in a manner that minimizes splitting counties into multiple districts. In states such as North Carolina, the legislature drew districting lines emphasizing racial demographics in order to minimize the impact of minority votes. While the Supreme Court ruled, in *Cooper v. Harris*, that North Carolina's districting maps violated the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Court has consistently declined to declare gerrymandering as a whole unconstitutional.

Across the nation, states have taken it upon themselves to reform redistricting practices in order to prevent racial and partisan gerrymandering. States like Arizona and Colorado have formed independent redistricting commissions which charge groups of independent citizens with forming maps based on representation and data, rather than partisan considerations. In Iowa, the nonpartisan legislative staff creates maps to be voted on by the state legislature. Despite some states' move towards redistricting reform, other legislatures are determined to protect partisan power and maintain complete control over the process. As Kentucky moves into the next redistricting cycle, the Commonwealth will determine the future of districting practices and political representation.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN BILLS

1. How does this specifically impact minority hubs like in Louisville and Lexington?
2. Is the census an effective way to accurately define Kentucky's district lines?
3. How should Kentucky go about redistricting?

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Sonka, J. (2021, June 1). Republicans in driver's seat for Kentucky redistricting process. Here's how it will work. Journal
<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/politics/ky-general-assembly/2021/06/01/republicans-in-control-of-kentuckys-redistricting-process/5161106001/>.

Underhill, W. (n.d.). Redistricting Commissions: Congressional Plans.
<https://www.ncsl.org/research/redistricting/redistricting-commissions-congressional-plans.aspx>.

Wines, M., & Fausset, R. (2018, August 27). *North Carolina Is Ordered to Redraw Its Gerrymandered Congressional Map. Again*. The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/27/us/north-carolina-congressional-districts.html>.