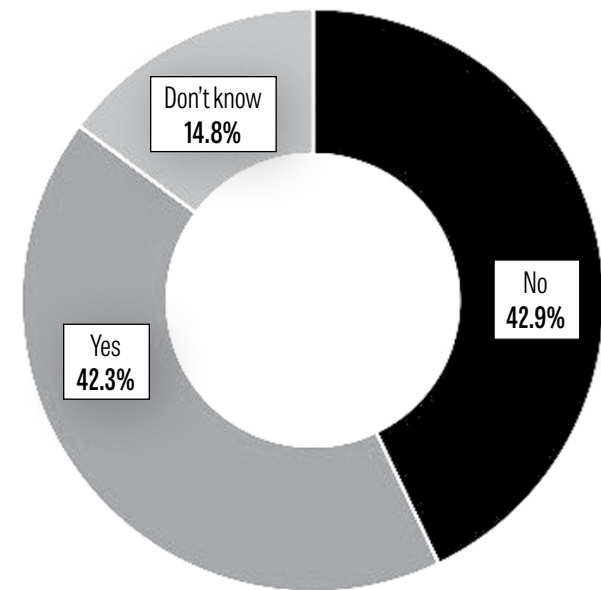


ONLINE POLL:
The Downtown Frankfort Summer Concert Series starts May 30. Do you plan to attend any of the concerts?



This poll reflects the opinions of 186 respondents.
Visit www.state-journal.com to take part in today's poll.

EDITORIAL

NWS warnings, forecasts keep public safe

When Mother Nature threatens with severe storms, tornadic activity, flooding or accumulating snow and frigid temperatures, Kentuckians have come to rely on the local National Weather Service (NWS) offices in Jackson, Louisville and Paducah for timely alerts and incoming weather information.

However, as deadly storms tracked across the commonwealth on Friday, staffing cuts made by the Department of Government Efficiency to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) forced the Jackson NWS office, which lost an overnight forecaster, to seek assistance from the other two Kentucky offices and stagger staff schedules in order to ensure around-the-clock coverage.

The Jackson NWS office typically staffs 13 meteorologists, but is operating with only nine, according to Tom Fahy, the legislative director for the National Weather Service Employees Organization, who told The Washington Post that the two management positions and three technical specialists were also missing.

Thanks to the support of the other NWS offices, the Jackson office remained fully staffed throughout Friday night's severe weather that left at least 19 people dead and 10 seriously injured after a tornado ripped through southeastern Kentucky. Because there was advanced notice of the storms along with the possibility of tornadoes, the Jackson office was able to plan ahead of time. Had there not been notification of severe weather ahead of time, the Jackson office would have been without an overnight forecaster.

In March, NOAA was told by the Trump administration to eliminate 1,000 employees on top of the roughly 1,300 who had already left. Those staffing reductions have filtered down to the National Weather Service, where nearly 600 workers have left via dismissal, the acceptance of incentive offers or retirement in recent months. Those cuts have left at least eight of the weather service's 122 offices without 24/7 coverage.

A letter authored by five former NWS directors earlier this month outlines staffing shortage concerns saying, "Our worst nightmare is that weather forecast offices will be so understaffed that there will be needless loss of life. We know that's a nightmare shared by those on the forecasting front lines — and by the people who depend on their efforts."

We believe that the NWS provides critical services that keep the public both informed and safe and should not be understaffed.

Trump's order, HB4 force shift in Ky's DEI landscape

Schools across Kentucky are adapting to President Donald Trump's executive order on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs. Of the Commonwealth's 171 public school districts, all but two are complying with the new federal restrictions. Universities are also shutting down DEI initiatives, aligning themselves with the White House's directive as well as Kentucky's House Bill 4.

But whether these institutions comply or push back, they are sure to draw controversy across the commonwealth. While some insist that DEI helps historically marginalized groups succeed, others say it is nothing more than prejudice dressed-up in woke terminology. One thing is certain: DEI is a hot-button issue, and when public dollars are involved, the stakes get even higher.

On his first day in office, Trump issued an executive order to end what the administration considers "wasteful government DEI programs and preferencing." The logic behind this order was simple. The White House sees DEI programs as codifying preferential treatment that discriminates against particular races, genders, or sexualities, a clear violation of Title IX.

The administration cited Martin Luther King Jr., insisting that "This order is meant to return to the promise and the hope that was captured by civil rights champions, that one day all Americans can be treated on the basis of their character, not by the color of their skin."

Similar reasoning served as motivation for HB 4 in the Kentucky legislature, which insists that DEI is a discriminatory practice that provides "differential treatment or benefits to individuals on the basis of religion, race,

sex, color, or national origin." Though the bill was vetoed by Gov. Andy Beshear, the veto was overridden by impressive margins in both the State House and Senate.



Jacob Ogan
Guest columnist

Neither the Trump administration nor the Kentucky legislature want discriminatory practices taking place within its jurisdiction, much less funded by taxpayer dollars. However, many within Kentucky are outraged with this action. Though the majority of school districts are complying, Fayette and Jefferson counties are refusing to do so.

Others districts, though compliant, are not happy about it. The superintendent of Hardin County, Teresa Morgan, said she signed the U.S. Department of Education's compliance form with "great disgust and sadness."

This same disgust is shared by many university students and faculty across the commonwealth. In the wake of the Trump administration's executive order and the passing of HB 4, Kentucky universities are making major changes. Part of these changes is the cancellation of so-called Lavender Graduation ceremonies, which are special graduation ceremonies for LGBTQ+ students.

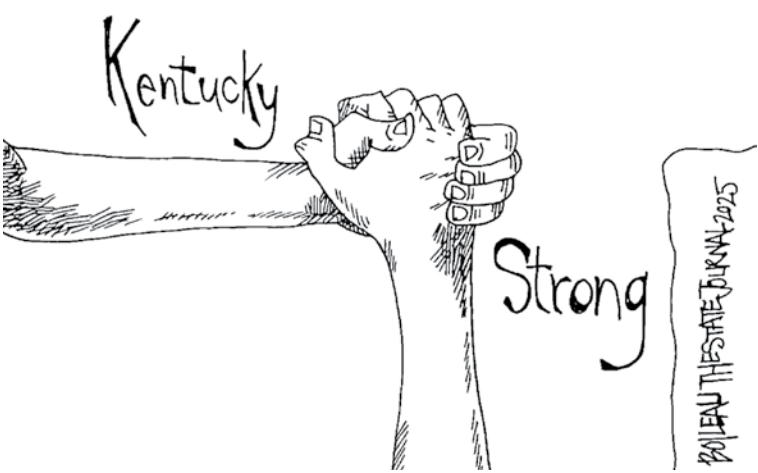
Both the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville cancelled their Lavender Graduations. UK also cancelled its Harambee Unity Celebration, specifically for Black graduates. UK's Chief Communications Officer stated that "The university will no longer host identity-based or special-interest graduation celebrations."

While many on campus lament this reality, it raises the question: why are identity-based and special-interest graduations taking place to begin with? One can only imagine the protests if a white-only or straight-only graduation ceremony were held, much less funded by tax-dollars. Don't Black-only or LGBTQ-only graduation ceremonies demonstrate a double standard?

Breaking up graduations by race or sexuality destroys the very unity embodied in the idea of the university. In fact, the very word "university" is associated with the Latin phrase universitas magistrorum et scholarium, meaning that the university is a community of scholars and students from different backgrounds who come together in pursuit of truth.

Though proponents of DEI claim that Republicans are undermining equality, the opposite is true. Both the Trump administration and Kentucky legislature are working to uphold truly equal standards — standards that are blind to race, gender, and sexual orientation. These impartial standards are not only consistent with our legal tradition — they are common sense. Institutional bias, in any direction, violates this principle. And when public schools forget this, it is the government's duty to step in.

Jacob Ogan is executive assistant at the Commonwealth Policy Center and is pursuing degrees at Boyce College and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Alongside his work at CPC, he serves in the President's Office at Southern Seminary and has previously interned with members of both the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. He can be emailed at jacob@commonwealthpolicy.org.



SUBMIT LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The State Journal encourages readers to submit letters to the editor. Letters should be the original work of the author, no form letters, and be fewer than 330 words. The State Journal reserves the right to edit letters for grammar and brevity. To submit a letter email letters@state-journal.com. Please provide an address and phone number with the submission for verification purposes only.

LETTER

WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN WORK IN GAZA SUSPENDED

Dear editor,

Earlier this month, World Central Kitchen (WCK) suspended its work in Gaza. This is the organization that was recently in Frankfort preparing hot meals for flood victims. WCK closed their kitchens and bakeries in Gaza because they have no more ingredients for making desperately needed meals for families. They have had trucks loaded with food and cooking fuel sitting on the border since early March waiting for Israel to grant permission for hu-

manitarian relief to enter Gaza. No food, medicine, or humanitarian aid of any sort has entered Gaza since early March. Children are starving.

As the supplier of about 70% of Israel's military aid, the United States can and should pressure Israel to open the borders to humanitarian aid and to find a diplomatic end to this war now. Children are starving. 90% of the population is displaced. And our tax dollars are being used to allow it to happen. This is wrong. It's time right now to open borders and to negotiate peace for everyone's benefit.

*Regina-Wink Swinford
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