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The Banner/Republican

OPINION

October 21, 2026



— October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month —

COMMENTARY

A Regional Issue That Affects Us All



BY **JEFF JOBE**
COMMUNITY PUBLISHER

From time to time, I write a commentary for the newspapers and radio stations we serve when an issue matters across our region. My recent commentary about local jail costs was one of those pieces.

Because it appeared during an election season—and because our work is new in some communities—I understand that readers may have wondered whether it was a political statement. It was not an endorsement of any candidate or political party. It was about the financial strain jail costs are placing on county

governments and local taxpayers.

County governments are spending significant general fund dollars to operate their jails. That money comes from local taxpayers and competes with funding for other community needs. Meanwhile, local jails are housing fewer state inmates than they did just a few years ago, reducing the reimbursements counties receive. Local officers enforce state laws, and county jails house people arrested under those laws, including people awaiting court proceedings. Counties must provide for their care while they are in custody.

Some jails also give eligible inmates the chance to work in the community, including roadside cleanup. I commend the counties that offer these programs. I have spoken with inmates who take pride in doing

useful work and giving back. People make mistakes. Taking responsibility and working to make things right matters, and I respect those who make that effort.

State Rep. Michael Meredith is working to advance legislation to help address the burden on counties. I support efforts to find a solution because this is a real challenge for county governments and their taxpayers. That support is about the issue and the legislation—not a political candidate.

The cost of local jails affects communities throughout our region. It deserves a serious discussion and a workable response. County taxpayers cannot continue carrying these expenses without consequences for other services their communities need.

WKU Mesonet App Gets New Look, Expanded Weather Features

Staff Report

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. — The Kentucky Mesonet at Western Kentucky University has updated its mobile app, giving users a new look and additional tools to monitor weather conditions across the Commonwealth.

The update, the first in nearly four years, provides access to historical weather data, soil conditions and a new webcam timelapse feature.

Originally launched in 2018 for iOS and Android devices, the Kentucky Mesonet app provides real-time weather information from nearly 90 monitoring stations statewide. Users can check current temperatures, rainfall, humidity, wind speed and direction, barometric pressure and solar radiation.

One of the biggest improvements allows users to view past weather conditions rather than only current readings.

“We’ve got historical data instead of just current data, so you can go back and look at the past week, the past month or the past year for all of the

different variables that we offer, like precipitation and temperature,” said Andrew Quilligan, systems architect for the Kentucky Mesonet.

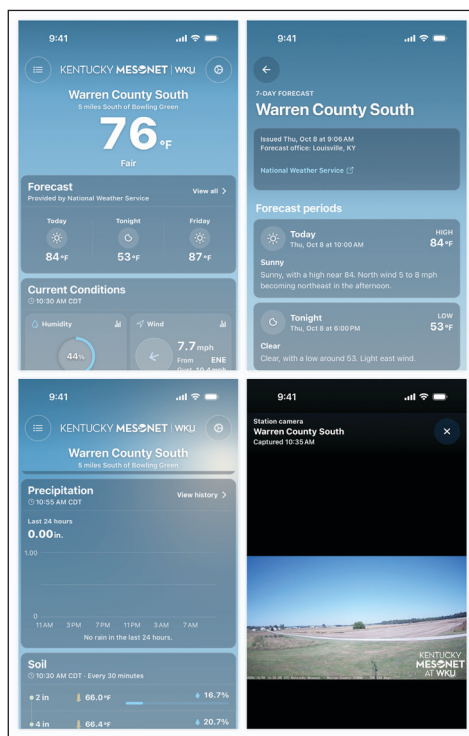
The updated app also includes soil moisture and temperature readings at various depths, providing valuable information for farmers and agricultural operations.

Another new feature allows users to view an hour’s worth of past webcam images through a timelapse option, making it easier to observe changing weather conditions.

The updated app was developed by Mesonet Applications Developer ChunHei (Leo) Yuen and Quilligan.

Dr. Jerry Brotzge, director of the Kentucky Mesonet and Kentucky Climate Center at WKU, said the improvements will benefit a wide range of users.

“The Kentucky Mesonet app is an essential tool for getting local, real-time weather information into the hands of those who need it fast, such as emergency managers, first-responders and farmers,” Brotzge said.



Kentucky news. | SUBMITTED PHOTO

He added that the new features will help users monitor recent weather events and long-term weather trends.

The Kentucky Mesonet operates 88 weather stations in 82 counties,

MESONET | CONTINUED ON PAGE FIVE

VETERANS CORNER



Written by **DAV Members**
Chapter 32, Brownsville, KY

VA RELEASES VETERAN SUICIDE ANNUAL REPORT

VA has released the 2026 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, which states that 6,488 veterans died by suicide in 2024, averaging 17.7 deaths per day. Sixty-two percent had not received VA healthcare during the year of their death or the previous year. The data from 2023 to 2024 indicates suicide rates fell 4.8% among veterans enrolled in the Veterans Health Administration but increased 3.7% among unenrolled veterans. This highlights the need to continue outreach efforts to connect more veterans to VA for healthcare services and suicide prevention.

The fact that so many veterans who died by suicide weren’t receiving VA healthcare shows there is a lot more work to do. VA needs to keep reaching out, making sure veterans know what help is available, and connecting them to the care and support they need.

Disabled American Veterans, Chapter #32, Brownsville, authored a bill, (HB30), in 2024 that was signed by the Governor into law, for the Prevention of Kentucky Veterans suicide that includes free mental health counseling for the veteran and their family members.

Chili Cook-Off Winner



▲ PHOTO | SUBMITTED

Erin Jenkins won the chili cook off at the Morgantown office.

■ APPRECIATION

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make it all possible.

With plenty of chili to sample, and friendly faces stopping by throughout the day, Morgantown Bank and Trust turned Customer Appreciation Day into a warm and welcoming celebration.

The Banner/Republican welcomes letters to the editor regarding our publications or local issues of importance. Letters should be no more than 300 words; we reserve the right to edit for clarity or length, or to reject letters that are in poor taste or libelous. Writers must include their name and a valid telephone number for verification purposes. Anonymous letters will be rejected. Send your letter by email to print@jpnews.com or mail to or drop off at any Jobe Publishing office.