



MCKENNA HORSLEY/Kentucky Lantern

Shown answering questions during his aborted U.S. Senate campaign, businessman Nate Morris has been nominated by President Trump as the next ambassador to Colombia.

Trump comes through with ambassadorship for Morris

BY MCKENNA HORSLEY
KENTUCKY LANTERN

President Donald Trump has nominated former Republican U.S. Senate candidate Nate Morris to become ambassador to Colombia.

Morris' nomination was among dozens sent Monday evening to the U.S. Senate for confirmation.

Morris had been one of several Republicans vying to succeed Kentucky U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell, but he dropped out of the race ahead of the primary last month after Trump endorsed another GOP candidate, U.S. Rep. Andy Barr.

Trump said on Truth Social at the time that he had met with Morris and "asked Nate to step aside from that race to take a role in my administration as an ambassador."

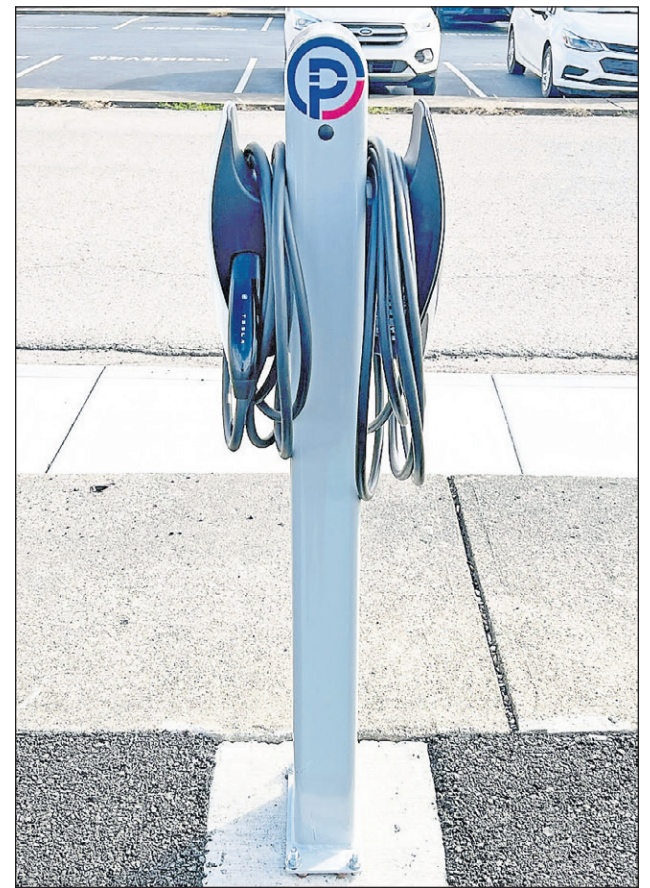
"Nate is Oxford educated, tough as nails, LOVES our Great Nation, and will represent the United States very well, overseas, or otherwise," the president said. "He has a great future in politics, or anything else he chooses to do."

Barr won the Republican primary and now faces Democrat Charles Booker in the general election.

Morris is a Lexington businessman

who founded waste and recycling company Rubicon. He is the chairman and CEO of Morris Industries.

Throughout his campaign, Morris was highly critical of McConnell and had support from some of the presidents' allies. Morris announced his campaign on Donald Trump Jr.'s "Triggered" podcast and highlighted his friendship with Vice President J.D. Vance. Elon Musk, the billionaire and former special government employee who oversaw the Department of Government Efficiency, gave \$10 million to a PAC supporting Morris.



Paxton Media Group file

Kentucky is seeking bids from contractors interested in installing and operating rural charging stations similar to a series at Court and Commercial streets in Campbellsville.

Kentucky seeks developers for rural EV charging stations

BY TOM LATEK
KENTUCKY TODAY

FRANKFORT — Kentucky has issued a request for proposals to further expand the state's network of fast-charging stations to support long-distance travel for electric vehicle drivers across the state.

"Electric vehicles are no longer the technology of the future, they're here now," Gov. Andy Beshear said. "We're excited by the progress we're making to expand our charging network, and we will keep working until Kentucky has the network required to meet the needs of the families that rely on our roads each day."

This is the fourth RFP under the state's EV Charging Program, which has supported the opening of 12 fast-charging sites to date. In total, Kentucky is expected to receive nearly \$70 million in federal funds from the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Formula Program established through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Previous proposals focused on Kentucky's alternative fuel corridors along its interstates and parkways, where the current 12 open sites and the 16 under construction are located. This latest proposal seeks private developers who will design, build, operate and maintain the stations in other urban and rural areas not already served by those stations,

helping ensure EV infrastructure reaches communities across Kentucky.

This includes rural portions of counties, some parkways such as the Bluegrass Parkway, as well as routes connecting interstates and parkways: U.S. 23, U.S. 68, U.S. 25E, U.S. 27 and U.S. 127, AA Highway in central and eastern Kentucky; U.S. 68, KY 80, U.S. 51 and U.S. 60 in western Kentucky; and urban areas such as Ashland, Covington, Lexington, Elizabethtown, Owensboro and Henderson.

Each station must have at least four charging ports and be accessible to the public 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

NEVI funds totaling \$55 million have been obligated for fast-charging stations in Kentucky.

"Reaching a milestone of 12 open sites was a big step to ease range anxiety for EV drivers who live in Kentucky and those who are visiting our state," Transportation Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Goodman said. "Additional fast-charging stations statewide will make a real difference for Kentuckians and those visiting the commonwealth."

Responses to the RFP are due July 13 and selections are anticipated late this summer. To obtain the RFP and learn more about the EV Charging Program visit EVCharging.ky.gov.

Legislators receive literacy outcomes update in interim session

BY LEGISLATIVE
RESEARCH COMMISSION

FRANKFORT — Kentucky lawmakers received an update Tuesday on statewide literacy outcomes and the impact of recent education initiatives during a meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education.

Officials from the Kentucky Department of Education highlighted gains in student achievement and discussed how literacy investments, including the Read to Succeed Fund, are contributing to academic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Micki Marinelli, chief academic officer for KDE, and Christie Biggerstaff, director of early literacy, presented findings from the department's Office of Teaching and Learning.

"Our purpose today in this presentation is to share how your investment in literacy — and the Read to Succeed Fund specifically — is leading to increased outcomes for Kentucky students," Marinelli said.

Marinelli cited the latest Education Recovery Scorecard, a collaboration among Harvard University, Stanford University and Dartmouth College that measures student academic recovery since the pandemic. According to the study, Kentucky ranks fifth nationally in reading recovery and eighth in math recovery among participating states.

"It does put us as a top performer across the nation," Marinelli said. "After the pandemic, most states saw an improvement or a rebound in math achievement relatively quickly. But we are just now beginning to see in 2025 the turnaround for reading."

Marinelli said the state's progress in reading appears



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Rep. Kevin Jackson, R-Bowling Green, speaks Tuesday about literacy during the Interim Joint Committee on Education meeting.

to be linked to early literacy reforms and noted that states showing reading gains between 2022 and 2025 have implemented comprehensive science-of-reading initiatives.

Kentucky's Read to Succeed Act, enacted in 2022, established several literacy-focused programs, including Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training, the Kentucky Early Literacy Leadership Network, literacy coaching partnership schools and the Kentucky Reads to Succeed Annual Conference.

According to Marinelli, LETRS training has helped increase the number of students performing at the proficient level while reducing the number classified as novice. She also highlighted professional learning opportunities offered through the AIM Institute for Learning & Research Pathways.

Future efforts will focus on sharing successful literacy practices statewide and implementing a high-quality instructional resources repository authorized by Senate Bill 207 in 2025. Marinelli said

see that collaboration and to think what we can do when we all work for the same goal, pulling the same direction."

Rep. Steve Bratcher, R-Elizabethtown, acknowledged the progress but cautioned that Kentucky still faces challenges.

"You said we were fifth in the nation, but that's fifth in the nation of recovery. That's not fifth in the nation of math," Bratcher said. "Based on some of those other numbers, we still are not at the levels we were before COVID."

Biggerstaff agreed that while the gains are encouraging, achieving long-term literacy goals will take time.

"The statewide improvements are amazing," she said, adding that it will take "a little while" to reach desired outcomes.

Committee Co-Chair Rep. James Tipton, R-Taylorsville, said the gradual pace of improvement was anticipated when lawmakers approved Senate Bill 9 in 2022.

"This was going to be a process," Tipton said. "It's going to take some time to implement."

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