

# COMMONWEALTH POLICY

*Reinforcing the Commonwealth's Founding Principles - Renewing the Commonwealth's Future Promise*

## BEVIN SHARES PRIORITIES



Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin isn't shy about sharing his vision for a better Kentucky. In a recent interview, CPC's Executive Director, Richard Nelson, had the opportunity to talk with the governor.

The conversation began with a review of the pro-life legislation that passed the 2017 General Assembly. Bevin called it long overdue and promised that he would do everything in his power to make sure the new laws are enforced in order to protect life at every stage.

The discussion on the issues of life led Bevin to talk about reforming the foster care system. Bevin says his newly appointed adoption czar, Dan Dumas, will work to reduce the red tape that slows the process for Kentucky's more than 8,000 foster children. "The child must be preeminent," Bevin said. "All else should fall behind that, making the process simple, streamlined, efficient, less invasive, less intrusive and less expensive," Bevin said.

He challenged the members of Kentucky's churches to put their faith into action by becoming involved in the foster care system and by adopting.

While he says he's greatly encouraged

by the record economic growth in Kentucky in 2017, he is adamant about helping the state pension system. He plans to call a special session of the General Assembly in the late summer to address the shortfall.

"We could sell every state park, every building, every piece of equipment, every piece of art, every car the state owns, everything, and we wouldn't begin to fill the hole we have in the state pension system," Bevin said. He hopes the special session will be a time when he and legislators can work together to find a solution to repair the failing system.

As the interview closed, Nelson asked the governor what citizens can do to help the state become "the best version of itself," a phrase Bevin uses often.

Without hesitation, the governor called people to get involved in government on every level. He pointed to himself as someone that has been involved in business, not politics. He said people are going to have to put themselves behind their own personal good for the greater good.

The entire 27 minute interview can be viewed by visiting [KentuckyTV.org](http://KentuckyTV.org).

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**The Commonwealth Policy Center is a non-profit public policy group helping Kentuckians value life, protect natural marriage, defend religious liberty and promote fiscal integrity.**



# Addressing the Heart of Kentucky's Drug Crisis

by Richard Nelson  
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The nation's top lawmakers and public health experts recently convened in Atlanta for the National Prescription Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit to learn the latest about our drug epidemic and how to stop it.

Kentucky Congressman Hal Rogers was one of the featured speakers and said "This week we're dealing in hope. We're here to do more than talk. We're here to act."

Kentucky had a big footprint at the conference which included a presentation by Gov. Matt Bevin. Kentucky State Police Commissioner Richard W. Sanders moderated a panel discussion.

University of Kentucky Healthcare was the platinum sponsor for the event, perhaps because we're at the epicenter of the opioid crisis and have an overdose rate more than 1.5 times higher than the national average.

In 2015, the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy reported overdose deaths reached an all-time high of 1,248. That's nearly three drug overdose deaths per day in the Bluegrass and the numbers don't appear to be decreasing.

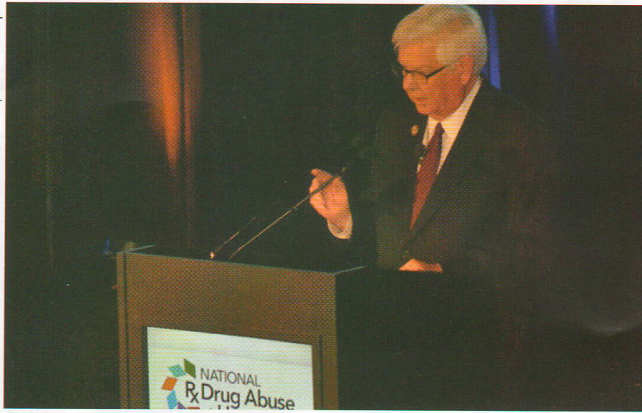
We've seen wave after wave of drug fads in our commonwealth. In my home region of Western Kentucky, meth production was so bad a decade ago that farmers couldn't leave their nitrous ammonia tanks in the fields because they'd be stolen. They're just beginning to return.

Now it's another drug. The headline I read the other day was startling: "\$1.5M Worth Of Heroin Seized From Semi In Ky." That was 33 pounds of the illicit drug seized on a highway I regularly travel adjacent to the county where I live.

The Kentucky legislature has worked tirelessly to deal with the epidemic of addiction that has caused too much pain and taken far too many lives. It made naloxone, an antidote for opioid overdose, more widely available to emergency first responders. It can now be purchased over the counter.

In 2017, the Kentucky General Assembly toughened penalties for trafficking even small amounts of heroin and added the highly potent fentanyl.

Trafficking in less than two grams is now a Class C felony punishable by five to ten



Con. Hal Rogers (R-Somerset) speaks at the National Prescription Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit in Atlanta on April 18, 2017.  
Photo Courtesy: National Prescription Drug and Heroin Summit

years in prison. They also limited opioid prescriptions to a three-day supply.

It remains to be seen if these laws will have an impact. The beat goes on.

Controlling Kentucky's drug epidemic is like squeezing a balloon. The law may have a grip on one dangerous drug while a bulge in the form of another lesser-regulated drug emerges elsewhere. The drug epidemic will continue to ravage lives until the air no longer fills the balloon. In other words, deep heart and soul issues must be addressed and this is something the state is powerless to fix.

In 2015, the General Assembly allocated \$24 million for drug addiction treatment. It's a good start, but addiction boils down to a person trying to numb their pain and relieve their sadness. And the best one to speak to this is the faith community, which has been overlooked when it comes to beating addiction. The faith community was conspicuously absent from the Atlanta Summit. Either they weren't invited or they refused to attend.

Money can be spent and conferences can be planned (the Atlanta Summit enjoyed some of the brightest minds and most powerful leaders in the nation), and some good might be achieved, but so long as the faith community doesn't play a role, we neglect a major asset that can get to the heart of the issue by addressing the soul.

Churches and faith-based ministries articulate moral limits on behavior and a vision for the true, the beautiful and the good. Christ-centered rehab ministries like Teen Challenge, which has a treatment

center in Louisville, boasts a high rehabilitation success rate for addicts who complete their program precisely because they address sin and life-controlling issues and point to redemption.

According to a 2011 Wilder Research follow-up study of Minnesota Teen Challenge graduates from between 2007-2009, 74% reported they didn't use drugs in the six months prior to follow-up.

If there's one thing we've learned from the opioid crisis, it's that we're in a war for our loved ones and the communities we call home.

If this war is to be won, faith-based rehab ministries must be included in mainstream and community collaborative efforts so they can speak to the hearts of the drug-addicted in order to help all of society address the heart of the problem.

*This column appeared in the May 16, 2017 edition of the Louisville Courier-Journal.*

## The Commonwealth Minute

A one-minute daily commentary  
on issues and events that affect  
Kentuckians.

Heard on more than 40 radio  
stations and at  
[CommonwealthMinute.org](http://CommonwealthMinute.org).





# Adoption Czar First Step to Repair Kentucky's Broken Foster Care System



Newly appointed adoption czar, Dan Dumas, speaks at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. Photo Courtesy: SBTS.edu

by Brandon Porter

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A broken government system should not keep the pieces of a child's life from being put back together. Governor Matt Bevin's choice of Dan Dumas as adoption czar is a major step in the right direction to repair the broken foster care and adoption process in Kentucky.

As an adoptive father of two, I'm grateful to see a governor who will put children before bureaucracy. More than 15 years ago, my wife and I tried to adopt through the foster care system in Alabama. On the day we believed we would become parents, the door was painfully slammed in our faces and our hopes were dashed.

Months later, we moved back home to Kentucky still longing to be parents. We found a foster care system in similar shambles. To avoid a second heartbreak, we chose to adopt internationally.

Could it be the day has finally arrived that something is going to be done to care for orphans and those being tossed around in a broken foster care system? Let's hope so.

Over the years, I've been asked many times why we adopted internationally instead of adopting in-state. Obviously, I've shared the story you just read. We've also found that we're not alone. There are dozens of people who have shared similar experiences with us.

I'm not a social worker and I've never worked for the Cabinet for Health and

Family Services, so I don't know the ins and outs of all of the problems. I just know there are problems.

I also know there are thousands of kids, who need permanent care, caught in a system that cannot provide it. The lives of these children should matter to all of us. They're the future of the commonwealth, and they need our care today.

The appointment of Dumas should help people see a fuller picture of what it means to be pro-life. For too long being pro-life has only been viewed as being anti-abortion. While that's one facet of being pro-life, there's a lot more to this conviction.

I value human life because I believe that every person has been created in the image of God and is, therefore, worthy of dignity and respect. That means life must be cared for from conception to the coffin.

Gov. Bevin has demonstrated his pro-life conviction by making sure Kentucky's abortion clinics are closely observing state law. In 2017, the governor and the general assembly demonstrated their commitment to life by passing legislation that protects human life. The appointment of Dumas will now show that life is to be valued far beyond birth.

Families are important to society and research shows they are vitally important to helping children succeed.

A 2006 Harvard graduate school survey revealed that children with parental involvement could read earlier in life and developed better work habits in elemen-

tary school. The study goes on to say that children with parental involvement have a greater level of social competence and are more successful once they graduate high school.

While many of Kentucky's social workers and foster parents should be commended for their work, they cannot fully stand in the gap for parents. It is time for reform in this important area. Dumas has his work cut out for him.

Let's look beyond party politics and cheer for the children in need and the men and women that want to be their parents.

*This column appeared on KentuckyToday.com on May 5, 2017.*

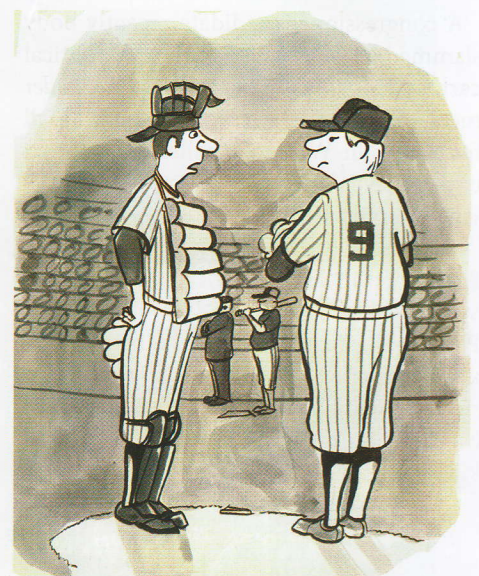
## CPC Schedules Candidate Training

The next candidate training hosted by the Commonwealth Policy Center is scheduled for Saturday, January 27, 2018. The location will be announced soon.

Candidate trainings provide instruction in the areas of campaign organization, fundraising, media relations, GOTV's, messaging, and more.

State Rep. DJ Johnson (R-Owensboro) attended CPC's 2016 Candidate Training and said, "the insights and recommendations of the various speakers helped me focus on the important tasks necessary to winning an election."

To learn more visit our website, [CommonwealthPolicyCenter.org](http://CommonwealthPolicyCenter.org).



**"After all the signals I've given you, you still voted for the wrong candidate."**



# Big Changes Coming to Kentucky Schools

by Brandon Porter  
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If you spend much time with teachers in Kentucky's public school system it doesn't take long for them to mention "the test".

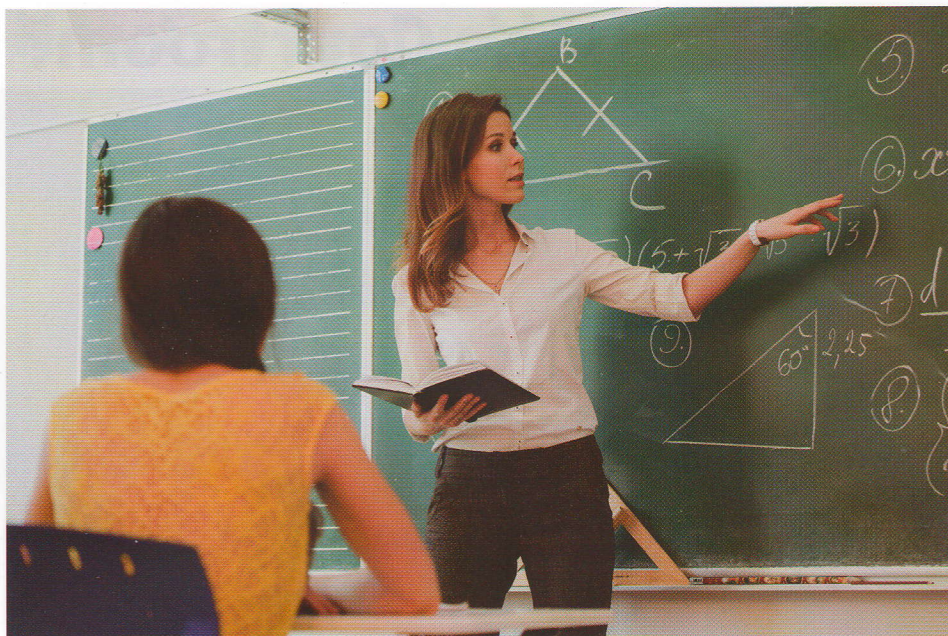
When I hear about "the test" I immediately remember taking out my Number 2 pencil and carefully filling in the bubble completely. Today's tests are much different for a number of reasons.

Since the passage the Kentucky Education Reform Act and the implementation of Common Core Curriculum, annual testing has been a primary measuring stick for schools.

For a number of years, the dollars a school and a school system receive are based on test scores. This motivates education leaders to make it a top priority. The high stakes are felt by students who are well aware that "the test" is the high point of their academic year.

When Senate Bill 1 passed Kentucky's General Assembly this year, Governor Matt Bevin quickly signed it into law.

If you haven't heard of or researched Senate Bill 1, you should. It spells out the vision for education in Kentucky. You can get



a brief glimpse by watching interviews with Sen. Mike Wilson (R-Bowling Green) and Sen. Pres. Robert Stivers (R-Manchester) at our webchannel, KentuckyTV.org.

Wilson is the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee. He believes these changes, "will free teachers up to teach students instead of preparing them for the test."

He hopes the changes will help students see that they can be successful in Kentucky and that their education will give them specific helps.

Stivers adds, "This bill was named Senate Bill 1 because it was a priority for us. Education is the great equalizer."

Their desire is to reform Kentucky's schools so local school systems can have more control to accommodate the needs of their students and community.

## Speaking Up for Civility in the Public Arena

A congressional candidate recently body slammed a reporter in Oregon. A political cartoon in *The Lexington Herald Leader* mocked the governor's conviction to call for prayer in West Louisville. To say that our society is in need of a resurgence of civility is an understatement.

CPC was invited to speak at the Kentucky Bar Association's Diversity and Inclusion Summit in Lexington on April 7. Brandon Porter participated in a panel called Cultural Competency as an *Component of Professional Civility in the Law*, a fancy title for a discussion on how to show professional kindness and courtesy to one another.

At CPC we believe civility is anchored in the truth that each of us has been created in the image of God. Because of this, every person is worthy of dignity and respect.

While it would be wonderful if all people

thought this way, we know they don't. So someone must take the lead.

Citizens that care about civility in the public square must be active in government on every

level. They must model self-control and kindness.

This spring CPC has not only spoken about this, but has had the opportunity to put it in action at numerous Human Rights Commission and City Council meetings across Kentucky.



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# Fairness in the Courtroom?



Chris Hartman (from left), Sam Marcosson, Richard Nelson participate in a debate hosted by WEKU's John Hingsbergen on the *Eastern Standard* program. Photo Courtesy: WEKU.fm

Should the personal convictions of judges be reasonable grounds for them to recuse themselves from cases? Judge Mitchell Nance has taken that stance in the Family Court of Barren and Metcalfe Counties as he has recused himself from all same-sex adoption cases in his courtroom.

John Hingsbergen of WEKU, the public radio station of Eastern Kentucky University, hosted an on-air debate on the issue featuring Chris Hartman of the Fairness Campaign, Sam Marcosson of the University of Louisville's Brandeis School of Law and Richard Nelson. The debate occurred

on the program *Eastern Standard* on Thursday, June 1.

The central issue debated was whether judges could appeal to their conscience when cases that come before them violate their deeply held religious beliefs. The lively debate lasted an hour with the participants interacting with callers and emails from listeners.

The debate is available for streaming at WEKU's website, <http://weku.fm/post/adoptions-same-sex-couples-related-legal-issues-eastern-standard>.

## CPC Presents Public Forum in Glasgow

Residents of Glasgow asked CPC to host an event to help them respond to Family Court Judge Mitchell Nance's decision to recuse himself from same-sex adoptions.

On April 27, Judge Nance cited a "conscientious objection" and said "under no circumstance" would "the best interest of the child be promoted by the adoption by a practicing homosexual."

Responses of outrage from local, state and national media flooded in quickly. On May 10, the ACLU and the Fairness Campaign of Louisville protested in front of the Barren County Courthouse and called for Judge Nance's removal.

In response, CPC held a public forum on May 15, at Calvary Baptist Church in Glasgow.

Richard Nelson spoke about the importance of moral conscience citing James Madison's declaration that it is a natural and unalienable right that is "the most sacred of all property."

Brandon Porter shared insights on how to face the challenges of objecting to the pro-gay agenda and sexual revolution going on in America today.

CPC regularly holds town forums to offer resources and perspective on pressing social issues for concerned citizens.

## Eastern KY is Listening

Commonwealth Policy has welcomed three new Eastern Kentucky radio stations to the list of affiliates carrying our radio programs.

WLGC in Ashland, WDOC in Prestonsburg, and WJMD in Hazard have recently added our programs.

The Commonwealth Minute is a one-minute daily commentary on issues and events that affect Kentuckians. The Commonwealth Matters is a half hour weekly program that helps the listener think through today's issues.

If you live in the area please tune in to those stations. If you have friends or family that call Eastern Kentucky home, please ask them to tune in.

Listen on-demand at [CommonwealthMinute.org](http://CommonwealthMinute.org) or [CommonwealthMatters.org](http://CommonwealthMatters.org).



## Help Us Avoid the Summer Slide

While the days are longer, the crops are growing, and children are begging to go the pool, non-profit groups, like CPC, face significant challenges during the summer months.

For a number of reasons, financial giving slips during the summer and early fall. Yet, the mission continues.

In this issue you'll read about our interview with Governor Matt Bevin, a debate over religious liberty on WEKU radio, and how Commonwealth Policy is working to inform people and shape the conversation in Kentucky.

We don't have any intention of slowing

down during the summer months, and, if you're a financial supporter of this work, we hope you don't either.

If you haven't supported the work of Commonwealth Policy, would you consider investing in the work God has given us as we help Kentuckians value life, protect natural marriage, defend religious liberty and promote fiscal integrity?

You can give securely at our websites or by using the form on the other side of this newsletter.

Thank you for your generous support! Please know we don't take you for granted as we strive for a better Commonwealth.



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