

~ continued from page 1 ~

It's clear that not all things that we call freedom make us free. For example the habit of overeating or comfort eating inevitably leads to obesity. This ultimately limits the possibilities otherwise afforded by healthy life choices. The same can be said of sundry other things we're free to take into our bodies. But what about our moral and spiritual diet? Pushing moral limits in the name of freedom has many advocates. But support wanes when the weight of an unrestrained life negatively affects other parts of society.

Implicit to freedom's viability in society is a strong internal compass within the heart of each citizen. Points on this compass include wisdom, discipline, fortitude, and where the rules for life originate. Navigating life and equipping children with a moral framework begins in the home. But the state should also support moral rules. Our Founding Fathers acknowledged God as the source of freedom. Their vision was one of ordered liberty that leads to human flourishing.

Freedom abused wrecks one's health. Freedom widely abused wrecks a society. It's becoming clear that breeching moral limits and disregarding spiritual vitality eventually leads to a human condition where psychological health and well-being are sacrificed. Christians argue that only Christ can free people from the chains of sin and slave of self. (This is the realm of the church). When the church fails to speak to personal morality, freedom abused affects a society. (Restoring order in public is the realm of the state). Appropriately balancing these jurisdictions underlies the debates over social issues. As we commemorate Independence Day, may we ponder this great gift and use it well.

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Riley Gaines to Headline Event for Commonwealth Policy PAC

The U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee recently held a hearing on LGBTQ rights. Sen. Dick Durbin opened by lamenting the "divisive and hateful rhetoric" of many conservatives. But former UK swimmer Riley Gaines pushed back against this narrative. Gaines shared her experience of having to compete against a biological male swimmer, Lia Thomas. She also shared how Thomas was allowed to enter the female locker room. Gaines said "No one asked for our consent, and we did not give our consent." Gaines has been harassed and verbally accosted, which isn't being covered by mainstream news media outlets. Balanced reporting is in dire need. But so is the need to respect Gaines' views as she works for the privacy and safety of female athletes.



Former UK Swimmer Riley Gaines will headline Commonwealth Policy PAC event.

The issue of women's sports is shaping up to be a key issue in this year's governor's race. To help spotlight Gaines' great work, she will headline an event in Bowling Green for the Commonwealth Policy PAC in September. Stay tuned for details.

Character Matters for Candidates

The primary election for Kentucky's constitutional offices is now over. Even though early voting has expanded the number of days for Kentuckians to cast a ballot, the turnout was a record low 14 percent according to Secretary of State Michael Adams. Considering the high stakes and importance of the offices, one wonders why participation was so low. Perhaps the smoke of negative attack ads kept some of the electorate away.

Most attention was on the Republican ticket, where a dozen GOP candidates vied for nomination for governor for a crack at knocking off incumbent Gov. Andy Beshear in November's general election. Beshear is the nation's most popular Democratic governor with an approval rating in Kentucky at 63

percent. But Republican candidates contend he's not in line with the values of most Kentuckians.

Gov. Beshear vetoed bills protecting infants who survive abortions in 2020; the Fairness in Women's Sports Act, which kept boys who identify as female off girls' sports teams in 2021; and most recently SB 150, which in part, kept minors from puberty blockers for and gender mutilation surgery. He considered churches "nonessential" during COVID and directed them to remain closed on Easter Sunday, even while other businesses were allowed to remain open. This prompted the Republican legislature to pass the Churches are Essential Act in 2022.

Continue reading at CommonwealthPolicyCenter.org

KDE Guidance Fails Legislative Intent Test

School may be out for the summer, but Kentuckians are getting a front row seat to a lesson in political activism from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). Their new guidance regarding SB 150 is causing a commotion, leading some legislators to go back to the drawing board as to how best to address what they see as defiance of legislative intent.

SB 150 received national attention for banning puberty blockers and surgical intervention of gender dysphoric minors. The bill strengthens parental rights regarding potentially controversial classroom lessons, forces school districts to adopt bathroom and locker rooms consistent with a child's biological sex, insists upon age-appropriate curriculum related to sexual orientation, and shields teachers from being forced to use student's preferred pronouns.

The bill's intent was clear, but KDE attorneys seized on the conjunction "or" and arrived at a novel interpretation. But they jumped over the many "shalls" in the law to get there. Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) Chapter 158.7d1 says "school district shall provide notification to the student's parents listing each of the health services and mental health services related to human sexuality, contraception, or family planning available at the student's school and of the parents right to withhold consent..." KRS 158.191.4 says "District personnel shall respect the rights of parents to make decisions regarding the upbringing and control of the student..." KRS 158.191.5c says "a local school district shall not require school personnel or students to use pronouns for students

that do not conform to that particular students biological sex..." KRS 158.191.6 requires that prior to well-being questionnaires or assessments "the school, district shall provide the student's parent with access to review the material and shall obtain parental consent."

The controversy centers around the conjunction "or" in KRS 158.1415d. That section forbids any sex education in grades K-5. It also forbids any discussion or promotion of gender ideology or sexual orientation in grades 6-12. Between the two is the word "or".



KDE's attorneys suggest that if schools don't teach sex-ed in K-5, then they're free to teach sexual orientation and gender ideology in any grade. Such interpretation turns the entire law on its head. It's an "absurd" interpretation according to State Sen. Max Wise (R-Campbellsville), sponsor of SB 150.

This skirmish over interpretation was elevated after the GOP-led legislature was harshly lectured by KDE Commissioner Jason Glass immediately following the bill's passage. Glass labeled the bill as "bullying and bigotry" and said to LGBTQ identified students in a statement "We see you, we love you and we will continue to protect you." Attributing nefarious motives

to state leaders is rarely a winning strategy to shape public policy. It is, however, a sure way to raise their ire. And that's what's happening now.

Opponents of SB 150 position the bill as detrimental to LGBTQ identified youth. Supporters of the bill are concerned that LGBTQ activism is divisive and has displaced the academic mission of our public schools. The legislature in bipartisan fashion made clear what they believe is best.

The latest numbers from the Annie E. Casey Foundation underscores serious academic deficiency as 69 percent of Kentucky's fourth graders fail to read at grade level, 79 percent of eighth graders are not proficient in math, and nearly one in ten aren't graduating on time. Kentucky ranks 29th amongst the states in education (2022 data). It's old news that Kentucky chalked up another dismal year in academic achievement.

There are other problems facing public schools. Last year, there was a 20 percent turnover in Kentucky's public school teaching ranks. Accomplished high school principal, Randy Adams of Anderson county was one who left after he was forced to use gender-preferred pronouns and told to keep it secret from parents. A teacher's task is difficult enough. KDE's imposition of controversial policies that sacrifices some teacher's consciences, only makes things tougher.

It's difficult to comprehend how KDE, a creature of the state legislature, perceives public opposition to SB 150 to be part of its mission. KDE does not have a monopoly what it means to affirm gender confused youth and others who identify with various sexual orientations.

~ continued on page 4 ~

One can disagree with a student's choice of sexual identity and yet support their well-being. In fact, fostering psychological alignment with born biological sex is most helpful to the health and well-being of gender dysphoric youth.

KDE is charged with guiding excellence in public education. When KDE focuses on academic excellence, avoids divisiveness in the classroom, maintains conscience rights of teachers, invites parents into the education formation process, and respects their rights instead of undermine them, they get an A. And all of Kentucky wins.

Conservatives Emerge from Primary Election



Daniel Cameron
Governor



Russell Coleman
Attorney General



Michael Adams
Secretary of State



Allison Ball
State Auditor



Mark Metcalf
Treasurer



Jonathan Shell
Comm. of Ag

General Election is Tuesday, November 7th

LGBT Push in Public Schools and Culture: A Christian Response

CPC is continuing to host several workshops across the state to help Christians think and respond biblically to the LGBTQ push in public schools. We have received positive feedback on these workshops from parents, teachers, and administrators. The next workshops will be held in Lagrange at CityPlace on July 29th and in Ashland on September 23rd.

Leading the event will be attorney Clint Elliott who will discuss legal rights of public school teachers and staff and how to tactfully respond to controversial issues. Former public high school principal Randy Adams will share how to maintain conscience rights, respectfully communicate concerns with public school administrators, and treat students in a positive way. Richard Nelson will speak on the cultural moment and how to respond biblically. The goal is to provide attendees with an effective plan of action and practical tools to engage the LGBT push. There is no charge, but registration is required. To register, go to CommonwealthPolicyCenter.org/register.

CPC Voter Guides and Election Resources for General Election Coming this Fall

Commonwealth Policy Center

Richard Nelson
Executive Director
Richard@CommonwealthPolicy.org

Jenny Bennett
Administrative Assistant
Jenny@CommonwealthPolicy.org

Cole Cuzick
Political Outreach Director
Cole@CommonwealthPolicy.org

Reed Heckmann
Community Outreach Director
Reed@CommonwealthPolicy.org

Christopher Parr
Intern
Christopher@CommonwealthPolicy.org

Alex Richey
Executive Assistant
Alex@CommonwealthPolicy.org

Justin Warriner
Church Outreach - Louisville Field Rep
Justin@CommonwealthPolicy.org

[Facebook.com/CommonwealthPolicy](https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthPolicy)

@CPC4Kentucky

Commonwealth Policy Center

PO Box 4172
Frankfort, KY 40604
CommonwealthPolicyCenter.org

Letter from the Director

Greetings! I'm writing this month's Director's Corner outside a Panera Bread in Midtown Louisville. The birds are singing as a faint breeze rolls across the court. The coffee shop is humming with pleasant conversation and all seems to be well. What is not happening are angry voices streaming through digital devices. I mention this for two reasons. First, the voices we listen to influence and temper us. Second, we need to be dialed in to the true, good, and beautiful (Philippians 4:8). My encouragement is to be grounded in God's eternal truth, discern the Spirit as to opportunities for engagement, and be available to move the needle toward the good. This is what we're doing at CPC.

I joined the debate on KET's Kentucky Tonight on June 19 over the Kentucky Department of Education's failure to faithfully implement SB 150 into law. Their staff attorney's novel interpretation renders outlandish guidance to public schools. They're dwelling on the word "or," and interpreting it to give public schools an option to teach controversial LGBTQ curriculum to all grades in public schools.

As a result, left-leaning school districts, like Lexington's, are planning to teach LGBT identity and sexual orientation issues—something the legislature specifically restricted. Even though the KET debate is over, the flimsy defense of gender ideology in public schools is likely to be with us through election season. Trans-activists have nothing to say regarding age-appropriate curriculum, respecting parental rights, or conscience rights of teachers. So long as these important realities are neglected by Gov. Beshear and his administration, it will be politically costly.



LGBT Push in Public Schools and Culture workshop in Prestonsburg.

Our latest workshop on the LGBT Push in Public Schools: A Christian Response, was held in Prestonsburg. The turnout was fantastic and we had great feedback from attendees. We're grateful for Pastor Tommy Reed and the Fitzpatrick Baptist Church family for hosting the event. Our next events are scheduled for LaGrange (July 29) and Ashland (September 23). We also plan to hold events in Paducah, Lexington, Hopkinsville, and Louisville.

Daniel Cameron emerged from the Republican primary as the nominee for governor with a commanding victory. Mr. Cameron is a fighter for conservative values, and I believe he will do a great job as governor.

We plan to engage the governor's race as well as other constitutional office races this November. In fact, we've begun the interview process for consideration for endorsement. We're also working on election related resources, including our well-researched voter guide.

Celebrated UK-women's-swimmer-turned-spokesperson for fairness in women's sports, Riley Gaines, is headlining a Commonwealth Policy PAC event for us in Bowling Green in September. We're excited to bring her message to south central Kentucky. Stay tuned for details. As you can tell, we're in a productive season. We've been focused, and in many respects we've found much favor. Allow me to go back to what I started saying. We must be rooted in God's Word and be prepared to act. Consider the influences you allow into your life. May I say that if any militate against the fruits of the Spirit, unplug from those sources and spend more time in the life-building source of God's Word. God is on His throne, and we as his subjects are called to stand and be counted for righteousness sake. To that end, let's press on towards the goal.

Yours in Christ,

Richard Nelson

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COMMONWEALTH POLICY

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

SKIRMISH OVER SOCIAL ISSUES TESTS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF FREEDOM

As we celebrate Independence Day, it's fitting to reflect on the theme that compelled the colonists to separate from Great Britain: freedom. Arguably, no nation has ever had so much of it leading to vast wealth, prosperity, and a high standard of living. At the same time, no nation afforded such freedom has witnessed so much of its populace using it so poorly. Drug addiction, obesity, and sloth—all misuses of freedom—inflict so many with great harm. How can this be? Ignorance, yes. Misunderstanding, certainly.

Kentucky's 2023 legislative session provides a laboratory and insight into our current understanding of freedom. Consider SB 150, where trans-advocates argued that bans on puberty blockers violated parental rights over their children. Education officials argued that curriculum bans on LGBTQ identities and ideologies kept students in the dark on important aspects of human sexuality. Others argued that refusal to address students by their gender preferred pronouns violated their personhood and jeopardized their safety.

SB 5 was enacted over protests, and some charged it as a "book ban bill" impeding freedom of inquiry for students. SB 115, dubbed the "drag queen ban," would have kept sexually oriented performances out of public spaces. Each of these bills test the limits of freedom and force us to think through what it means. Good public policy undergirds

fundamental freedoms, while at the same time it recognizes its limits. Parents have primary responsibility for raising their children according to their values. Yet those values cannot infringe on the health and safety of them. Even though some parents may subscribe to modern theories of gender identity and development, their rights stop when allowing substance use that undermines their health (alcohol or tobacco) or approving protocols like puberty blockers that arrest their physiological development.



In a similar vein, public schools are entrusted to teach Kentucky's children. But that charge isn't absolute. Parental input is necessary and parental rights must be respected. Public schools also have an obligation to teach age-appropriate curriculum, which supports a child's well-being. Hence, teaching the Genderbread Person, which introduces sexuality and gender identity to five and six year olds, isn't appropriate.

Limits of minor's freedoms must also be realized. They are immature, vulnerable, and cannot fully comprehend life-changing decisions. That's why it was disconcerting to see middle and high school kids from across the state, some in rainbow face paint, others with Pride flags draped over their shoulders, convened to protest SB 150 at Kentucky's Capitol back in March. Children shouldn't be enlisted as political foot soldiers drafted into somebody's culture war.

~ continued on page 2 ~

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Skirmish Over Social Issues Tests Our Understanding of Freedom
page 1-2

Riley Gaines Headlines Commonwealth Policy PAC Event
page 2

Character Matters for Candidates
page 2

KDE Guidance Fails Legislative Intent Test
page 3-4

LGBT Push in Public Schools and Culture: A Christian Response
page 4

Letter from the Director
page 5

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.

Learn more about our work at CommonwealthPolicyCenter.org

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**The LGBT Push In Public Schools and Culture:
A Christian Response**

July 29, 2023 | La Grange
September 23, 2023 | Ashland

8:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Light Breakfast Provided

For More Info and to Register go to CommonwealthPolicyCenter.org/register