



Kentucky Chamber Chair Diane Medley, MCM CPAs & Advisors, Addresses Crowd at the 27th Annual Chamber Day Dinner

STATE LEADERS DISCUSS PRIORITIES AND PROGRESS OF THE 2022 LEGISLATIVE SESSION *at Kentucky Chamber Day*

Over halfway through the 2022 General Assembly, business leaders from across the Commonwealth gathered to hear from the state's top political leaders at the Kentucky Chamber Day Dinner in March.



Kentucky Chamber Chair Diane Medley, MCM CPAs & Advisors, discussed the major events of the past two years since the last Chamber Day Dinner and commended the business community's innovation and dedication throughout.

Medley shared the Chamber's top priorities of the ongoing 2022 legislative session, including changes

to the state's tax code to make Kentucky more competitive, changes to Kentucky's unemployment insurance system to improve Kentucky's workforce participation rate, and more.

Kentucky Chamber President and CEO Ashli Watts welcomed the crowd of over 1,700, speaking on the vitality of the business community. Especially over the past two years, Watts touted the work of businesses during the coronavirus pandemic to help keep Kentuckians safe and healthy and push the Commonwealth's economy forward.

[SEE KENTUCKY CHAMBER DAY, PAGE 2](#)

KENTUCKY REMAINS MORE THAN 22,000 WORKERS SHORT OF WHERE IT STOOD BEFORE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN, KENTUCKY CHAMBER QUARTERLY *Economic Report Shows*

Two years after the COVID pandemic reached the Commonwealth, Kentucky's economy continues to move toward a full recovery, a new report from the Kentucky Chamber shows. Based on revised government data, Kentucky has recovered 82 percent of the nearly 300,000 jobs lost during the initial months of the pandemic. In addition, the state added 38,800 workers to the labor force during 2021, but Kentucky remains more than 22,000 workers short of where it stood before the pandemic began.

"Progress is always good news, especially when it comes to Kentucky's economic recovery, which has been the Chamber's focus for the last two years now," said Kentucky Chamber President and CEO Ashli Watts. "But we still have a ways to go. Even after we get our workforce back to pre-pandemic levels, Kentucky will continue to trail much of the nation when it comes to workforce participation and employment rates. The Chamber is fully committed to policies and programs aimed at building a robust, competitive workforce."

The new report marks the fifth edition of Kentucky's Economic Recovery, produced in partnership with the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Kentucky. The report covers a wide range of economic data, including job growth, employment and unemployment, job vacancies, inflation, GDP, and the housing market.



KENTUCKY SPORTS RADIO AND KENTUCKY CHAMBER FOUNDATION HOLD

Tornado Relief Roundtable to Identify Needs

In an effort to meet the needs of Kentucky communities impacted by the December 2021 tornadoes, Kentucky Sports Radio (KSR) and the Kentucky Chamber Foundation held a tornado relief roundtable in February.

The event brought together local elected officials, nonprofit organizations, charities, and other leaders to coordinate recovery efforts. Other groups that have also raised significant funds dedicated to tornado relief were involved in the event, giving them the ability to hear directly from leaders in the impacted communities.

Over 120 attendees discussed long and short term needs in the communities surrounding housing, mental health, rebuilding businesses, and much more.

[SEE TORNADO RELIEF, PAGE 3](#)

HIGHLIGHTS



Kentucky added **38,800 workers** to its labor force in 2021.



Nonfarm employment increased **61,500 jobs, or 3.3%**, in 2021 and 65% of these jobs were created during the last six months.



Kentucky's December unemployment rate was **4.6%**.



Kentucky housing units authorized by building permits increased by **22% in 2021**.



As of December, Kentucky recovered **82% of the 294,900 jobs lost** during the initial months of the pandemic.

LEARN MORE

The full report as well as previous editions of Kentucky's Economic Recovery can be read on kychamber.com.



FROM THE FRONT

Kentucky Chamber Day

In his remarks, Governor Andy Beshear highlighted the many economic successes Kentucky has seen over the past few years and recognized the work of local leaders, the legislature, and other groups to help secure those record investments. While more jobs become available from these investments, Beshear stressed the need to prepare Kentuckians for the future workforce.

Senate President Robert Stivers took the time to recognize the work of the legislature during previous sessions to make the state's tax code more competitive and support Kentucky's signature industries.

Also during the event, House Speaker David Osborne highlighted the House's work on the state budget in 2022 to maximize the impact of every single dollar invested and focus on workforce and education needs.

"Our state ranks at the bottom three for workforce participation, and there are nearly 150,000 unfilled jobs in Kentucky," Osborne noted. "It is the challenge of our generation to find the solution to filling those jobs."

“Our state ranks at the bottom three for workforce participation, and there are nearly 150,000 unfilled jobs in Kentucky.”

— House Speaker David Osborne

During his speech, Senate Minority Leader Morgan McGarvey talked about the critical need to improve access to childcare across the state, the importance of reforming Kentucky's justice system, and more.

House Minority Leader Joni Jenkins spoke on the issues that have passed during the 2022 legislative session and discussed top priorities including sports betting, child care, and restoring voting rights for felons.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force Member Dr. Aaron Thompson, President of the Kentucky Council for Postsecondary Education



Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear



House Speaker David Osborne



House Minority Leader Joni Jenkins



Kentucky Chamber Board Member Jeb Duke, Regional Vice President of Humana



Senate President Robert Stivers



Senate Minority Leader Morgan McGarvey



Kentucky Chamber Executive Committee Member Susan Elkington, President of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky



Patti Dale Tye of Stoll Keenon Ogden, Former Board Chair Bill Lear of Stoll Keenon Ogden, Former Board Chair Kevin Canafax of Fidelity Investments, and Meghan Glynn of Atlas Air



FROM THE FRONT

Tornado Relief

"This was an important day to listen to our western Kentucky neighbors and learn more about the region's current and longer-term needs. It was also inspiring to witness the resiliency and strength of western Kentucky as we work towards rebuilding. All of Kentucky must continue to support these communities now and for the foreseeable future," said Senior Vice President of the Kentucky Chamber Foundation Beth Davisson.



The Kentucky Chamber Foundation and Kentucky Sports Radio plan to continue working with these groups to deploy funds in the most effective way possible. The KSR Tornado Relief Fund is still open and accepting donations to help those impacted and meet the needs of the region.



Matt Jones, Ryan Lemond, and Drew Franklin host Kentucky Sports Radio show at Kentucky Chamber office

LEARN MORE
Learn more and donate at ksrtornadorelief.com.



OP-ED:

Childcare is a Win-Win for Working Parents & Business



ASHLI WATTS
PRESIDENT & CEO
Kentucky Chamber of Commerce

In October of 2020, I penned an op-ed about the devastating effect the pandemic was having on women in the workforce. I had been working around the clock, helping my two children with virtual school, coupled with constant quarantines, and to put it very simply, I was tired. And I knew that other working parents were as well—especially working moms.

However, almost two years after the beginning of the pandemic, we have made strides toward progress and a new sense of "normal," but there is an underlying crisis preventing us from being able to fully rebound from this pandemic.

The damage to our workforce cannot be understated as Kentucky currently ranks 48th in workforce participation with just over half of our working-age population

working. A factor of this trend is the struggle parents have had between child care facilities shutting down, schools being closed, the high cost of quality child care, ever-changing guidelines, and constant quarantines. This has caused many parents, particularly moms, to struggle to stay in the workforce, and employers unable to fill open positions. It has been a vicious cycle with little relief.

Of course, the workforce crisis is complicated and cannot be fixed with one simple solution, but a multi-faceted approach. As the President of the Kentucky Chamber, the state's largest business association, but more importantly, as a mother, I could not be prouder to support House Bill 499, establishing the Employee Child Care Assistance Partnership. House Bill 499 would lead to fewer Kentucky parents and guardians having to choose between working and ensuring their children get the care and education they need at such a pivotal moment in their development.

The bill is sponsored by the youngest woman to ever be elected to the General Assembly, Rep. Samara Heavrin of Leitchfield. Like Rep. Heavrin, I was raised by a single, working mom and we both know the importance and impact of women in our workforce. Without being able to assist working families with the cost of quality child care, we not only do a disservice to Kentucky's children, we also stand to lose decades of strides toward equality in the workforce.

While there is still uncertainty as the pandemic becomes an endemic, we can act now to show support for our working families and Kentucky children.

READ MORE
Read the full op-ed on kychamberbottomline.com.



Kentucky Chamber Foundation Senior Vice President Beth Davisson, Brown-Forman Vice President and Director of State and Local Public Affairs Les Fugate, Fifth Third Bank Kentucky President Kimberly Halbauer, and Republic Bank Chief Community Development Officer William Summers

CURRENT STATE OF WORKFORCE AND INNOVATION PRACTICES HIGHLIGHTED AT *Kentucky Chamber Workforce Summit*

In the midst of the ongoing workforce shortage, Kentucky businesses, workforce development partners, and human resource experts gathered at the 7th Annual Workforce Summit to discuss solutions, best practices, and resources to help address hiring and retention needs.

Opening the event, Kentucky Chamber Foundation Workforce Center Executive Director LaKisha Miller highlighted recent initiatives to help address Kentucky's workforce issues, including the Foundation's recently-released report "20 Years in the Making, Kentucky's Workforce Crisis."

As the Commonwealth continues to work on solutions to Kentucky's workforce crisis, Kentucky Chamber Foundation Talent Pipeline System Director Sara Tracy said it is important to note the root causes of the state's workforce issues including skills gaps, access to child care, retirement, overdose deaths, and more.

As organizations look to reshape for the future, speakers focused on how employers can bring lasting, positive change to their organization in terms of hiring and retaining talent.

"Workplaces must be more flexible than ever," said LaCinda Glover of Mercer, sharing the ways employers are internally responding to current workforce challenges. These methods include enhancing workplace flexibility, reevaluating compensation and benefits, evaluating talent sourcing strategies, investing in diversity, equity and inclusion, well-being and mental health, and more.



7TH ANNUAL KENTUCKY
**WORKFORCE
SUMMIT**

Presented by
**Kentucky
Career Center**
Career Training Employer

Additionally, with over 600,000 individuals being released from incarceration each year, now is the time to engage this untapped pool of talent to help solve workforce needs, said Sam Hanna and Vinita Musapeta.

Business leaders that serve on the Kentucky Chamber and Kentucky Chamber Foundation Board of Directors had a conversation on corporate leadership and the business community's role in transforming the state.

The coronavirus pandemic has caused workplaces to shift, and employers are working to navigate the new normal. Employers are also paying more attention to childcare than ever, said Fifth Third Bank Kentucky President Kimberly Halbauer while noting the number of women leaving the workforce due to child care issues.

Brown-Forman Vice President and Director of State and Local Public Affairs Les Fugate stressed the need for everyone to work together and think ahead to solve the needs of today as well as tomorrow.

"We must recognize barriers and make sure we don't fall backward from a diversity perspective," said Halbauer.

As businesses work to make their workplaces more diverse, equitable, and inclusive, Demetria Miles-McDonald of Decide Diversity encouraged employers to be intentional and seek out ways to bring those with diverse backgrounds and opinions into day-to-day operations.

The Kentucky Chamber Foundation has developed initiatives to help employers find talent while shifting their cultures to become more inclusive.

LEARN MORE

Learn more about those initiatives at kychamber.com/foundation.

Kentucky Chamber

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2nd Annual
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KENTUCKY'S INNOVATIVE WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS HIGHLIGHTED AT NATIONAL LEVEL AS KENTUCKY CHAMBER PRESIDENT AND CEO

Ashli Watts Testifies in Front of U.S. Senate Committee

The U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions invited Kentucky Chamber President and CEO Ashli Watts and leaders from other states to discuss workforce opportunities and barriers in February. Each panelist discussed the issues facing their state and some of the programs and potential solutions their areas are using to tackle these issues.

During her testimony, Watts said, "the pandemic and economic recovery have accelerated preexisting trends and magnified our weak points. This is especially the case in Kentucky, where the data tells us that since 2000 more and more Kentuckians have not been participating in the workforce. In fact, fewer adults in Kentucky participate in the workforce than in almost any other state in the nation. Perhaps what is more concerning is that even once Kentucky fully restores its workforce to pre-pandemic levels – which is not a certainty – we will likely still be far behind the nation and surrounding states. Kentucky's workforce challenges are exceptional, but they did not suddenly emerge in the age of COVID-19. Rather, they have been building and holding back our economy for at least two decades. There is no one singular cause of these challenges. Instead, the causes are many, and the solutions must be, as well."

Watts said Kentucky is seeing "too many people without jobs and too many jobs without people" and detailed the programs the Kentucky Chamber and the Kentucky Chamber Foundation are undertaking to address the critical workforce shortages within the Commonwealth.

As the number one issue facing Kentucky businesses, the Kentucky Chamber has focused on innovative workforce solutions for many years. Watts detailed some of the employer-led initiatives run by the Chamber to develop, expand, and strengthen our workforce to support Kentucky's economy including:

- The Workforce Recovery Program focusing on engaging the business community as part of the solution by reducing stigma and increasing second-chance employment opportunities across Kentucky and recruiting 28,000 fair chance job opportunities statewide.
- The Kentucky Transformational Employment Program (KTEP) providing a pathway for businesses and employers to help more Kentuckians reach long-term recovery while supporting second chance employment by ensuring protections for businesses from civil action regarding negligent hiring and hiring related to an employee's substance use disorder through state statute.



- Proper Identification being provided for those coming out of incarceration to ensure the only form of identification they have is not their mug shot.
- Bus to Business engaging over 210 schools and over 110 businesses across Kentucky, impacting over 42,000 students by providing the opportunity to tour companies, complete hands-on work-based learning activities, and speak directly with employers about career pathways available in their organizations.
- Talent Pipeline Management building talent solutions for Kentucky's key industry sectors by engaging almost 300 employers and connecting more than 3,000 Kentuckians to jobs, training, or work-based learning opportunities.

LEARN MORE

Learn more at kychamberbottomline.com.



KENTUCKY CHAMBER FOUNDATION INVITES MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN

First-Ever Kentucky Civics Bee

Middle school students across Kentucky are invited to participate in the Kentucky Chamber Foundation's first-ever Kentucky Civics Bee. This new competition gives students the opportunity to share their ideas for improving their communities and show their enthusiasm for civics. Participants will have the chance to win recognition and cash prizes, ranging from \$250 to \$1,000, while growing their understanding of and appreciation for civic engagement.

Kentucky has been chosen as one of two states to participate in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's National Civics Bee competition, which shows young Americans how they can positively contribute to their local civic life.

Modeled on annual spelling bees across the U.S., the Kentucky Civics Bee is designed to educate middle schoolers on public issues, build trust in others and public institutions, and help students engage in shaping public service within their own communities, the Commonwealth, and country as a whole.

"When we understand how democracy works, we can make it work better. We hope that the Civics Bee will broaden participation in our civic life and inspire Kentuckians to build on our shared commitment to our values, institutions, schools,

economy, and the health of our community," said Kentucky Chamber Foundation Senior Vice President Beth Davisson.

"Kentucky must do a better job of preparing our young citizens for self-government," Secretary of State Michael Adams said. "I'm grateful to the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce Foundation for this significant and needed contribution to civic education."

To enter, students must submit a 500-word essay by midnight on April 7, 2022 at 11:59PM EST. A panel of judges will review the essays and select ten finalists who will go on to participate in a live Civics Bee competition in May. Finalists will be chosen and notified via email by April 19, 2022.

MORE INFO

For more information about the Kentucky Civics Bee and how to enter, visit kycivicsbee.com. Any questions can also be sent to kycivicsbee@kychamber.com.

Thank you for your investment.

The following is a list of new members of the Kentucky Chamber. Please help us thank these companies for investing in the Chamber's mission by giving them your business.

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Providence Point Healthcare, Inc.

KENTUCKY CHAMBER NEWS

For address changes and subscription information, call **502-848-8723**.



18TH ANNUAL BEST PLACES TO WORK IN KENTUCKY *Award Winners Announced*

The Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, the Kentucky Society for Human Resource Management (KYSHRM) and ClearPath Mutual Insurance Company announce the 100 companies (in alphabetical order) that made the **18th Annual Best Places to Work in Kentucky** list. The winner rankings will be announced at an awards dinner **Thursday, June 9, 2022**, at the Central Bank Center (formerly Lexington Convention Center).

Winners from across the state have been selected in three categories: small companies of 15-149 employees, medium companies of 150-499 employees and large companies consisting of more than 500 employees (categories based on number of U.S. employees, only Kentucky employees surveyed). The selection process, managed by Workforce Research Group, is based on an assessment of the company's employee policies and procedures and the results of an internal employee survey.

The competition is a multi-year initiative designed to motivate companies in the Commonwealth to focus, measure and move their workplace environments toward excellence. Numerous studies show a strong correlation between profitability and creating a good place to work.



READ MORE

Visit bestplacestoworkkentucky.com for more details about Best Places to Work in Kentucky.

Mark Your Calendars

- April 13-14, 2022** | OSHA Fall Protection Competent Person Certification – Lexington
- April 15, 2022** | OSHA Forklift - Train the Trainer – Lexington
- April 21, 2022** | Advanced Workers' Compensation – Lexington
- May 3-4, 2022** | 34th Annual Kentucky Human Resources Update – Lexington (Hybrid)
- May 4, 2022** | 9th Annual Navigating Sales and Use Tax in Kentucky – Lexington
- May 17-18, 2022** | 11th Annual Kentucky Energy Management Conference – Lexington
- May 24-25, 2022** | OSHA 10-Hour General Industry Voluntary Compliance – Louisville
- May 24-27, 2022** | OSHA 30-Hour General Industry Voluntary Compliance – Louisville
- May 26, 2022** | 9th Annual Navigating Sales and Use Tax in Kentucky – Louisville
- June 9, 2022** | 18th Annual Best Places to Work in Kentucky – Lexington
- June 13, 2022** | Golf Invitational at Valhalla – Louisville
- June 15-16, 2022** | Supervising and Managing People – Louisville
- June 21, 2022** | 4th Annual Kentucky Recovery in the Workplace Conference – Lexington
- July 11, 2022** | 2nd Annual Women's Summit – Lexington
- July 13, 2022** | OSHA's Respiratory Protection: Train the Trainer & Program – Lexington
- July 14, 2022** | OSHA Lockout/Tagout Train the Trainer – Lexington
- Aug. 10-11, 2022** | 25th Annual Kentucky Environmental Permitting & Reporting Conference – Lexington
- Aug. 30-Sept. 1, 2022** | 38th Annual KYSHRM Conference – Louisville
- Sept. 7- Nov. 30, 2022** | Virtual SHRM Certification Prep Course – Virtual
- Sept. 14, 2022** | 76th Annual Kentucky Chamber Annual Meeting – Louisville
- Sept. 28, 2022** | OSHA Recordkeeping and Reporting – Lexington
- Sept. 29, 2022** | OSHA Forklift: Train the Trainer – Lexington
- Nov. 16, 2022** | Kentucky Entrepreneur Hall of Fame – Louisville
- Dec. 6-7, 2022** | OSHA 10-Hour General Industry Voluntary Compliance – Lexington
- Dec. 6-9, 2022** | OSHA 30-Hour General Industry Voluntary Compliance – Lexington



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NEW KENTUCKY CHAMBER REPORT CALLS FOR BOLD, COMPREHENSIVE TAX REFORM AS A *Key to Kentucky's Growth*

Now is the time for bold, comprehensive tax reform in Kentucky, a new report from the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce argues. To firmly set the Commonwealth on a path toward long-term sustainable growth, building a tax code that can outcompete other states for population, workers, businesses, and investment is vital.

Following up on a major report on Kentucky's tax code released by the Tax Foundation in November 2021, the Chamber's new report, "Why Tax Reform: Kentucky's Opportunity for Growth," makes the case for why the General Assembly should build on the reforms of 2018 and 2019 and prioritize this critical issue in 2022. The report focuses on the importance of reducing and phasing out Kentucky's individual income tax as a key strategy for growing Kentucky's population, boosting incomes, and transforming the Commonwealth into a magnet for opportunity.

"As Kentuckians, we have long stood by and watched as no-income-tax states like Tennessee and Florida have grown and attracted new opportunities for their residents, often at the expense of the Commonwealth," said Kentucky Chamber President and CEO Ashli Watts. "The data is clear: to outcompete other states for growth in an economy as mobile and fluid as today's, we need a tax code that is up to the challenge. That's why the Chamber's top priority for 2022 is reforming Kentucky's tax code, and this means strategically reducing and phasing our individual income tax."

The report examines a wide range of economic, demographic, and labor market data to illustrate the benefits of reducing and phasing out taxes on work and small businesses.

For example:

- Population growth in no-income-tax states has significantly outpaced states like Kentucky. In fact, the populations of no-income-tax states grew at twice the national rate in the 2020 Census.
- Tennessee's economy – a no-income-tax state – grew 60 percent faster than Kentucky's over the past two decades.
- If Kentucky's personal income had grown at the same rates as Texas – another no-income-tax state – since 2001, it would be \$55 billion per year higher than it is today.

This new report also looks at current economic trends, arguing that an income tax is more important than ever to support working Kentuckians and small businesses.

"With inflation continuing to rise and hitting the pocketbooks of Kentuckians harder and harder, lower income taxes means more hard-earned dollars in working Kentuckians' bank accounts. In addition, because many small businesses pay individual income taxes as passthroughs, lower income taxes can allow these employers to meet the demands of higher wages and more competitive benefit packages. Through tax reform, lawmakers can directly help taxpayers cope with rising prices on everyday goods and support small businesses in competing for workers," the report said.

READ MORE
Read the full report at kychamber.com.

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Kentucky Chamber

NEWS

Kentucky Chamber

MARCH 2022

2022 KENTUCKY CHAMBER DAY

