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Kentucky makes progress on most New Agenda goals

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 21, 2009) – Kentucky has made progress on four of the five goals identified in the New Agenda for Kentucky as ways to improve the economic and civic future for individuals and the state as a whole, but significant challenges continue to confront the state in every area.

That is the finding of the first progress report issued recently on the New Agenda initiative, launched in the spring of 2007 by the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce to encourage Kentuckians to think creatively and share their ideas about improving the state.

Guided by a private-sector task force of established executives and young entrepreneurs, the New Agenda effort identified five transformational goals that subsequently were adopted by the state Chamber as its long-term strategic plan:

1. Improve the education attainment of Kentuckians at all levels
2. Modernize government
3. Promote wellness and healthy Kentuckians
4. Prepare Kentucky to successfully compete in the global marketplace
5. Expand the state's role as an energy leader

The progress report, released at the Chamber's fourth Economic Summit and Annual Meeting, reviewed significant developments related to each goal to assess the progress that had been made since the New Agenda report was presented to the Governor in early 2008.

Here is a quick look at the results:

- **Education**—moving ahead as a result of the creation of a new elementary/secondary testing system reflecting international benchmarks and increasing graduation rates at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Education attainment, postsecondary enrollment and the need for more science and technology graduates are among the continuing challenges.
- **Modernizing government**—standing still. Kentucky's government performance ranking dropped in a national assessment, public employee benefit costs continued to escalate and budget deficits have been recorded for three years in a row. However, the state also ranks high nationally in the use of technology by state government.
- **Wellness**—making progress based on the state's significant upward movement in national health rankings and a decline in the adult smoking rate. The state continues to have the highest total mortality rate in the nation, however, and also ranks high in obesity, cancer deaths and cardiovascular disease.
- **Global marketplace**—moving forward due to slight improvement in the state's competitiveness ranking and strong performance in attracting foreign investment. Challenges: a low per capita income and a decline in exports.
- **Energy leader**—making progress as a result of Kentucky's improved state ranking in energy efficiency, new state energy-efficiency incentives and the development of significant public/private projects in coal gasification, carbon sequestration and battery research and development.

The full New Agenda for Kentucky First Progress Report 2009 is available online at www.kychamber.com.

"We hope that Kentuckians interested in the future of their state will find useful information in this update," said Chamber President and CEO Dave Adkisson. "We also hope that Kentucky's state officials and civic and business leaders will find this assessment of progress helpful in their continuing work to strengthen Kentucky and its future."

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EDITORS: To schedule an interview with Kentucky Chamber President and CEO Dave Adkisson, contact Jessica Fletcher at 502-848-8731.