

LEXINGTON

# Support for Beshear split on party lines

## Senator talks of GOP's priorities

By Joseph Gerth  
The Courier-Journal

Just a day after Gov. Steve Beshear was sworn in, there were signs that he might have trouble getting his agenda through the Kentucky Senate.



Republican Floor Leader Dan Kelly told a Lexington business group Wednesday that he and other Senate leaders don't rank some of Beshear's priorities as highly as he does.

During his inaugural address Tuesday, Beshear said one of his first actions would be to propose changes in executive branch ethics laws that he believes will restore faith in elected officials.

Beshear defeated Republican incumbent Ernie Fletcher in November - in part because of ethical questions raised about Fletcher and his handling of the state merit hiring system.

But Kelly, of Springfield, questioned Wednesday whether such changes are needed.

"He mentioned ethics. Maybe that was just a little continuation of the campaign," Kelly said at a luncheon of Commerce Lexington, the Lexington Chamber of Commerce. "Maybe we need some ethics legislation in Kentucky, but there's not an ethical problem with the people serving in Frankfort that is going to be solved by changing the law."

He added: "We have good people serving in Frankfort, we have laws on the books requiring ethical behavior, so that's not a pressing issue that is facing us."

Kelly also said a constitutional amendment allowing casino gambling in Kentucky is not a priority for the Senate, which Republicans control 21-15-1. The Senate, he said, wants to focus on such issues as shoring up

the state's pension system, dealing with budget problems and paying some math and science teachers more.

On casino gambling, Kelly said, "I really don't think it's the panacea that some people propose. ... I really don't believe it's a way to build the future."

Speaking at the same luncheon, House Speaker Jody Richards, D-Bowling Green, voiced support for both initiatives.

He said he believes that voters in Kentucky will approve casino gaming if given the opportunity and that ethics reform is a must. He noted that he sought to toughen ethics laws after the 2003 election but that the Senate refused to pass his measure.

"We certainly support that," Richards said of Beshear's ethics proposal. "I do believe that we need to increase the ethics statutes, improve those for the executive branch."

Beshear spokeswoman Vicki Glass said Wednesday that the governor "is looking forward to conversing with legislative leaders about these and other issues, and he is sure they will find common ground."

Gambling and ethics reform are among Beshear's top priorities. Expanded gambling could help pull the state from its deepening budget problems, and ethics reform could help draw a sharp distinction between Beshear and past administrations.

He didn't mention gambling in his inaugural address Tuesday, instead talking mainly about bipartisanship and getting along. But he did talk at some length about ethics.

"One of my first proposals to the legislature will be a package of new ethics laws to govern us," he said. "... We need to get our own house in order before we can be trusted to do the people's business. I look forward to working with legislators of both parties to pass tough new ethics and accountability standards we can all be proud of."

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FRANKFORT

# Beshear bans secret door

By Joe Biesk  
The Associated Press

Days are numbered for an infamously secret door in the state Capitol, that was installed by the previous administration, Gov. Steve Beshear said on his first full work day as Kentucky's chief executive.



A door former Gov. Ernie Fletcher's administration installed in early 2004 for more than \$5,000 won't be used and, depending on cost, could be removed, Beshear said. It provided passage from the governor's first-floor suite of rooms to one often used for press conferences and allowed officials to avoid using a public hallway to get there.

Fletcher's administration claimed the door had existed previously, but was taken out and plastered over. But Beshear said the door, which is behind a large blue

## Governor settles into job

curtain, projects an image of secrecy that he doesn't want for his own administration.

"It, I think, has become a symbol of a lack of access to the media and to the public on behalf of the governor," Beshear said. "And, we're going to be running an open government, a transparent government and a government where the governor is going to be accessible to the people."

After a night filled with fancy outfits and elegant balls the Beshear administration reported for duty Wednesday, only to find some people without the necessary desks or computers usually associated with office jobs. Nevertheless, Beshear said his administration was "ready to work" and handle its business.

"Part of it's just figuring out how the phones work and where things are and getting organized," Beshear said.

Fletcher's term expired Mon-

day night at midnight. Beshear, a Democrat, was sworn in and inauguration festivities for Kentucky's 61st governor - which included a parade, and three balls around the Capitol grounds - filled the new executive's first full day as governor on Tuesday.

Now, Beshear's main focus shifts to crafting a state budget proposal and developing a legislative agenda for the General Assembly, which returns to Frankfort in January.

Beshear had meetings throughout the day, including an afternoon face-to-face with Senate President David Williams at the governor's office. Williams, R-Burkeseville, said they talked in general terms about a number of issues facing the state.

"It was a productive conversation," Williams said.

Beshear's cabinet secretaries, his chief of staff and state police commissioner were sworn in at an

afternoon ceremony in the Kentucky Supreme Court chambers. Beshear's cabinet consists primarily of Democrats, and one position has not been filled. Beshear said he was still looking for a permanent Health and Family Services cabinet secretary.

"We've been looking for the very best people we can find to fill these cabinets and people with experience and we're not looking at their political affiliation when we're reviewing that experience and making those decisions," Beshear said.

His election last month marked the completion of an improbable political comeback for Beshear, who exited state politics after serving as lieutenant governor more than 20 years ago.

The biggest change between then and now, Beshear joked, might be where his office is located.

"Now I'm sitting in the main chair there in the governor's office," Beshear said. "It's a great feeling obviously."

WILLIAMSBURG

# Pharmacy school financing argued

The Associated Press

A judge will decide whether to grant summary judgment to either side in a lawsuit over state funding for a private university that expelled a student for being gay.

A gay rights group filed suit in Franklin County Circuit Court seeking to block an \$11 million state appropriation to create a pharmacy school at the University of the Cumberlands, a Southern Baptist school in Williamsburg.

Attorneys argued for their respective sides this week in the first courtroom hearing in the case.

Timothy J. Tracey, of the Center for Law & Religious Freedom in Springfield, Va., contended the 2006 General Assembly acted constitutionally when it appropriated \$10 million for a building and \$1 million for scholarships.

Tracey said the legislature, by giving the money to the University of the Cumberlands, sought to ad-

## State gave money to private university

dress the state's shortage of pharmacists.

Citing a 1949 case, Tracey said the legislature's action was for the betterment of the state's health and welfare. The legal precedents make it clear that the legislature can give money to a private institution if it serves a public purpose, he said.

The plaintiffs' attorney, David Tachau of Louisville, argued that the appropriation to the university did not fall under the heading of "health and welfare" and was instead in support of education at a private, sectarian institution, which makes it unconstitutional.

Tachau cited a ruling in a 1983 case that said public money could not be used to buy textbooks for private schools.

Retired Franklin County Circuit Judge Roger Crittenden, who is

presiding over the case, said he expected to rule in about 60 days.

Initially it seemed the case would significantly involve the University of the Cumberlands' ouster of gay student Jason Johnson in April 2006. Tachau argued

that the university had shown it would not guarantee equal protection of all people, regardless of their sexual practice.

But attorneys' arguments focused heavily on the competing legal interpretations of whether the \$11 million state appropriation was educational in nature or was for the state's health and welfare.

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Left: Cornhole championship on Fountain Square. Photo by Andrew Curtis  
Center: Jazz pianist Nicholas Brown and his parents at New Vision United Methodist for a jazz concert. Photo by John Newell  
Right: Raising funds for Mary Queen of Heaven School's volleyball team in Erlanger. Photo by Jenny Kunst

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