

KLEFPF Safeguards become Campaign Issue

The question of safeguarding Kentucky Law Enforcement Foundation Program Fund (KLEFPF) for public safety training—as the original intent and wording of the statute makes clear—continues to be a focal point in the 2015 statewide campaigns for elected office. In recent years, the general assembly has swept millions of dollars earmarked for public safety from KLEFPF into the state’s general fund, ignoring the needs of Kentucky law enforcement and firefighters.

Kentucky's KLEFPF fund was originally designed to underwrite statewide police training, including basic training, annual proficiency training and leadership training as well as all expenses of the Department of Criminal Justice Training in Richmond.

While affected public safety personnel do not question the legislature’s authority to sweep KLEFPF receipts into the general fund, most feel current practices abscond with most of the funding before legitimate public safety needs are addressed. The issue has been avoided by subsequent legislative sessions.

Recently, gubernatorial candidate Jack Conway, speaking at a quarterly Kentucky Law Enforcement Council meeting (as attorney general, Conway retains a seat on the council), voiced support for retaining KLEFPF funding for its intended purpose: funding law enforcement and firefighter training and providing proficiency pay to all who meet training requirements annually. Conway also want to upgrade the state’s crime lab with KLEFPF funds.

"The General Assembly has a history of sweeping KLEFPF funds to balance the budget. It's time to put an end to it," he said. "This needs to happen for the continued progression of law enforcement in Kentucky."

Last week, candidate for attorney general Andy Beshear requested a get-acquainted tour of the Department of Criminal Justice Training (DOCJT) in Richmond and voiced his support of using KLEFPF funding as originally intended by statute.

“Every day Kentucky law enforcement and fire fighters put their lives on the line to protect and serve our communities. They deserve our full support,” Beshear said.

“The KLEFPF program – if used for its intended purpose, -- not only provides important training, but also compensates officers for their proficiency. After meeting with law enforcement across Kentucky, I know that our officers can go from fighting drug crimes to complicated financial crimes in a single day and their training is more important than ever.”

Echoing Conway’s previous public comments, Beshear noted that more than 300 Kentucky law enforcement officers do not receive proficiency grants for completing the same training requirements as Kentucky’s other 7,000+ officers. Those law enforcement officials receive proficiency grants of \$3,100 after successfully completing the same classes.

“It’s only equitable that officers completing the same training should receive the same grants,” he said.

“And those proficiency grants have not increased in 14 years,” Beshear added. “That, too, must change. “The KLEFPF program is the backbone of our law enforcement and firefighters’ continued success. I am committed to protecting KLEFPF and will always fight to ensure that our officers have both the training and the resources necessary to build safer communities across the Commonwealth.”

Requirements to become a law enforcement officer in Kentucky are among the strictest in the nation, including 22 weeks of basic training and at least 40 hours of proficiency training annually. No state requires more basic law enforcement training than Kentucky.