



A Fair Shot for Kentuckians: Respecting Working Families & Helping Them Get Ahead

A note from Andy —

Ahead of Labor Day weekend, we're celebrating our working families. We're also honoring their contributions to our Commonwealth by releasing policies that respect workers and give them a fair shot at earning a good living so they can raise their families with dignity.

We've been traveling Kentucky to unveil our Kitchen Table Agenda because working families deserve a governor with a positive vision to lift them up, instead of the current governor who insults and tears them down. The first plank of our comprehensive jobs plan focuses on creating good-paying jobs of the future in agritech and advanced manufacturing.¹ The second piece outlines policy priorities to rebuild our failing infrastructure to make Kentucky more competitive.²

When we rebuild Kentucky and boost our economy, we need to do it the right way. That means treating our neighbors with the respect they deserve and making sure new growth actually puts more money in the pockets of workers. The median wage in Kentucky is not even enough to meet a family's budget³ and personal income is actually dropping in several rural counties.⁴

That's exactly what the new policies we're unveiling today focus on: making it easier for working families to get ahead. Workers have been struggling, with too many living paycheck-to-paycheck. But instead of providing a ladder to help them climb, this current governor continues to knock them down by enacting harmful policies that cost our workers. And Matt Bevin has used his office to insult and bully teachers, social workers, and first responders.

That's going to change. Jacqueline and I will create an inclusive economy that increases wages, respects workers, improves working conditions and grows our middle class.

Thanks,

Andy

¹ ["Growing Kentucky's Future: Building an Agritech & Advanced Manufacturing Economy,"](#) Beshear/Coleman 2019.

² ["Fixing Our Aging Infrastructure: Rebuilding Kentucky to Create More Good-Paying Jobs,"](#) Beshear/Coleman 2019.

³ ["Average Kentucky Worker's Paycheck Not Yet Benefitting from Growing Economy,"](#) Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, 7/1/2019.

⁴ ["Income falls in several Appalachian Kentucky counties as coal fails to bounce back,"](#) Lexington Herald Leader, 6/25/2019.



Policy Priorities to Respect Working Families and Help Them Get Ahead

Promoting Fair Wages: Andy and Jacqueline believe that you should be able to support a family on one full-time job. But too many Kentuckians are forced to work three or four jobs just to make ends meet. Matt Bevin effectively lowered Kentuckians' wages by repealing Kentucky's prevailing wage protections, which ensured that the skilled workers who build our roads, highways and public schools earned a fair living.⁵ Despite what the Bevin administration says, cutting these vital protections for wages does not save Kentucky money — it just hurts Kentucky workers and results in lower wages.⁶ As a result, Kentucky should restore prevailing wage protections to ensure that all workers get the pay they deserve. Promoting fair wages also means addressing the gender wage gap, which a Beshear/Coleman administration will do, as outlined in April.⁷ We also need to repeal so-called "right-to-work (for less)" legislation, which results in lower wages for workers.⁸

Respecting Workers' Skills & Training: Kentuckians work hard to gain the skills they need to earn a good living and raise their families. A Beshear/Coleman administration will respect the amount of time and expertise workers have gained through years of experience. When qualifications are watered down, it opens the door to lower wages, unsafe workplaces, and a poorer quality of work that ends up costing more in the long run, especially for taxpayer-funded projects. Kentucky can save money, raise wages, and respect hard work by honoring the independence and intentions of state boards that provide oversight and recognize qualifications in the skilled trades. Additionally, the labor secretary in a Beshear/Coleman administration will be a card-carrying member of a union.

Prioritizing Work-Family Balance: As parents, it's important to Andy and Jacqueline that every Kentuckian can enjoy a work-family balance without being forced to make impossible choices between the two. A Beshear/Coleman administration will focus on policies that strengthen this work-family balance, including paid family and sick leave. No Kentuckian should have to choose between financial security and caring for their family.

Promoting Safer Workplaces: Andy and Jacqueline understand that every Kentuckian should be able to go to work without fear of getting hurt. Unfortunately, Governor Bevin abolished Kentucky's Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board last year, making workers less safe.⁹ By reinstating Kentucky's Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board, a Beshear/Coleman administration will provide informed unbiased protection to workers. Kentucky should also make sure the Labor Cabinet has the resources and tools it needs to ensure and enforce safe workplaces. Additionally, a Beshear/Coleman administration will prioritize implementing policies that fight sexual harassment in the workplace.

⁵ ["Kentucky legislature repeals prevailing wage,"](#) Associated Press, 1/7/17.

⁶ ["The Economic, Fiscal, and Social Effects of Kentucky's Prevailing Wage Law,"](#) Duncan, Kevin and Manzo, Frank IV, 12/15/16.

⁷ ["Andy Beshear's Plans to Address Wage Gap in Kentucky,"](#) Beshear/Coleman 2019.

⁸ ["Right-to-Work" States Still Have Lower Wages,"](#) Economic Policy Institute, 4/22/15.

⁹ ["Bevin rejects pleas of Democrats to re-establish worker safety panel,"](#) Louisville Courier Journal, 8/1/18.



Ensuring No Tax Incentives For Companies That Don't Pay a Living Wage: Right now, Kentucky spends millions of dollars on tax incentive programs that help out-of-state CEOs, while “subsidizing the creation of jobs that provide wages and benefits that are significantly below the typical jobs in many counties.”¹⁰ A Beshear/Coleman administration will make sure Kentucky is using taxpayer incentives to create family-supporting jobs, with good wages, affordable health care and a secure retirement.

Having Workers' Backs During Hard Times: When a factory closes or a mine shuts down, it hurts entire communities and Kentuckians are often faced with very few options to support their families. If that happens, Andy Beshear and Jacqueline Coleman will focus on making sure there are more good-paying job opportunities in that same community and will also support policies that help workers stay afloat and get back on their feet as quickly as possible. As an example, the Bevin administration failed to enforce key protections for workers when Blackjewel went bankrupt, cheating miners out of pay they were owed. In fact, Matt Bevin's Labor Cabinet even tried to repeal the law that could have made sure the Blackjewel miners received their pay.¹¹ That was wrong — and a Beshear/Coleman administration will actually enforce those protections for workers so they don't fall further behind.

¹⁰ [“Kentucky's Economic Performance Falls Short of Claims Based on Corporate Announcements,”](#) Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, 12/20/2018.

¹¹ [“No Kentucky coal company has complied with a law designed to protect miner wages,”](#) Lexington Herald-Leader, 8/29/19.