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Gov. Bevin expands Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship to Include Associate's Degrees and High School Dual Credit Courses

Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin signed an Executive Order July 11, expanding the Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship (WRKS) to include students enrolled in certificate, diploma, and associate of applied science degree in the state's top five high-demand workforce sectors. Additionally, the scholarship will now be available for high school students for dual credit career and technical education (CTE) courses in pathways in Kentucky's top five high-demand sectors leading to industry-recognized certifications.

"We are excited to be expanding our innovative Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship program to empower even more students and adults to pursue their dreams," said Gov. Bevin. "This program is equipping individuals of all ages for the high-demand careers that are available in the Commonwealth today. At the same time, it is strengthening our workforce and continuing to make Kentucky the ideal location for businesses to thrive and grow."

The scholarship, initially announced by Gov. Bevin in December 2016, provides financial aid for eligible Kentuckians who have not yet earned at least an associate's degree. Through the WRKS, eligible students can receive funding to study in any of the following high-demand fields of work including:

- Advanced Manufacturing, Business and IT, Construction Trades, Healthcare, Transportation and Logistics

"We are delighted that the Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship can now be used for students to obtain associate's degrees," said Education and Workforce Development Cabinet Secretary Derrick K. Ramsey. "This will go a long way in helping prepare Kentuckians for the 160,000-plus open jobs in the Commonwealth, the majority of which require training and education beyond a high school diploma."

Prior to the July 2018 executive order, WRKS only provided tuition for up to 32 credit hours and was aimed at providing career certifications. The scholarship can now also be used for high school students interested in pursuing careers in the five high-demand sectors. Kentucky's Dual Credit Scholarship Program covers the cost of two dual credit courses for high school students. Now with the Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship, depending on students' course of study, they will have the opportunity to earn up to 30 credit hours of dual credit with tuition and fees covered by state scholarship programs.

"This expansion of the Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship is critical for aggressively attacking Kentucky's skills gap and preparing our students for postsecondary education and the jobs of today and tomorrow," said Interim Commissioner of Education Wayne Lewis. "No other state has made comparable investments in dual credit coursework generally, or in advancing CTE dual credit coursework specifically. This program and its expansion show that Kentucky is serious about improving high school students' postsecondary and workforce readiness, and providing equitable opportunities for students."

The scholarship can also be utilized by adults without a high school diploma who wish to pursue their career certification or associate of applied science degree in tandem with obtaining a GED through the Accelerating Opportunity Kentucky program offered through the Kentucky Community and Technical College System.

You can learn more about the Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship through helpwantedky.com.

KFB Marketbasket Survey Shows Increase in Food Prices for Second Straight Quarter

Louisville, Kentucky (Date) - After two years of slight quarterly declines in food prices, the most recent Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) Marketbasket Survey indicates a food-cost increase for a second straight quarter. The survey, taken four times each year, price-checks 40 basic food items throughout the state in an effort to gauge current food-price trends. Since the end of 2016, surveyed food items had dropped by a total of \$3.79 or just over three percent.

That trend seems to have come to an end, at least for the first half of 2018. After a first quarter increase of 1.35 percent, the most recent survey shows a 2.19 percent jump. The total price of all 40 items came to \$118.26.

The latest Consumer Price Index report from May noted little movement nationally in most food categories over the last several months. There was an unadjusted, 12-month period increase of 1.2 percent in the all-food category. Food-at-home indices indicated a .2 percent decline for the month of May.

Specifically, the CPI noted, "The index for meats, poultry, fish, and eggs declined 0.7 percent, while the fruits and vegetables index fell 0.3 percent in May after increasing 1.0 percent in April. The indexes for other food at home, and dairy and related products also declined."

Marketbasket Survey specifics: These second quarter increases were spread out across all the surveyed food categories including, beef, pork, poultry, dairy, fruits and vegetables, and grains. The largest category increase came in pork products with a rise of 4.09 percent, followed by poultry with an increase of 3.69 percent. All other categories were at or below the two percent mark. The largest single item increase was attributed to a 10-pound bag of Idaho potatoes, which rose by \$.55 followed by whole smoked ham prices, which rose \$.46 per pound.

"Even though we are seeing small increases for the first two quarters of 2018, the surveyed food items are still below 2016 prices at the same time of year by nearly 1.6 percent," said KFB Commodity Division Director Joe Cain. "In the case of pork and poultry increases, we saw pork prices drop by nearly four percent at the end of 2017 and poultry prices fell during the first quarter of this year. I think the shifts we are seeing now can be attributed to normal market fluctuations as opposed to any long-term changes in the market."

Agricultural Economics in Food Prices: Whether or not U.S. grocery prices fluctuate from one quarterly survey to the next, Kentuckians and all Americans continue to enjoy some of the lowest food prices in the world. Shoppers in the U.S. spend only about seven percent of their disposable income on food each year. Those costs remain far lower than any other country in the world thanks to many of the agricultural efficiencies utilized in America. Today the average U.S. farmer produces enough food and fiber to provide for about 154 people – a significant jump from an average of 19 people per farmer back in 1940.

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