



Political leaders in Kentucky fall into the ‘gap’

By Jim Waters

You’ve heard of the generation gap and the gender gap. But have you heard of the “credibility gap” in Frankfort these days?

An earlier use of “credibility gap” involved journalists describing former President Lyndon Johnson’s handling of the Vietnam War. Reporters discovered a chasm between what Johnson’s administration told the public about the war in Southeast Asia and reality.

But what does a “credibility gap” look like in a state Capitol in modern times?

Picture this: Governors, House speakers and their big-spending minions running around Frankfort like chickens with their heads cut off, hyperventilating about Kentucky’s budget crisis. Yet, they absolutely ignore — or just simply refuse to make — tough decisions needed to close gaps between spending and revenue.

And just so we don’t have a “communication gap”: When I talk about refusing to make tough decisions, I’m not promoting tax hikes. It’s much easier for politicians to raise taxes in lieu of making tough spending or policy decisions that anger special interests — especially if voters don’t hold them accountable.

Kentucky’s leftist “community organizers” default to raising taxes when facing deficits. Lawmakers should ignore groups such as [Kentuckians for the Commonwealth](#), “Taxocrats” whose representatives constantly repeat – as if by rote – that the “top 1 percent of earners” in Kentucky do not pay “their fair share” in taxes but offer no credible data to back up this assertion.

Who said top earners do not pay “their fair share?” What credibility do these economically challenged “activists” demonstrate that allows them to credibly determine for the rest of us what “fair” looks like?

Many social service agencies depend on taxes for their existence and have a vested interest in sending lobbyists to Frankfort to convince spineless politicians to raise taxes. So when it comes down to survival between lobbying interests or taxpayers, guess who gets the shaft?

Gov. Steve Beshear’s credibility gap keeps growing, too.

Beshear [promised](#) during his gubernatorial campaign to conduct “a comprehensive efficiency study of the entire state government.” He quickly added that “other states have done this and they have on average saved about 2 percent of their general fund dollars,” which would amount to “between \$150 million and \$180 million” for Kentucky.

Enterprising journalists and citizen-reporters filed open records requests seeking copies of the study only to find out it doesn’t exist. In the process, another gap – an “integrity gap” – was exposed.

If the governor just kept his campaign promise, Kentucky could have closed the current [\\$100 million gap](#), balanced its budget without the usual Chicken Little-like drama and been on its way toward attacking long-term money shortages.

But getting Kentucky politicians to think long-term about anything outside of how fat their pension checks will be after a lifetime of part-time “public service” is like getting a possessed University of Kentucky basketball fan to acknowledge that any other Kentucky team exists.

Frankfort needs policy changes beyond the limited but favored false choices of raising taxes or cutting essential services — arguments with eternal life as long as KTC and its fellow collectivist organizations exist.

Instead, Rep. Jim DeCesare, R-Rockfield identified the real choices: short-term solutions that work for the next election cycle or long-term policy changes that set up Kentucky for economic prosperity.

“If we have to suffer short-term pain in order to benefit long-term, I’d much rather do that than endure a continual repeat of the current situation,” DeCesare said.

If enough Kentuckians started acting and reacting with similar thinking, we could close the gap between poverty and promise quicker than the ‘Cats puts away those pesky Cardinals.

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