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HBO's 'Thrones' spinoff, 'A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms,' is more muddy than magical.

In today's paper

SPORTS: Collin Chandler fights off illness to lift UK basketball to another win. **1B**

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Lexington Herald-Leader photo staff

Former attorney general Daniel Cameron, Lexington tech entrepreneur Nate Morris and Rep. Andy Barr

KY Senate race: Barr, Cameron, Morris' paths to nomination

BY AUSTIN HORN
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This is one of the most consequential election years in recent Kentucky history.

For the first time in 16 years, a seat in the U.S. Senate is opening up. And, it's not just any seat.

Love him or hate him, Mitch McConnell put his thumb on the scales of political history, arguably as much as any Kentuckian since Abraham Lincoln. He is the longest-serving U.S. Senate party leader ever, and cemented his place in the textbooks when he blocked former President Barack Obama from getting his Supreme Court nominee in 2016, later forming an unlikely alliance with President Donald Trump to reshape

the federal judiciary.

It matters who replaces McConnell.

They may not be there for 42 years like him, but with the current average years served at 11.2, they're likely to make some big decisions, for the state and country.

Though there's a robust crop of Democratic hopefuls running in their primary, the seat is widely considered safe for Republicans, barring any major shift in national political environment. No Democrat has won a Senate seat in Kentucky since 1992, and no nominee has come close to winning since 2004.

The three leading GOP candidates for the Tuesday, May 19 primary are Lexington tech entrepreneur Nate Morris, former Attorney General Daniel

Cameron and 6th Congressional District Rep. Andy Barr.

The race has been ongoing for nearly a year, with Cameron declaring in February 2025 right on the heels of McConnell's retirement announcement. Cameron has led all publicly available polls, but in the money race he's lagging well behind Barr (\$6.4 million on hand) and Morris (\$1.5 million on hand, and personal wealth). Cameron hasn't reported his number yet, but it's believed to be well behind the other two.

Morris got a shot in the arm Monday with the news tech billionaire Elon Musk, the world's richest man, contributed \$10 million to a political action committee supporting him.

Michael Faris, a veteran from

Elizabethtown who owns a helicopter repair business, is running a vigorous campaign, too. Differentiating himself with a skepticism of America's relationship Israel and a grassroots group of supporters, it's believed Faris' run could affect the final result, even if it lacks the name ID and funding of the other candidates.

Remind yourself of this: Kentucky voters don't typically tune in until spring, or even until the first Saturday in May, when the Kentucky Derby is held. So what looks one way now — whether polling or fundraising numbers — could completely flip by May 19.

As the senior political reporter at the Herald-Leader, I field a lot of calls from supporters of all three men. Here's my best distillation of the paths to victory for all three, and the most compelling arguments against each of their candidacies. Please reach out to me via email if you'd like to weigh in at ahorn@herald-leader.com.

THE CASE FOR NATE MORRIS

The good news is Nate Morris' ties to the White House are real.

SEE NOMINATION, 4A

KY bill tackles 'public frustration' caused by FCPS advances

BY VALARIE HONEYCUTT SPEARS
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A Lexington Republican lawmaker criticized Fayette County Schools for attempting to implement a tax increase last year, saying it was a "public debacle," as a Senate committee approved a bill to change how future occupational license taxes are introduced.

Sen. Amanda Mays Bledsoe, R-Lexington, filed Senate Bill 76 Jan. 13 in response to "widespread public frustration" following last year's attempt by the Fayette County Board of Education to impose a new school board occupational license tax increase, a news release said.

SB 76 raises the population threshold required for a county to have authority to increase the tax from 300,000 to 500,000 residents. Fayette and other counties would no longer be able to implement such an increase unless they reach the new population requirement.

"The last year has been full of long school board meetings, budget inconsistencies, frustrated teachers, disappointed parents and a business community that doesn't really know what to expect, and students who just need to be students," Bledsoe told fellow lawmakers Wednesday. "This is not an acceptable environment."

The bill was approved Wednesday by the Senate Appropriations and Revenue Committee. It now goes to the full Senate for consideration.

The legislation does not remove or change any existing occupational license taxes.

In 2025, the Fayette County school board voted to raise its occupational license tax during Memorial Day weekend, drawing sharp criticism for its lack of transparency.

In response to constituent complaints, Bledsoe formally requested an attorney general's

SEE FCPS, 3A

KY Addiction Recovery Care owes DOJ \$28M, lawsuit claims

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Addiction Recovery Care, once the largest for-profit drug treatment company in Kentucky, has agreed to a settlement with the Department of Justice to the tune of nearly \$28 million for alleged Medicaid fraud, according to a new, separate federal lawsuit filed against the company.

A draft of the settlement between the DOJ and ARC, which has been under investigation by the FBI for fraud for more than a year, was included in a lawsuit filed against the company Jan. 12 in the Southern District of

New York by Angelica Capital Trust, a Bahamian company with a trust organized under Delaware law.

The complaint attempt to halt ARC from misusing millions Angelica says the company is keeping illegally in order to "stave off imminent bankruptcy," spurred in part by a need to pay the DOJ's settlement.

"ARC is wrongfully holding on to this money because it is in desperate straits," Angelica said in its request for an injunction. "This action ultimately rises out of ARC's fitful attempts to deal with the consequences of massive fraud that ARC perpetrated over a number of years."

The DOJ's settlement, an unsigned copy of which was

included in a Jan. 12 court filing, alleges that ARC "knew or recklessly disregarded" Medicaid billing instructions and submitted "false claims" for peer-to-peer services the company provided to clients between 2018 and 2021, resulting in ARC receiving payments "to which they were not entitled."

The company also inappropriately billed for services led by staff who were not appropriately credentialed or licensed, according to the statement. Of the \$28 million ARC owes as part of the settlement, roughly \$16 million is restitution.

By sharing a draft of the settlement, which has otherwise not been made public, Angelica "violated the confidentiality



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Logos of organizations under the Addiction Recovery Care umbrella are on display at ARC's career services office in Louisa, Ky., on July 11, 2024.

provisions" of its non-disclosure agreement with ARC, Tim Robinson, ARC's founder, said in a Jan. 20 filing. Robinson requested the document be put under

seal. The Department of Justice has not publicly confirmed the set-

SEE LAWSUIT, 3A



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