

KENTUCKY BAR ASSOCIATION

YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION 50TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



BY TANNER WATKINS,
YLD CHAIR

2016 marks the 50th Anniversary for the Young Lawyers Division (“YLD”). Founded in March 1966, the YLD has grown to the largest subsection (and only division) of the Kentucky Bar Association, with a current membership of over 2,000 attorneys.

More important than the number of attorneys is the quality of attorneys and human beings the YLD attracts. The YLD is comprised of countless young Kentucky lawyers who are doing great things to improve their communities, the profession and the Commonwealth.

To recognize this milestone, the Kentucky Bar Association’s Communications & Publications Committee graciously allowed the YLD to develop content for the March issue. The theme behind the issue is celebrating the past and future of the YLD and the many accomplishments of its members.

Instead of devoting the issue to a small number of longer articles, the YLD chose to have a number of shorter articles focusing on the YLD and its programming; the issues faced by young lawyers in today’s world; and the accomplishments of young lawyers around the state, who have chosen to give up private practice in favor of serving the Commonwealth through elected office. Every article is either authored or co-authored by a young lawyer. The topics selected for this issue include:

- A history of the YLD as told through its past chairs.
- Kentucky’s young lawyer elected officials;
- Law school student debt;
- YLD community outreach programming;
- Health and well-being in the profession; and
- The importance of mentoring.

While these articles were chosen for their importance to young lawyers, we believe that all practitioners, regardless of age or experience, will find the contents of this issue both useful and relevant.

Thank you again for your time and attention and support for the YLD. I hope you enjoy.

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Kentucky's Youth Movement: A TEMPLATE FOR YOUNG LAWYERS TO IMPROVE KENTUCKY

By: J. Tanner Watkins & R. Brooks Herrick



Much has been made about the 2015 election results in Kentucky, with almost all of the spilled ink focusing on voter turnout or the partisan aspects of the election results. After the dust settled, and with the benefit of hindsight, Kentucky's 2015 election results have the potential to be remembered for something far greater. However, much of how 2015 is remembered will depend upon whether we, as young lawyers, are willing to follow in the footsteps of our colleagues by using our skills and energy to ensure that 2015 is remembered as the year that our generation took ownership of our Commonwealth by stepping forward to make it a better place to live.

In 2015, the Commonwealth of Kentucky elected four Young Lawyers—Alison Lundergan Grimes, Allison Ball, Andy Beshear, and Ryan Quarles—to statewide public office. Because our elected officials live in the limelight and are frequently featured on television programs or quoted in newspaper stories, we sometimes envision them as being larger than life, or, at the very least, hold them in a different regard than ourselves. However, when talking to our newly elected (or re-elected) officials, it quickly becomes apparent that Treasurer Ball, Secretary Grimes, Attorney General Beshear, and Commissioner Quarles are no different than any of us. They are proud Kentuckians, born-and-raised, who, despite possibilities elsewhere, decided to stay home and seize an opportunity to make a difference in the future of Kentucky.

When asked, all four of these individuals quickly and graciously agreed to talk with us about what it means to be a young Kentuckian serving the public. While we all know these elected officials hold varied beliefs, they share certain fundamental ideals and principles that led them to public service—fundamentals and ideals that should inspire all of us to take responsibility for helping Kentucky grow.

At age 37, **Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes**, a native of Maysville, is the youngest Secretary of State in the United States. Secretary Grimes obtained her Bachelor's degree from Rhodes College in Memphis, Tenn., and her law degree from American University in Washington, D.C.¹ Even though Secretary Grimes attended

universities outside of Kentucky; she never doubted that she wanted to come home to be close to friends and family, and to serve the public. True to this plan, after obtaining her law degree, Secretary Grimes returned to Kentucky where she was in private practice until she was elected Secretary of State in 2011.

Secretary Grimes was driven to public service due to her *pro bono* work in domestic violence cases as a private attorney, and by community activities outside her law practice, including involvement with the National Kidney Foundation. Secretary Grimes saw the difference she could make by volunteering her legal services and believed running for office would provide her the platform to make large scale changes across the Commonwealth. Finally, Secretary Grimes says that her decision to run for Secretary of State in 2011 was due in part to the fact that, at the time she ran, no women held Constitutional office in Kentucky.

Alison enjoys being Secretary of State because it mirrors many of the passions she pursued in her private practice. For example, her role as Secretary allows her to attempt to make Kentucky as business-friendly as possible, and overseeing elections reminds her of the many times she volunteered as a precinct worker on election day. When asked whether she considered returning to a successful private practice rather than seeking re-election, Secretary Grimes showed no hesitancy in answering that seeking re-election was the obvious choice due to the significant changes she has overseen as Secretary, including historic changes to voting procedures for Kentucky citizens serving in the military, of which she was most proud.

For any young person that is interested in bettering the community, Secretary Grimes suggests finding your passion, and dedicating yourself to that passion, which allows a person to achieve anything.

Whether serving on a board, helping a nonprofit, or providing legal services *pro bono*, Secretary Grimes stresses that lawyers can always make a difference in the community. She further emphasized that youth should not be a deterrent in a world where experience is often stressed, because experience is just a line on a resume and will not guarantee future success.



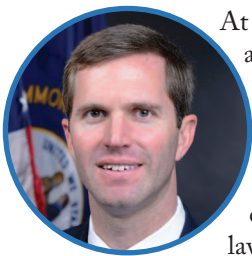


At age 34, **Treasurer Allison Ball**, a native of Prestonsburg, is the youngest female to hold a statewide-elected public office in the United States.² Additionally, Treasurer Ball received the most votes of any candidate in the 2015 election.³ Treasurer Ball obtained her college degree from Liberty University in Virginia, and her law degree from the University of

Kentucky. Treasurer Ball chose to pursue her legal education at UK because she wanted to continue building a network of friends throughout Kentucky that would allow her to contribute to Kentucky, in whatever form that might take. After obtaining her law degree, Treasurer Ball spent four years serving as the Assistant Floyd County Attorney. Prior to being elected Treasurer, she was in private practice, focusing primarily in bankruptcy law.⁴

Treasurer Ball's decision to run for public office was most influenced by her years serving as an attorney in a small community. Through her bankruptcy practice, she was able to see exactly what Kentuckians were going through and how the economy was affecting them. Specifically, Treasurer Ball credits her desire to want to seek public office on the fact that coming from a small town allowed her to see the impact a lawyer can make in a person's life.

For other young attorneys considering becoming involved in the community, whether that be politically, or otherwise, Treasurer Ball says, "Go for it," and that 90 percent is showing up. She believes others will notice someone involved and always in attendance, especially a young attorney, who has received the best training for public service, by frequently tackling difficult problems, spotting issues, and developing solutions. Treasurer Ball further stressed that any young attorney thinking about seeking political office should not hesitate because a lawyer cannot lose a campaign. No matter what happens an attorney will win by getting their name out in the community, and developing new and stronger relationships.



At age 38, **Attorney General Andy Beshear**, a native of Lexington, is the second youngest Attorney General in the United States, less than a year older than Nevada Attorney General, Adam Paul Laxalt. Attorney General Beshear obtained his Bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University and his law degree from the University of Virginia.⁵

After beginning private practice in Washington D.C., he moved back to Kentucky where he continued his practice until he was elected Attorney General.

Attorney General Beshear credits his desire to seek public office, and public service in general, to what he calls the "Beshear family motto"—Family, Faith, Hard Work, and Public Service. For Attorney General Beshear, holding public office is merely one form of public service that can better the community. He sees the importance of the work that is done through state government, and, specifically, through the work of the Attorney General, as he feels he grew up with a front row seat to seeing the impact an Attorney General can make by protecting the most powerless.

While Attorney General Beshear will miss private practice, he is looking forward to serving in his new job because he believes it will be more meaningful. He stressed that he would get to oversee a large staff and push goals, priorities, and a mission throughout the Office of the Attorney General that will impact the lives of those Kentuckians that need help the most. For example, he believes there are changes that can be made in the Office of the Attorney General that will allow for better "customer service" and enable his office to serve the needs of Kentuckians whose needs have not traditionally been met.

Like the others, Attorney General Beshear does not believe he is disadvantaged compared to other public officials who may be older and have more experience. Instead, he believes the energetic, hungry approach he plans to utilize while in office will allow him to take on more tasks that will quickly grow his skills and lead to experience. For those young attorneys considering taking a risk—whether it be running for public office, seeking a position on a non-profit, or even switching careers—Attorney General Beshear suggested to stop and think about what makes you want to wake up and fight every day. He believes that if you can find the passion that drives you there is no risk because, if you pursue that passion, you can't make a mistake. Further, he believes having legal skills will help in your effort to give back to the community because charities, non-profits, and legal aid programs are always seeking out individuals with legal skills. However, when it comes to holding public office, Attorney General Beshear stressed that running for an elected position is not about the office or a title; rather it has to be about what you can achieve through the office.



At age 32, **Commissioner of Agriculture Ryan Quarles**, a native of Georgetown, is the youngest statewide elected public official in the United States.⁶ Commissioner Quarles obtained his Bachelor's degree and two Masters Degrees from the University of Kentucky prior to enrolling at the University of Kentucky College of Law. In the middle of his legal education, Commissioner Quarles was awarded a full scholarship from Harvard University on the Zuckerman Fellowship, which allowed him to obtain his Master's Degree in education from Harvard. After completing his studies at Harvard, Commissioner Quarles returned to the University of Kentucky College of Law to finish the final year of his legal education⁷ while also in the process of being elected to the Kentucky House of Representatives.

Commissioner Quarles knew in high school that he wanted to be involved in politics, but says he decided to run for his first political office at such a young age (and while finishing law school) because he saw where Kentucky was headed, and he was worried. As a millennial, Commissioner Quarles knows his generation is going to inherit Kentucky's current problems. He saw an opportunity to help Kentucky immediately by seeking a seat in the House of Representatives, and he took a risk. Commissioner Quarles says he was drawn to seek election for Commissioner of Agriculture because he grew up on a family-owned farm and farming defines him. Thus, he understands the unique needs of Kentucky's Agriculture Department. Furthermore, he stressed that being Commissioner of Agriculture presented a way for him to serve Kentucky on a grander

scale because the Department of Agriculture touches every Kentuckian multiple times, every single day, through the Department's regulation of gas pumps, grocery stores, crops, and more.

Commissioner Quarles thinks youth is an advantage in public service, including for elected officials. Indeed, through his five years of being a public official, and enduring six elections, Commissioner Quarles says that his youth has never been an issue because Kentuckians see youth as an asset, not a liability. In fact, on the campaign trail, many Kentuckians expressed an appetite for change and were excited to see young people willing to serve. Furthermore, Commissioner Quarles thinks that our state will be served by youthful leadership because there is a different mentality in the younger generation. He noted that the rising generation is tired of partisan politics, and that they want to see cooperation and collaboration that will foster an environment better conducive to solving the problems facing Kentucky—a mindset Kentuckians will see exhibited by all four of the Young Lawyers featured in this article, he believes. It is through this mindset that he, and other millennial office holders, can redefine what government means.

For other young people interested in public service, Commissioner Quarles encouraged everyone to give it a try because public service is rewarding and fulfilling. He further stressed that you do not need to be an elected official to serve the public because there are many ways to affect public policy. Moreover, no matter what you may choose to do, it is important to be engaged and pay attention to local, state, and national politics because the decisions made at each level will impact all of us. Finally, Commissioner Quarles believes that Kentucky voters have shown a willingness to elect young people with new ideas. Thus, Commissioner Quarles hopes, and expects, that the young people of Kentucky will stand up to address the issues our generation will inherit by joining him in being a voice for a new generation.

As you can see, even though all these Young Lawyers come from different backgrounds and hold varied beliefs, a short discussion with any of these leaders highlights fundamental principles they share that we can all admire and emulate. Based on their answers to our questions, it is also abundantly clear that, if we choose, it will not be difficult for us, as Young Lawyers, to use their words of wisdom to contribute to our individual communities and our Commonwealth as a whole. Due to the education and training required to be a member of this profession, we all possess skills that allow each of us to positively affect our local and state community—whether that be in the form of serving on town council, serving on a board, providing *pro bono* services, or volunteering at a local charity. The only question that remains is whether we will harness our energy and fresh ideas and join our new leaders in making Kentucky a better place to live and work for ourselves, our family, and the Commonwealth. **BB**

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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ENDNOTES

1. *Biography of Kentucky Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes*, Kentucky.gov, <http://www.sos.ky.gov/secdesk/Pages/Biography.aspx> (last visited Jan. 8, 2016).
2. Chris Williams, *Kentucky duo represent Republican "youth movement"*, WHAS11, Nov. 25, 2015, <http://www.whas11.com/story/new/politics/2015/11/25/kentucky-duo-represent-republican-youth-movement/76388616/>.
3. Official 2015 General Election Results, available at <http://elect.ky.gov/SiteCollectionDocuments/Election%20Results/2010-2019/2015/2015%20General%20Election%20Results.pdf>.
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7. *Meet Ryan*, <http://ryanquarles.com/meet-ryan/> (last visited Jan. 8, 2016).

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