

OPINION

Bluegrass Beacon

Beeshear you know what you're getting before you buy

Gov. Steve Beeshear talked a good game during his inauguration speech, but it's wait-and-see for me. I've returned to many political "purchases" and I would like to "impulse buy" but I don't want to be back to customer service.



Beeshear
By Steve Beeshear

Among the words I liked from Beeshear were "These ideas have been consistent themes in my columns - while the politicians marched down the road of mediocrity, puffing the status quo, or we can choose the path of progress. This new

path will involve new thinking and new ideas. And it will demand courage." These ideas have been consistent themes in my columns - while the politicians marched down the road of mediocrity, puffing the status quo, or we can choose the path of progress. This new

likely he's going to have some fun at their expense. You know, he could have left those two presents for me out in plain sight. But, no! He had to hide them and make me suffer, thinking he had only brought that little kiddie book for me.

Old St. Nick hasn't changed much over the years, either. No sooner did Cindy and I have children of our own than Santa started playing those same tricks on them. I'm sure he means it all in good (un, though).

The children's momentary disappointment is actually increases their joy - not to mention their relief at when everything finally turns out the way it's supposed to. And it always does. Still, at least in our home, the kids never know what to expect, and that Christmas I had received two of them. It was beyond my wildest expectations.

I also learned something new that year: Santa has a sadistic streak about a mile wide. He loves nothing better than playing practical jokes on innocent children. The more they want just one particular present, the more

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As a buyer, I'm not shaking my head "no." I'm just not making my way to the checkout lane yet. If the governor accepts sound economic and education ideas from experts outside his partisan purview, then Kentucky could enjoy a renaissance.

But what happens when good ideas for Kentucky - like right-to-work and school-choice laws - clash with the agendas of powerful labor groups? Will the governor consider long-term effects and all people or be content to grab short-term political gains? If he chooses the latter, Beeshear joins a list of marginal leaders that dwarfs the state's roll call of courageous governors.

Beeshear's fellow Democrats previously rejected the idea of a "right-to-work" policy, which would prevent employees from being forced to join labor unions or pay dues, whether they came with sufficient benefits or not.

Yet "right-to-work" is one of 16 critical economic variables for states in a new American Legislative Exchange Council report co-authored by highly respected economists Arthur Laffer and Stephen Moore.

Without a right-to-work law, Kentucky ranks No. 46 among states - and dead last in the Southeast - in economic competitiveness, the council report shows.

Laffer and Moore report that having a right-to-work law represents one of two economic factors that stand out as "perhaps the most important in attracting jobs and capital."

Jim Henderson, Simpson County's Republican judge-executive, whose county sits on the border of Tennessee, once wrote in an article for the Bluegrass Institute that a lack of a right-to-work pol-

icy "sends a signal that Kentucky is not a job-friendly commonwealth." Is anyone in Frankfort listening to Henderson?

Does he think higher taxes means "investing in our people?" So far, it hasn't worked.

"It now takes the typical Kentuckian 13 months to make the income that a resident of Tennessee makes in a year," the council's report stated.

Meanwhile, Tennessee offers a right-to-work law, no income tax and ranks 41 spots higher than Kentucky in the report's "competitiveness index."

School choice is another good idea. Beeshear says a good idea is a good idea, no matter where it comes from.

However, many of his appointments - particularly in education and labor - offer for a hint that he won't challenge much of anything, least of all the status quo.

Nothing would delight me more than finding I'm wrong about this administration. And if I am, I'll prepare the "crow" myself.

Jim Waters is the director of policy and communications for the Bluegrass Institute, Kentucky's free-market think tank. You can reach him at waters@bluegrassinst.org. You can read previously published columns at www.bigs.org.

Democratic governors nationwide have reaped handsome political rewards for swimming against the tide in the monopolistic public-education industry that threatens to drown our students. One of those governors - Janet Napolitano - leads Arizona to a No. 2 ranking in the council's report and a No. 1 spot in the report's "Education Freedom Index" and right-to-work category.

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STEVE
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culator, though. I wanted the Texas Instruments TI-30, a full-function scientific calculator that had just hit the market with a price tag of about \$45. It cost another \$25 for the rechargeable battery kit and \$15 for the faux-leather carrying case. The microscope I wanted wasn't exactly cheap, either. But the way I figured it out, I had a better chance of getting one of the presents if I started out asking for an investment. You know, convince everyone that I needed it for my education. But when I told my Dad I needed a brand-new microscope, I just whistled, shook his head, and reminded me that even if Santa Claus brought the presents, Mom and Dad still had to help pay for them, and money was always pretty tight around our house.

When Christmas morning finally arrived, I couldn't wait to see what Santa had brought. I tore down the hall, dashed around the corner into the living room, and made a beeline for my Christmas stocking. That's when I saw my present and froze in my tracks.

"Hey!" I said, "Look what Santa brought... a book called 'TA for Tots.' Gee, thanks Santa!" I was trying my hardest to be a good sport.

I opened the book and had just finished reading that TA stands for Transactional Analysis and has something to do with Warm Parents and Hot Parents when Mom couldn't stand it any longer. "Oh, honey," she chuckled. "Why didn't you check inside your stocking to see what else Santa brought you?"

"There was something else?" Santa NEVER brought more than one present. It was the rule. Not knowing what to expect, I reached into my

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HEALTHY LIVING
Keeping Up with BABY

Transitioning to Baby Food and Eating Veggies!
Babies' eating habits change dramatically in the first few months, and it's often difficult for new parents to know when to begin offering their babies new options. Below are some helpful tips to guide parents along the way.

- While every baby is different, solid foods can be introduced around 6 months.
- Start with a single grain, iron-fortified infant cereal such as rice cereal, mixed with breast milk or formula.
- While trying to start with fun fruits, it's best to add strained vegetables first and then strained fruits to your baby's diet.
- Introduce one new food every three to five days like strained vegetables or fruit if it may take 10 or more attempts before baby is willing to accept a new food.
- At around 8 or 9 months, babies may be ready to start feeding themselves with finger foods. Soon they'll move on to using a child-sized spoon and drinking from a cup.

Diapers: More Than Just a Bigger Size
Most parents think that they just move to a bigger diaper size as their babies get older, but with new Pampers Sensitive, there's a complete line of diapers, training pants and corresponding wipes for each stage of development, which makes it easy for parents to know which products are most appropriate for their babies or toddlers at that time.

- For the newborn stage, expect more frequent diaper changes than other stages because of a baby's all-liquid diet. Pampers Swaddlers feature quilted, flannel-like softness and Sensitive Wipes are ideal for newborns because they help restore the natural pH balance of delicate skin up to two times faster than a washcloth and water.

Car Seat Safety
Car safety is such an important topic, but many parents don't know how to navigate through the stages. It's important to choose the right car seat for the right age and size, to keep babies safe as they grow.

- Rear-facing car seats are required for babies until they're 1 year old regardless of weight. Infant car seats are ideal for this stage and can be used during the first year until baby reaches 20 or 22 pounds. Once a baby reaches this weight, change to a convertible car seat (but still place rear-facing until 1 year).

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