

By Sam Howard to change. Wages in many alike. Historically, Ken- level. moment should be one of tion centers, and indus-

In the economic history of Lewis County, few events cast a longer shadow than the closure of the US Shoe factory in Vanceburg. Once a major employer that provided livelihoods for hundreds of families, the plant's shutdown in the late 1990s marked a turning point that many residents still remember vividly.

For decades, one of the greatest challenges to keeping manufacturing in the United States was competition from lower-wage countries. Companies moved production to places such as China and Mexico, where labor costs were significantly lower, leaving communities like ours to absorb the impact. That dynamic is beginning

By energy independence, we do not mean a single fuel source or ideology. Rather, it refers to access to reliable, affordable, and scalable power that meets the needs of modern industry while keeping costs manageable for businesses and households

Combined with our central location in the eastern United States, these assets position Lewis County as a practical, not speculative, candidate for modern manufacturing and logistics operations. What is required is careful planning, infrastructure readiness, and a realistic assessment of how energy, transportation, workforce, and policy intersect at the local

Future articles in this series will explore what counties like Lewis can realistically influence: site development, utility partnerships, workforce preparation, and the role of local leadership in creating conditions that attract investment. These are complex issues with no single solution, but they are not beyond our reach.

The closure of the US Shoe factory was a defining moment, but it does not have to be the final one. By understanding how global trends, technology, and local assets align, and by engaging in thoughtful discussion about energy and infrastructure, Lewis County can position itself for a stronger, more resilient future. The next watershed

Sam Howard is a construction executive and economic development professional with more than 30 years of experience in the building and infrastructure sectors.

He serves as Chief Executive Officer of Trace Creek Construction, Inc., where he oversees company operations, financial management, and long-term strategy. The firm specializes in design-build construction, construction management, and pre-engineered building systems, with completed projects across the public and private sectors, including schools, hospitals, churches, judicial facilities, de-

Howard's focus is on job creation, infrastructure development, and strengthening the long-term economic vitality and quality of life in Northeast Kentucky.

Herald Report nent state highway signs, payers and should be a

This means that all signs illegally placed on a state right of way will be removed, which includes any type of sign for political candidates, yard or garage sales, businesses, real estate or for any other purpose.

Kentucky state law and KYTC policy prohibits the placement of any signs for any type of advertising on state highway rights of way. The ban includes signs attached to perma-

According to the KYTC, the illegally posted signs can be a potential sight distance hazard to drivers. In addition to that, they can interfere with mowing crews, ditch line cleaning, litter pickup and other highway maintenance operations.

“Putting signs on state right of way is illegal and unsafe. That’s the bottom line,” said Mary Westfall-Holbrook, the Chief District Engineer of the Pikeville Highway District Office. “The state right of way belongs to the tax-

To check if one of your signs have been picked up and to make arrangements to get them, call the District 9 Highway Office at 606-845-2551.

This column is the first part of a guest series authored by Sam Howard and published by THE LEWIS COUNTY HERALD to encourage thoughtful discussion about Lewis County's future. Howard is the primary author of the series; I am serving as editor and host, working with him on clarity and presentation for HERALD readers. While we have been lifelong friends, this series appears because of his professional experience in construction and economic development and his interest in Lewis County's progress. The views expressed are those of the author, and readers are encouraged to engage with these topics as the series continues.

This will likely translate to more cases and more severe disease among those at highest risk, YLE reports.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that every-

It's also important to get tested if you think you have the flu because there are antiviral drugs that can be given early to treat flu — but they are most effective when given within the first two days of getting symptoms.

And health officials say basic steps help to reduce the spread of flu and other respiratory viruses, including washing your hands frequently with soap and water, covering your coughs and sneezes, staying home if you are sick and considering wearing a mask in crowded indoor spaces during peak flu activity, particularly if you have a cough.

Some important dates to know: the last day you can change your political party affiliation and be able to vote with your new party in the May pri-

He is survived by his wife of 25 years, Teresa Killen Blankenship; two daughters, Sierra Blankenship and Elizabeth Blankenship of Vanceburg; three sons, Josef Dilyn Blankenship, Jacob Blankenship, and Clayton Blankenship of Vanceburg; a sister, Julia

For the WKKS listening audience, for the church

Well done, good and faithful servant.



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