

News Release



Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, January 23, 2025

Contact: Robin Ross, Board of Commissioners, 614/525-2392

Chelsea Barnett, Commissioner Kevin L. Boyce, 614/525-5530

FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONER KEVIN L. BOYCE DECLINES VA KEYNOTE ADDRESS AFTER TRUMP ORDER ON D.E.I.

Citing the Suppression of Freedom of Speech and the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Franklin County, Columbus, OH – Commissioner Kevin L. Boyce was scheduled months in advance to be the featured speaker for the Columbus VA's MLK 2025 Annual Lunch. He was invited to share his personal journey to leadership while honoring Dr. King's legacy. This year's theme, "Triumph Through Adversity," deeply resonated with Commissioner Boyce, who had been eager to share his story of overcoming personal challenges and adversity.

However, just two-hours before the event, organizers informed Commissioner Boyce that he was prohibited from addressing topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as well as anything deemed "politically charged," due to President Trump's recent federal executive orders limiting such discussions. This request directly conflicted with the Commissioner's values, particularly when honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose life's work centered on civil rights, equity, and inclusion.

Regrettably, as a result of these restrictions, Commissioner Boyce made the difficult decision to withdraw from the event. "It was an insult to demand that I restrict my comments to not include equity and inclusion, I can't separate diversity from the memory of Dr. King," said Commissioner Boyce.

Boyce, whose father served two tours in Vietnam before tragically losing his life in a violent crime, understands firsthand the hardships of adversity. His family's military service instilled in him deep respect for the valor and sacrifice of our nation's military and veterans.

Commissioner Boyce continued, "As an elected official, my commitment to fostering opportunity, inclusivity, and equality is unwavering." "The United States was founded on the belief that all people are created equal. To honor Dr. King is to continue the fight for these rights, and I will not remain silent on the values of equity and inclusivity."

As a public servant, Boyce encourages all residents, civilians, and veterans alike, to engage in local discussions to advance equity and inclusivity in bringing prosperity and success to our growing community.

For more information or to schedule an interview with Commissioner Boyce, please contact the Franklin County Commissioner's Office.

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For more information on the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, log on to: <https://commissioners.franklincountyohio.gov/>



A blue banner featuring the Franklin County Board of Commissioners logo on the left and four individual portraits on the right. The logo is circular with a star and the text 'SERVICE · PROGRESS · EXCELLENCE', 'EST. 1803', 'FRANKLIN COUNTY OHIO', and 'BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'. The portraits are of Commissioner John O'Grady, Commissioner Kevin L. Boyce, Board President Erica C. Crawley, and County Administrator Kenneth N. Wilson.

Portrait	Title	Name
1	Commissioner	John O'Grady
2	Commissioner	Kevin L. Boyce
3	Board President	Erica C. Crawley
4	County Administrator	Kenneth N. Wilson