

Week of March 31st legislative committee calendars: [House](#) | [Senate](#)

This Week at the Capitol

On Tuesday, Governor Bill Lee released his official budget amendment for the upcoming fiscal year, outlining which bills requiring state funding made it into the proposed budget. The pared-down amendment prioritized infrastructure, education, public safety, and emerging technologies, while leaving out several high-profile funding requests—setting the stage for final budget negotiations in the weeks ahead.



CASA programs from across Tennessee visited Capitol Hill this week to advocate for children in foster care. Court Appointed Special Advocates provide a vital voice for vulnerable youth navigating the legal system. Meagan, a longtime supporter, shares a deep passion for their mission and impact.

This graphic features a composite image on a dark blue background. On the left, a large photo shows Governor Bill Lee speaking at a wooden podium with two microphones. To the right of the governor are three circular inset images: the top-left shows three young girls walking in a hallway; the bottom-left shows a nurse in blue scrubs attending to an elderly woman in a wheelchair; the top-right shows a woman in a red dress walking past several white posters that read "DID YOU KNOW?" with silhouettes of people. Below these images, the following text is displayed in white, bold, sans-serif font:

**Gov. Lee Unveils \$343M
Budget Update Focused on
Capital Projects & Services**

Gov. Bill Lee’s administration presented a \$343 million budget amendment, raising the total to nearly \$60 billion. The plan includes \$486 million in new bonds for long-delayed capital projects and taps \$200 million in Treasury earnings to ease pressure on the budget. Key items include new funding for nursing homes, school safety, crime victim services, and indigent legal defense. Lawmakers raised concerns about rejecting federal food assistance and cuts to education hold-harmless funding.

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Local Caucus Nominations Under Review

A new bill aims to prohibit political party caucuses for nominating county-level candidates—such as mayors and sheriffs—unless the county already used a caucus process in 2022 or 2024. The measure is in response to recent intra-party shifts and concerns about transparency and voter participation in local nomination contests.

Key Points:

- The bill would prohibit future county party caucus nominations, except in counties that already used this method in the past two election cycles.
- Primaries would be required for local offices in nearly all Tennessee counties moving forward.
- The legislation follows recent leadership shifts within local Republican parties in Williamson and Hamilton counties, driven by more activist factions.
- Rep. Lee Reeves (R-Franklin) introduced the amendment; House Speaker Cameron Sexton is listed as a co-sponsor.

- Rep. Tim Rudd (R-Murfreesboro) was the only Republican to oppose the bill in subcommittee, citing concerns over local party autonomy.
- Sen. Jack Johnson (R-Franklin) is now leading the Senate version, following internal disputes during recent local reorganization elections.

As of the last election cycle, 81 of Tennessee's 95 counties held partisan primaries for local races, a shift from less than half a decade ago. Supporters say the bill provides clarity and protects broader voter engagement, while opponents argue it limits local party control.



A bill that would allow Tennessee schools to deny enrollment or charge tuition to undocumented students advanced in the House Education Committee this week on an 11–7 vote, with three Republicans opposing. The amended legislation, HB 793, permits districts to require immigration status documentation but does not mandate it—setting up a potential legal challenge to the federal *Plyler v. Doe* decision guaranteeing public education for all children. The proposal sparked strong pushback from education advocates, Democratic lawmakers, and

community members, with critics warning it targets vulnerable children and could harm the state's future workforce.

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The Tennessee Department of Health has awarded \$45.7 million in a third round of Rural Healthcare Resiliency Program (RHRP) grants to support health outcomes in rural and underserved communities. The funding supports 23 projects focused on preventive care, behavioral health, substance abuse treatment, mobile clinics, and care navigation.

These grants reach all 89 rural counties, including Tennessee's nine distressed counties, and were made possible through the TennCare Shared Savings program and legislative support in the 2025 state budget. An additional \$4.3 million remains to be awarded.

PRESS RELEASE



Memphis International Airport has officially broken ground on its next major modernization effort. The multi-year construction project will update the airport's aging Concourse B, expand baggage claim areas, add new amenities, and improve overall passenger flow. This investment continues MEM's mission to enhance traveler experience and prepare for future growth.

IN THE NEWS

- Tennessee Republican primary for governor: Who's in, who's out and more for 2026 elections**

Gov. Bill Lee, who is term-limited, will leave the Tennessee governor's office in January 2027.

[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://tennessean.com) - Mar. 24, 2025
- Senate passes bill to make it harder to change government seals**

The Senate passed a bill 27–5 to protect historic government seals, including those featuring Confederate imagery, under the Tennessee Heritage Protection Act.

[PRO.STATEAFFAIRS.COM](https://pro.stateaffairs.com) - Mar. 25, 2025
- TN Bill proposes exceptions for firearms in restricted zones**

Two pieces of legislation are causing controversy as they move into the next phase, but they still have a long way to go.

[WREG.COM](https://wreg.com) - Mar. 26, 2025
- Tennessee House passes bill to make juvenile records of deceased school shooters public**

A bill seeking to make public deceased school shooters' juvenile records passed the Tennessee House with bipartisan support on Monday.

[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://tennessean.com) - Mar. 25, 2025
- House Passes Bill Increasing Penalties for 'Chemtrail' Violations**

The House approved a bill 69–21 to raise penalties for unauthorized weather modification, drawing criticism for legitimizing the "chemtrail" conspiracy theory.

[PRO.STATEAFFAIRS.COM](https://pro.stateaffairs.com) - Mar. 25, 2025
- TN bill establishing guidelines and guardrails for veteran benefits leads to division among advocates for veterans**

Supporters of the bill say it can safeguard servicemembers accessing benefits. Critics warn it could open veterans up to "financial predators."

WBIR.COM - Mar. 24, 2025

- **Tennessee Roof Code Exemption Bill Heads to Governor**

A bill exempting Tennessee from federal commercial roofing standards is headed to the governor after passing both chambers with strong support.

PRO.STATEAFFAIRS.COM - Mar. 25, 2025

- **Hemp Regulation Bill Faces Setbacks and Confusion**

A hemp regulation bill hit legislative roadblocks as House and Senate versions clash over THC potency limits and licensing structures.

PRO.STATEAFFAIRS.COM - Mar. 25, 2025

- **GOP bill allowing Tennessee schools to deny an education to immigrant children advances**

A bill giving public school districts the right to refuse enrollment to children without legal immigration status advanced in the Tennessee House Wednesday as a packed audience disrupted debate by standing and singing spiritual music in protest.

TENNESSEELOOKOUT.COM - Mar. 27, 2025

- **Lee plan to give locals taxing authority for transportation projects runs out of gas**

Gov. Bill Lee's proposal to grant local governments more authority to levy taxes for transportation projects has been derailed amid heavy lobbying by opponents.

PRO.STATEAFFAIRS.COM - Mar 27, 2025

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