

What's New on the Hill

Here are upcoming dates of importance:

- *Thursday, March 28th at 2:00 pm - Senate Deadline for Appropriation Amendments*
- *Week of March 25th legislative committee calendars: [Senate](#) / [House](#)*
- *113th Legislative Session Adjournment - Approx Mid-April*



Governor's Budget Amendments Set for Presentation in Senate and

House Finance Committees Next Week

We anticipate the Governor will introduce amendments to the budget next week, with presentations expected in both the Senate Finance and House Finance Committees. Both committees are scheduled to convene on Tuesday to review and potentially approve these proposed budget adjustments.



ON THE HILL

We had a fun time celebrating "Ag Day on the Hill" in honor of National Agriculture Day this Monday. Agriculture holds a special place in Tennessee, where ag-related industries employ 324,000 people and contribute a staggering

\$89 billion to the state's economy.

Additionally, Meagan had the privilege of meeting with Tennessee's commercial airports on Thursday to express gratitude for Governor Bill Lee's unwavering support. These airports play a vital role in connecting our state to the world, facilitating commerce, tourism, and economic growth.

We were thrilled to welcome back our summer intern, Anika, who shadowed Meagan on Wednesday. It's hard to believe that in just two short months, Anika will be a college graduate!



Tennessee's Opioid Abatement Council Announces First Round of Community Grants



Tennessee's Opioid Abatement Council has unveiled its inaugural round of community grants, totaling nearly \$81 million, to support initiatives addressing opioid addiction across the state.

These grants will fund a range of programs focused on treatment, recovery

support, primary prevention, education, harm reduction, and research. With input from diverse stakeholders, the council meticulously evaluated proposals to ensure funding aligns with strategic priorities and maximizes impact.

This milestone reflects a concerted effort to combat the opioid crisis and mitigate its devastating effects on individuals and communities throughout Tennessee. Through collaborative efforts and prudent stewardship of resources, the Opioid Abatement Council aims to effect meaningful change and promote healing in the face of this ongoing public health challenge.

To view the list of funded community projects and learn more about Tennessee's efforts to address the opioid epidemic, [click here](#).



Tennessee Becomes First US State with Law Protecting Musicians from AI



Tennessee Governor Bill Lee has signed the Ensuring Likeness Voice and Image Security (ELVIS) Act into law, marking a significant step in protecting artists, including musicians, from unauthorized use by artificial intelligence (AI).

This groundbreaking legislation updates Tennessee's personal rights protection law to safeguard songwriters, performers, and other music industry professionals from the misuse of AI-generated content. With the rise of generative AI technology, concerns have mounted over its potential to infringe on artists' rights and create legal and ethical dilemmas.

The ELVIS Act aims to address these concerns and provide vital protections for Tennessee's vibrant music industry, which supports over 61,000 jobs and contributes billions to the state's economy. As AI continues to reshape the creative landscape, this legislation sets a crucial precedent for safeguarding artists' intellectual property rights.

To learn more about the ELVIS Act and its implications for the music industry, [click here](#).



Join Us at The Tennessee Childcare Summit!

You're invited to participate in an important conversation about childcare in Tennessee at The Tennessee Childcare Summit on April 10, 2024. This event

will be held from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at The Cal Turner Family Center at Meharry Medical College.

Childcare plays a crucial role in workforce and economic development, and this summit will bring together leaders from across the state to discuss the need for safe and affordable childcare solutions. [Register soon to secure your spot](#), as space is limited.

During the summit, you'll have the opportunity to engage with other leaders, participate in discussions, and gain insights from panelists, including State Commissioners, representatives from Ford at Blue Oval City, West Tennessee Healthcare, and more. Lunch will be provided.

Don't miss this chance to be part of an important conversation about childcare in Tennessee. We encourage you to share this invitation with others who may be interested in joining the discussion.

Date and Time:

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM CDT

Location:

The Cal Turner Family Center at Meharry Medical College

1011 21st Avenue North

Nashville, TN 37208

We look forward to seeing you at The Tennessee Childcare Summit!

[RSVP](#)



Key Legislation



Franchise Tax Reform Advances in Senate

During its recent Thursday morning floor session, the Tennessee Senate overwhelmingly endorsed Governor Lee's proposal to eliminate the alternative minimum measure used for calculating businesses' franchise tax liability. The legislation, championed by Leader Johnson and Leader Lamberth, received strong support with a 25-6 vote, signaling a significant step towards comprehensive tax reform in the state.

If enacted, the bill promises substantial tax savings for Tennessee businesses, amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Additionally, businesses that utilized the alternative minimum measure in the past three years could be eligible for refunds totaling as much as \$1.5 billion, providing crucial relief and incentivizing economic growth.

The next phase of the legislative process entails consideration of the bill by the House, where it will undergo review by the Finance, Ways, and Means Subcommittee. While Subcommittee members have signaled their support for

eliminating the alternative minimum measure, concerns have been raised regarding the provision of refunds for past tax years. Some members question the potential legal liability associated with retroactive refunds and advocate for a more cautious approach. [Read more >>>](#)

Voucher Bills Forge Ahead on Separate Paths

The Tennessee House and Senate are pressing forward with their distinct versions of a statewide voucher proposal, showcasing little indication of convergence or compromise. Both bills have now advanced to their respective finance committees, where deliberations are expected to unfold.

The Senate version extends Governor Bill Lee's \$144 million proposal by incorporating an open enrollment system, granting parents the flexibility to utilize a \$7,300 voucher for public school attendance in districts with available space. The estimated price tag for this expanded initiative amounts to \$287 million for the state and \$50 million in local government foregone revenue.

On the contrary, the House bill encompasses a slew of supplementary spending programs atop the governor's voucher initiative. These additions include reductions in testing and assessment requirements, augmented funding for school maintenance and health plans, and the dissolution of the Achievement School District for underperforming schools. Projected state costs for the House bill stand at \$384 million, accompanied by a \$197 million increase in local revenues next year.

Governor Lee, thus far, has maintained a neutral stance on the competing versions, emphasizing the ongoing legislative process as a path toward a statewide voucher program. As speculation swirls within legislative corridors

about the bill's fate, the possibility of divergent outcomes remains, ranging from legislative deadlock to scaled-back compromises. Ultimately, the future trajectory of Tennessee's voucher program hinges on navigating the intricate web of political dynamics and policy considerations. [Read more >>>](#)



IN THE NEWS



- **Tennessee bill proposal aims to ensure lowest prescription drug costs for consumers**

A newly proposed bill in Tennessee could help you get the best price on your medication.

[NEWSCHANNEL9.COM](https://www.newschannel9.com) - March 20, 2024

- **Bill to close college board meetings fails in Tennessee House subcommittee**

Legislation to allow public college boards to close meetings to discuss “sensitive” matters will not proceed after a House subcommittee killed the bill Monday.

[TENNESSEELOOKOUT.COM](https://www.tennesseelookout.com) - March 19, 2024

- **Dark money group goes after GOP House member for opposition to Tennessee school voucher plan**

As anticipated, the push for Tennessee to adopt a statewide school

voucher plan has received an extra boost from dark money political action groups.

[TENNESSEELOOKOUT.COM](https://tennesseelookout.com) - March 20, 2024

- **Tennessee Senate Passes Bill To Give Greater Protection To Stalking/Harassment Victims**

The Tennessee Senate voted unanimously to pass legislation that would provide increased protection for victims of stalking and harassment.

[TENNESSEECONSERVATIVENEWS.COM](https://tennesseeconservativenews.com) - March 19, 2024

- **Legislation To Expedite Parental Rights Termination For “Substantial Non-Compliance” Passed By Tennessee House**

The Tennessee House of Representatives passed a bill Monday that would require the Department of Children’s Services to move forward with termination of parental rights for “substantial non-compliance.”

[TENNESSEECONSERVATIVENEWS.COM](https://tennesseeconservativenews.com) - March 19, 2024

- **Tennessee Senator Brent Taylor passes 2 bills to help tackle juvenile theft crimes**

Senator Brent Taylor passed two bills on Monday to help fight against the juvenile crime problem.

[ACTIONNEWS5.COM](https://actionnews5.com) - March 19, 2024

- **As Texas border arrests law teeters in court, other GOP states also push tougher immigration policy**

Republican lawmakers across the country were already jockeying to push their states deeper into immigration enforcement when the Supreme Court, if only briefly, let Texas enforce a new law giving police broad powers to arrest migrants suspected of crossing the border

illegally.

[FOX59.COM](https://www.fox59.com) - March 19, 2024

- **Senate panel makes changes, advances bill to make TN tourism records secret**

Many of Tennessee's future tourism records are one step closer to potentially becoming confidential.

[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://www.tennessean.com) - March 21, 2024

- **Biden nominates federal prosecutor Ritz of Memphis to 6th Circuit bench**

President Joe Biden has nominated Kevin Ritz, currently the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Tennessee, to serve as a judge on the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

[PRO.STATEAFFAIRS.COM](https://www.pro.stateaffairs.com) - March 21, 2024

- **Tennessee Senate passes bill based on 'chemtrails' conspiracy theory**

The Tennessee Senate has passed a bill targeting "chemtrails." SB 2691/HB 2063, sponsored by Rep. Monty Fritts, R-Kingston, and Sen. Steve Southerland, R-Morristown, passed in the Senate on Monday. The bill has yet to advance in the House.

[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://www.tennessean.com) - March 20, 2024

- **Tennessee stalls a bill that would increase penalties for transporting undocumented immigrants**

Legislation filed in Tennessee's statehouse would increase the penalty for people that give a ride to an undocumented immigrant.

[WPLN.ORG](https://www.wpln.org) - March 20, 2024

- **Tennessee bill to ease reading law's retention policy for 4th graders clears first hurdle** State lawmakers advanced legislation Tuesday that would put fewer fourth graders at risk of being held back this year under Tennessee's 2021 reading law.

[CHALKBEAT.ORG](https://www.chalkbeat.org) - March 20, 2024

- **Senate Committee kills bill to ban state court challenges of legislative rules** The Senate Judiciary Committee has defeated a bill introduced by House Republicans to ban lawsuits challenging legislative rules from being filed in state courts.

[PRO.STATEAFFAIRS.COM](https://www.pro.stateaffairs.com) - March 13, 2024



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