

What's New on the Hill

Upcoming dates of importance:

- Week of April 15th legislative committee calendars: [Senate](#) / [House](#)
- 113th Legislative Session Adjournment - Approx End of April
- Upcoming Tennessee Tax Deadlines: [Online Calendar](#)

Senate Passes Health Care Liability Fix

This week, the Senate passed [SB2253/HB2001](#), a measure addressing health care liability concerns. Introduced in response to the Crotty v. Flora decision by the Tennessee Supreme Court, this legislation seeks to clarify and reaffirm the legislative intent regarding health care liability damages.

Before the Crotty decision in September 2023, plaintiffs could only recover costs of medical expenses within the amount covered by the patient's insurance company. However, the decision altered this practice, potentially leading to inflated payouts and increased medical malpractice insurance costs. The bill's passage in the Senate represents a step toward rectifying this issue and ensuring fair compensation without burdening patients and businesses with escalating medical procedure costs.

Next in the legislative process, the bill heads to the full House for consideration on Tuesday, April 16.

Update on School Voucher Plan

As the Tennessee legislature enters its final weeks, Governor Lee's initiative to establish a statewide school voucher system is encountering challenges. Republican lawmakers are working to reconcile differing proposals and resolve disagreements, particularly regarding student testing requirements. The bill, which initially gained momentum, has stalled in finance committees for three

weeks.

Efforts to pass the legislation are complicated by the tight legislative timeline, with the session set to conclude by April 26. Senate Education Committee Chairman Jon Lundberg and House K-12 Subcommittee Chairman Kirk Haston have been engaged in negotiations to address key issues in efforts to move the legislation forward.

While some Republican lawmakers have expressed doubts about the bill's viability, Governor Lee and GOP leadership remain optimistic about its prospects. However, concerns persist over certain provisions, including the need for state-approved testing for voucher recipients, which the Senate favors but the House does not.

Negotiations continue between the House and Senate, with input from education stakeholders such as the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE). The proposed legislation, known as the Education Freedom Scholarship Act, aims to allocate taxpayer funding to K-12 students for private school tuition. However, Democrats oppose school vouchers, emphasizing support for public school provisions in the House bill.

Further discussions are planned over the weekend, with the bill scheduled for review by finance committees next week, signaling its potential fate.

You can [track the legislation](#) on the General Assembly's website.



Tennessee Senate passes bill allowing teachers to carry guns amid vocal protests

In a contentious session, Tennessee Senate Republicans recently approved legislation permitting public K-12 teachers and staff to carry concealed handguns on school premises. This decision, passed in a 26-5 vote, sparked intense protests from Covenant School families and advocates pushing for stricter gun-control measures. Approximately 200 demonstrators voiced their opposition in the Senate gallery, leading to disruptions and a call from Lt. Gov. Randy McNally for state troopers to clear the area.

For more information, you can read the full article [here](#).

Deadline Extensions and Sales Tax Refunds Available to December Storm Victims



Tax relief measures are being implemented for businesses and homeowners affected by severe weather in Tennessee on December 9, 2023. The Department of Revenue has extended the franchise and excise tax filing and payment deadlines to June 17, 2024, for impacted businesses in designated disaster areas. This extension applies automatically to businesses in currently identified areas, with further extensions for newly designated disaster areas.

[PRESS RELEASE](#)



Tennessee Opioid Abatement Council: 2024 Community Grant Updates



In the first round of Community Grants for the 2024 cycle, the Opioid Abatement Council received an overwhelming response with 396 applications from across the state.

On Monday, March 18, 2024, the Council convened to review and approve the

grant applications for this cycle. The list of approved applications is now available for viewing via the link provided below.

[2024 Approved Community Grant Applications](#)



IN THE NEWS



- **Tennessee GOP Rep. Andy Ogles draws Republican and Democratic challengers**

Tennessee Rep. Andy Ogles will have Republican opposition in the August primary as he seeks to retain a congressional seat passing through Nashville.

[APNEWS.COM](#) - April 9, 2024

- **Tennessee lawmakers seek to require parental permission before children join social media**

Tennessee's GOP-dominant Senate on Monday unanimously signed off on legislation requiring minors to have parental consent to create social media accounts.

[AJC.COM/NEWS](#) - April 9, 2024

- **Republican lawmakers question Tennessee education commissioner's credentials**

House Republicans are voicing concerns over Tennessee Education Commissioner Lizzette Reynolds' qualifications to continue leading the state agency.

[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://www.tennessean.com) - April 8, 2024

- **Tennessee legislature advances bill to boost small music venues with \$6 million fund**

There's good news for small music venues across Tennessee. A bill creating a fund to help them survive and thrive is moving forward in the state legislature.

[FOX17.COM](https://www.fox17.com) - April 9, 2024

- **Tennessee Senate advances bill to allow death penalty for child rape**

Tennessee's GOP-controlled Senate advanced legislation on Tuesday allowing the death penalty in child rape convictions as critics raised concerns that the U.S. Supreme Court has banned capital punishment in such cases.

[WASHINGTONPOST.COM](https://www.washingtonpost.com) - April 9, 2024

- **Tennessee lawmakers pass bill to increase punishment for school threats**

It may soon be a felony to threaten the safety of a Tennessee school.

[WKRN.COM](https://www.wkrn.com) - April 11, 2024

- **Tennessee Senate bans local governments from enacting red flag laws**

No local governments will be able to pass ordinances that allow for extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs) unless the state legislature passes a law for them, so says the Tennessee Senate.

[WKRN.COM](https://www.wkrn.com) - April 11, 2024



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