

HBS

TENNESSEE NEWS

Legislative Updates: Week of January 27, 2025

Dates of importance were announced:

- **Week of February 3rd legislative committee calendars:** [House](#)
- **Thursday, February 6th:** House Bill Filing Deadlines
- **Monday, February 10th:** State of the State address



Gov. Lee to Deliver Seventh State of the State Address on February 10

Governor Bill Lee will deliver his seventh State of the State address on **Monday, February 10, at 6 p.m. CST** before the General Assembly and Tennesseans. The address, held in the House Chamber, will outline legislative priorities and the vision for Tennessee's future.

The address will be streamed live on Gov. Lee's [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) channels and broadcast statewide.

[PRESS RELEASE](#)



Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee successfully closed the special legislative session, securing passage of three major initiatives: the Education Freedom Act, a comprehensive

disaster relief package, and new public safety measures focused on immigration enforcement.

- **The Education Freedom Act (SB6001/HB6004)** creates Tennessee's first universal school choice program, ensuring stable state funding for school districts while allocating \$145.9M for scholarships, \$198.4M for teacher bonuses, and \$77.2M for K-12 infrastructure from sports betting revenue. The law protects school funding from disenrollment impacts and boosts teacher salaries and school facilities.
- **The disaster relief package (SB6003/HB6003)** provides \$110M for local government loan interest payments, \$100M for emergency relief, \$240M for non-federal disaster recovery costs, and \$20M to rebuild Hampton High School after Hurricane Helene. Additionally, SB6004/HB6002 allows the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to waive unemployment benefit requirements in disasters and clarifies TEMA's role in public recovery efforts.
- **The public safety and immigration enforcement bill (SB6002/HB6001)** establishes a new immigration enforcement division within the Department of Safety, appointing a Chief Immigration Enforcement Officer to coordinate with the Trump Administration. It restricts state-issued IDs to U.S. citizens, lawful residents, and federally authorized individuals, while mandating proof of citizenship for license renewals. The law also criminalizes sanctuary policies, allowing removal proceedings for violators, and creates a \$5M grant program to support local immigration enforcement efforts.

The new laws take immediate effect, positioning Tennessee to support federal immigration enforcement and expand school choice for families.

[PRESS RELEASE](#)

Tennessee
officially has
**universal,
statewide
school choice!**



Tennessee lawmakers pass \$447M school voucher program in major win for Gov. Bill Lee

Tennessee lawmakers passed a \$447 million statewide school voucher program on Thursday, marking a major victory for Gov. Bill Lee and school choice advocates. The Senate approved the bill 20-13, while the House passed it 54-44, with bipartisan opposition. Protesters chanted against the measure outside the chamber.

The Education Freedom Scholarship program will provide 20,000 scholarships of about \$7,300 to public and private school students statewide, with initial income requirements for half the slots. The bill guarantees school districts will not lose state funding, provides \$2,000 bonuses for public school teachers, and allocates funds for school construction and maintenance.

The bill now heads to Gov. Lee, who is expected to sign it into law immediately, allowing the Tennessee Department of Education to begin implementation for the 2025-26 school year.

[READ MORE](#)

Tennessee's Outstanding Fairs **HONORED**



Tennessee's agricultural fairs were celebrated at the 103rd Tennessee Association of Fairs (TAF) Convention, held January 16-18 in Murfreesboro. Nearly 1,000 attendees gathered as the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and TAF honored the best county, regional, and state fairs for the 2024 season.

Champion of Champions: Greene County Fair

Top Fair Winners:

- **Division A:** White County Fair (State Champion)
- **Division AA:** Warren County Fair (State Champion)
- **Division AAA:** Williamson County Fair (State Champion)
- **Most Improved Fairs:** Houston, Rhea, and Coffee County Fairs

The Fair Showcase competition, now in its 27th year, drew 579 entries from 43 fairs, recognizing excellence in categories like educational displays, social media, and creative exhibits.

[See the Full List of Winners here](#)

PRESS RELEASE



Price tag for Tennessee immigration plan lowered from \$20M to \$5M

Gov. Bill Lee's immigration enforcement plan saw a sharp cost reduction from \$20M to \$5M, mainly by cutting grants for local law enforcement to implement 287(g)

programs, which allow local officers to enforce federal immigration laws. [Read more...](#)



Tennessee's immigration enforcement division would be confidential

Gov. Bill Lee's proposed immigration enforcement division would operate confidentially, exempt from public records laws, sparking transparency concerns. The four-person division would administer grants to law enforcement and coordinate with federal authorities. Critics warn the

secrecy could undermine public oversight and trust. [Read more...](#)



In December, unemployment rates declined in 23 of Tennessee’s 95 counties, remained unchanged in 39, and increased in 33, according to the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Moore County had the lowest rate at 2.5%, followed by Williamson (2.6%) and Sevier (2.7%), while Unicoi County recorded the highest at 5.9%. Statewide, Tennessee’s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3.6%, slightly up from November but still below the national rate of 4.1%. 2024 saw record lows of 3% in May, June, and July, and county-level rates remain unadjusted for seasonal employment shifts. January 2025 data will be released on March 6 at 1:30 p.m. CST.

[PRESS RELEASE](#)

IN THE NEWS

- **Tennessee House GOP now requires tickets, ID to enter public gallery**
Tennessee House Republicans are implementing a new ticketing system for the chamber's public galleries that will require spectators to reserve seats and show identification to enter.
[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://www.tennessean.com) - Jan. 24, 2025
- **Tennessee's \$1B special legislative session kicks off, expected to wrap this week**
Tennessee lawmakers on Monday officially began a special legislative session to take up \$470 million in Hurricane Helene relief, a \$447 million statewide school choice voucher program and new a state immigration enforcement entity.
[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://www.tennessean.com) - Jan. 27, 2025
- **School vouchers a civil rights issue or 'predatory lending'? Special session debate looms**
As lawmakers prepare to take up Gov. Bill Lee's \$447 million proposal for a statewide school choice voucher program, advocates are framing the matter as a civil rights issue, while critics warn that similar programs in other states have led to student achievement decline on par with the setbacks seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.
[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://www.tennessean.com) - Jan. 27, 2025

- Tennessee lawmakers discuss bills on first day of special session**

The special session focuses on Hurricane Helene relief, how Tennessee will be involved in President Donald Trump's immigration plans and the school voucher bill.

[WSMV.COM](https://www.wsmv.com) - Jan. 28, 2025
- Tennessee Opens Session on School Vouchers and Trump Immigration Push, as Protests Seek Gun Control**

Tennessee's Republican-dominant Statehouse has begun considering Gov. Bill Lee's push for more school voucher access statewide and efforts to help President Donald Trump's aggressive immigration agenda

[USNEWS.COM](https://www.usnews.com) - Jan. 27, 2025
- Bill restricting flags displayed in government buildings, public roads, classrooms introduced in TN**

A bill was introduced this week in both chambers of the Tennessee legislature that would limit the display of any flags in government buildings or school classrooms.

[WSMV.COM](https://www.wsmv.com) - Jan. 28, 2025
- New Tennessee legislation would let police use interstate cameras to investigate some crimes**

Tennessee state Rep. John Ray Clemmons is developing legislation that would allow law enforcement to use cameras posted on interstates to investigate certain crimes.

[AXIOS.COM](https://www.axios.com) - Jan. 28, 2025
- TN bill to amend public comment rules for development application approvals withdrawn in state house**

A bill proposed in the Tennessee General Assembly, that would change the rules on public input before local governments could approve development applications, has been withdrawn for consideration.

[LOCAL3NEWS.COM](https://www.local3news.com) - Jan. 28, 2025

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