

Week of February 17th legislative committee calendars: [House](#) | [Senate](#)



Husch Blackwell Strategies (HBS) has officially rebranded as HB Strategies, marking its transition to an independent firm. This evolution reflects the firm's tremendous success and growth over the past seven years, expanding from five offices and 42 clients in 2018 to thirteen offices nationwide, serving more than 400 clients today. While the name and logo have changed, HB Strategies remains dedicated to delivering the same exceptional advocacy and results clients have come to expect.



Gov. Lee's 2025 State of the State Address

Governor Bill Lee delivered his seventh State of the State address, unveiling a \$59.5 billion budget for FY 2025-26 focused on economic growth, education, public safety, and conservation. Key initiatives include:

Economic Growth & Tax Relief

- \$35.6M for the Rainy Day Fund, bringing reserves to \$2.2B.
- \$45.8M for Rural Development Grants to revitalize communities.
- \$25M for FastTrack grants to attract businesses and create jobs.
- \$10M for startup innovation through SBIR/STTR matching funds.

Education

- \$198.4M for teacher bonuses and \$244M to boost the TISA formula, including teacher pay raises.
- \$145.9M for Education Freedom Scholarships to expand parental school choice.
- \$12M for TennesseeWORKS scholarships covering TCAT tuition and fees.

Public Safety

- \$130M for the Violent Crime Intervention Fund to support local law enforcement.
- \$75M for Downtown Public Safety grants.
- \$38M to hire 117 additional State Troopers.

Housing & Infrastructure

- \$1B for TDOT to expedite road projects statewide.
- \$60M for starter home construction in rural areas.
- \$30M for Rural & Workforce Housing Tax Credits.

Conservation & Energy

- \$100M for long-term water resource planning, including protecting the Duck River.
- \$52M to establish five new Tennessee State Parks.
- \$50M for Small Modular Reactor (SMR) grants to advance nuclear energy innovation.

Strong Families

- \$95.5M for enhanced long-term care services.
- \$41M to strengthen DCS placement options for children.
- \$5.9M to expand Smart Steps childcare assistance.

[PRESS RELEASE](#)

Tennessee Needs at Least **\$77.7 Billion Worth** of Public Infrastructure Improvements



Tennessee Advisory Commission
on Intergovernmental Relations
TACIR



The Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR) released its latest report detailing the state's infrastructure needs for the five-year period from July 2023 to June 2028. The report highlights a \$9.5 billion (14%) increase from the previous year, bringing the total estimated cost of public infrastructure improvements to \$77.7 billion. Key findings include:

Top Infrastructure Categories

- **Transportation and Utilities:** \$39.1 billion (40% of the increase)
 - \$3.8 billion increase driven by \$3.1 billion in new projects and \$3.7 billion in cost increases.
- **Education:** \$18.9 billion
 - \$895 million increase in school renovations, with major needs in Metro Nashville Public Schools (\$668M), Wilson County (\$106M), and Rutherford County (\$93M).
- **Health, Safety, and Welfare:** \$12.4 billion

- \$1.4 billion increase due to water/wastewater upgrades (\$484M) and new law enforcement projects, including jail construction in DeKalb County (\$70M) and Humphreys County (\$30M).

For the full report and county-specific details, visit [TACIR's website](#).

[PRESS RELEASE](#)



Governor Bill Lee announced the appointees to the Duck River Watershed Planning Partnership, created by Executive Order 108 in November 2024. This initiative underscores Tennessee's commitment to balancing economic development with water resource management and environmental conservation.

[PRESS RELEASE](#)

Gov. Lee Signs Historic **EDUCATION FREEDOM ACT**



Governor Bill Lee has signed the Education Freedom Act, establishing Tennessee's first universal school choice program. This landmark legislation empowers families statewide to direct their tax dollars toward the educational options that best meet their children's needs, regardless of income or location. Celebrated alongside legislators, educators, and families, Gov. Lee called the Act a transformative step toward ensuring quality education for every Tennessee child.

[READ MORE](#)



The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) has announced the inaugural recipients of its Fatherhood Grant Program, a \$5 million initiative supporting public, private, and nonprofit organizations that serve fathers across the state. Following over 120 applications, ten organizations were selected, including East Tennessee State University, Ridgeview Behavioral Health Services, and the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Memphis.

The program focuses on mentorship, co-parenting support, skill-building, education, employment assistance, and financial literacy, recognizing the critical role fathers play in strengthening families and promoting childhood development.

[PRESS RELEASE](#)

IN THE NEWS

- **Gov. Lee Proposes Renaming Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills Grants**
Jimmy Naifeh and John Wilder served a combined 54 years as the speakers of the House and Senate. Now, Gov. Bill Lee is proposing to remove their names from a scholarship program for students to attend technical colleges.
[PRO.STATEAFFAIRS.COM](https://pro.stateaffairs.com) - Feb. 10, 2025
- **Tennessee lawmakers introduced some 1,400 bills before filing deadline**
Tennessee lawmakers collectively introduced 2,826 bills before the filing deadline for measures to be considered in the 2025 session. House members sponsored 1,400 measures and senators weighing in with 1,426.
[PRO.STATEAFFAIRS.COM](https://pro.stateaffairs.com) - Feb. 11, 2025
- **Lawmakers propose constitutional amendments for gun rights, property tax ban, right to refuse medical treatment**
While many laws passed during the legislative session take effect immediately or within a year, some legislation takes multiple years to go into effect.
[WJHL.COM](https://wjhl.com) - Feb. 13, 2025
- **Grocery tax cut not off the table for Tennesseans, but may be losing steam**
Republicans may still be cooking up a plan to cut Tennessee's grocery tax, but the effort could be losing steam after Gov. Bill Lee did not include funding in his proposed budget to make up for the lost revenue.
[WKARN.COM](https://wkarn.com) - Feb. 13, 2025

- ***New state bill would allow Broadway businesses to avoid some historic zoning scrutiny***

A bill introduced this week in Tennessee's House and Senate aims to curb those commissions' authority in "tourism development zones," like one that covers downtown Nashville.

[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://tennessean.com) - Feb. 14, 2025

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