

HBS

TENNESSEE NEWS

Legislative Updates: Week of February 3, 2025

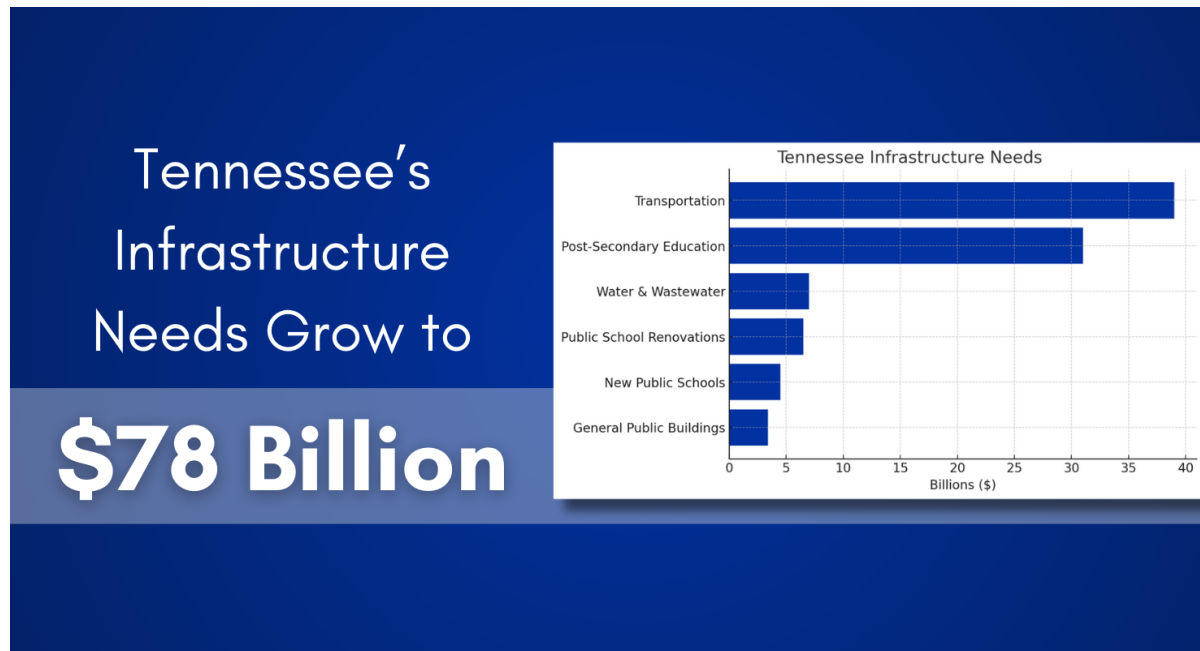
Dates of importance were announced:

- **Week of February 10th legislative committee calendars:** [House](#) | [Senate](#)
- **Monday, February 10th:** State of the State address
 - Streaming on Gov. Lee's [Facebook](#) & [YouTube](#).
 - Airing statewide on public TV & radio.

TN Physical Therapy Association Day on the Hill



Tennessee legislators met with the TN Physical Therapy Association as PTs and PT students from across the state gathered for their Day on the Hill to engage in the legislative process.



A new Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR) report finds that state and local infrastructure needs have risen by 15%, now totaling nearly \$78 billion. The increase, about \$10 billion from last year, is based on projected needs from July 2023 to June 2028, compiled from local and state government data.

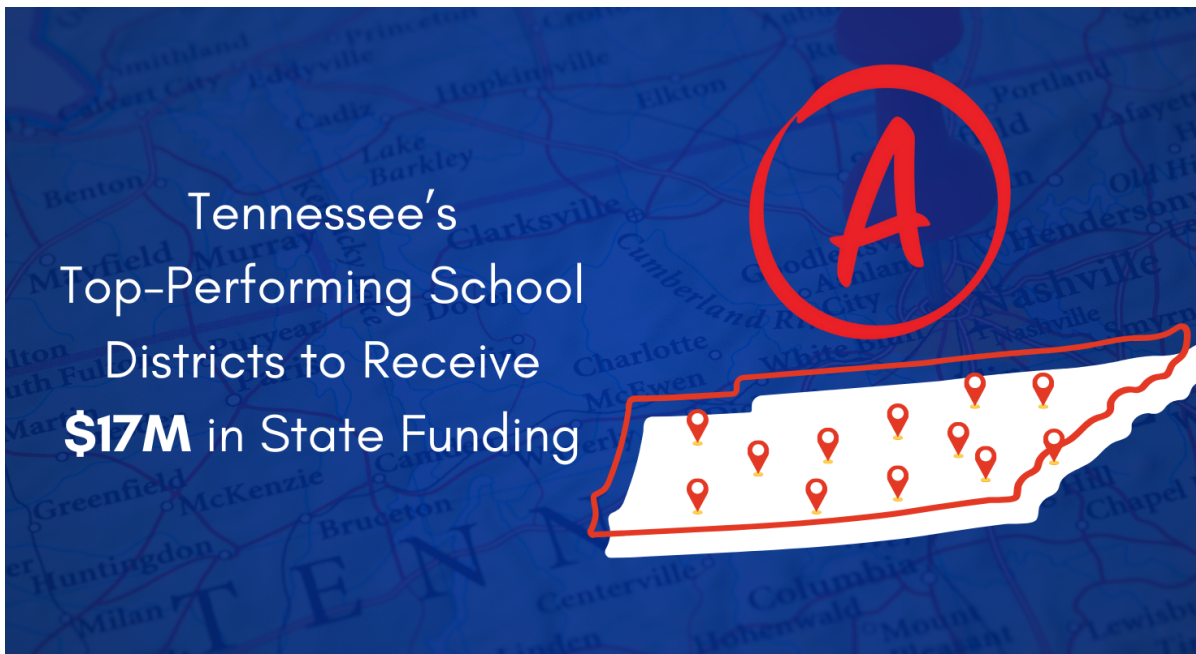
Top Infrastructure Needs:

- \$39B for transportation (largest category)
- \$31B for post-secondary education buildings
- \$7B for water & wastewater projects
- \$6.5B for public school renovations
- \$4.5B for new public schools & additions

- \$3.4 billion for general public building

Tennessee relies on gas and diesel taxes to fund road projects but has not raised them since 2017's IMPROVE Act, leading to funding gaps. Gov. Bill Lee's Transportation Modernization Act (2023) provided \$3.3 billion for road projects, but additional funding challenges remain. Sen. Mark Pody (R-Lebanon) is pushing a plan to redirect sales tax revenues from auto and tire sales to boost road spending by \$1 billion annually after a similar effort failed last session.

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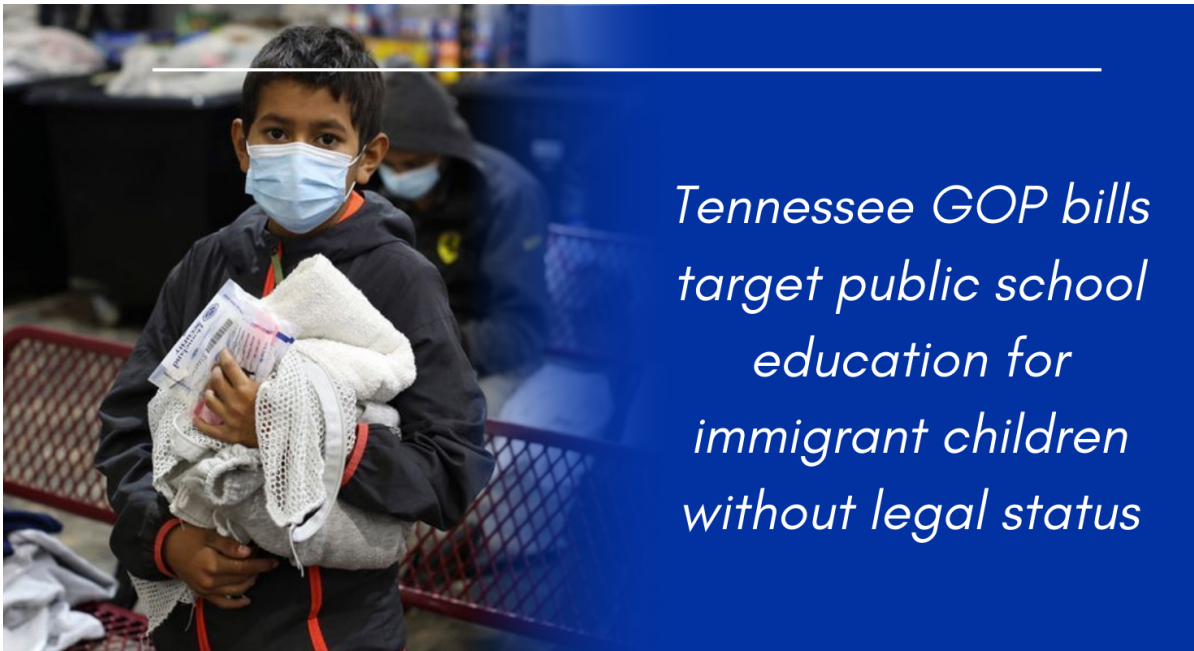


Who gets it: 15 high performing school districts would qualify for money from \$17M pool

As part of Gov. Bill Lee's \$450 million education package, \$17 million will be distributed annually to Tennessee's top-performing school districts. To qualify, at least half of a district's schools must receive an "A" rating from the Department of Education. Based on the latest rankings, 15 school districts meet the criteria, including Williamson County, Germantown, and Rutherford County.

The funding was included in the appropriations bill (SB6005/HB6004) as a separate measure from the school voucher program, allowing lawmakers to support it even if they opposed vouchers. The appropriations measure passed with strong bipartisan support (Senate 27-6, House 81-14), while the Education Freedom Scholarships passed more narrowly (Senate 20-13, House 54-44).

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*Tennessee GOP bills
target public school
education for
immigrant children
without legal status*

Tennessee Republicans have introduced bills to restrict public school access for undocumented children, challenging the 1982 Supreme Court ruling in *Plyler v. Doe*. Proposals include allowing districts to deny enrollment and requiring undocumented families to pay tuition. Gov. Bill Lee's school voucher program also excludes students without legal status. Supporters argue these measures prioritize resources for legal residents, while critics call them cruel and unconstitutional. Immigrant rights advocates vow to fight the legislation.

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Gov. Bill Lee's administration is backing HB 107, which would remove school attendance and vaccine requirements for families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits. Sponsored by House Majority Leader William Lamberth, the bill eliminates rules requiring parents to ensure school attendance, immunizations, health checkups, and parental involvement in education. Lee's office

argues the measure "streamlines" eligibility rules, but Democrats warn it weakens parental accountability. Currently, non-compliance can reduce TANF payments by 20%, with Tennessee receiving \$190M annually for the program. Critics argue that removing these requirements could weaken child welfare standards and reduce program effectiveness.

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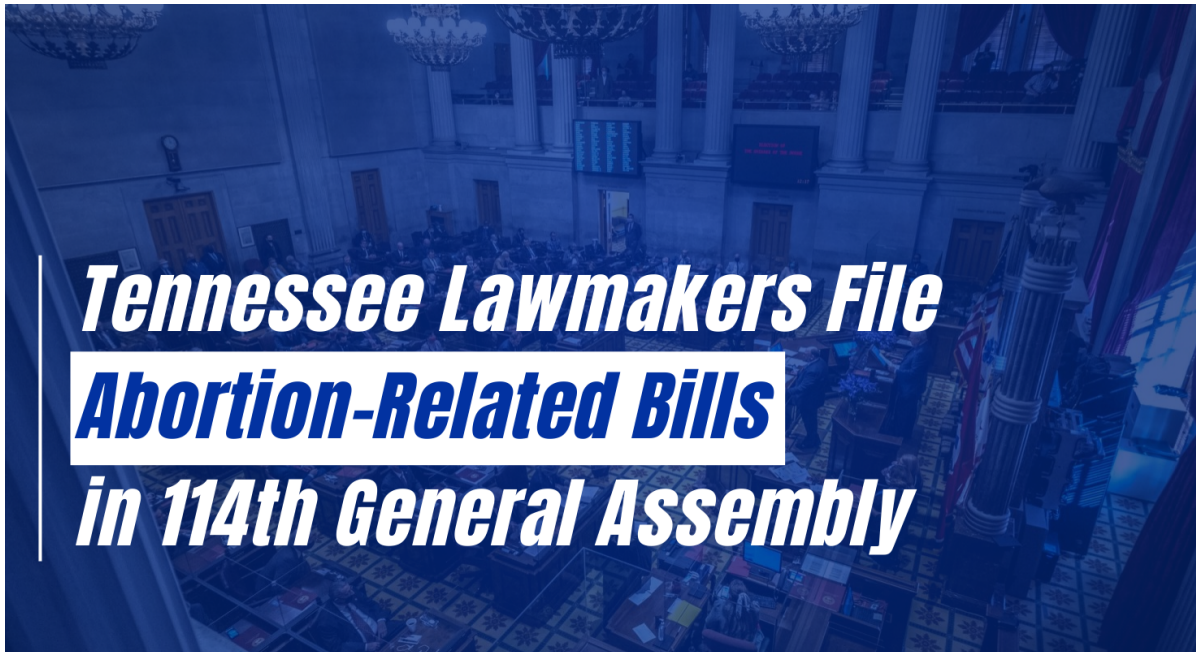
Tennessee Lawmakers File Gun Legislation For 114th General Assembly

Tennessee legislators have introduced several gun-related bills, with proposals focusing on both expanding gun rights and enhancing firearm safety. Some key bills include:

- **HB 0167/SB 0033 – "Makayla's Law"** – Holds gun owners accountable if a child under 13 accesses a firearm and causes harm.

- **HB 0430/SB 0500 – "Protect Kids Not Guns Act"**– Proposes a red flag law to temporarily remove firearms from high-risk individuals.
- **HB 0985/SB 0824** – Would allow firearms in gun-free zones and remove penalties for carrying in restricted areas.
- **HB 0387/SB 0474** – Would prohibit healthcare providers from asking patients about gun ownership.
- **HJR 0053** – Proposes a constitutional amendment to limit state firearm regulations.

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With the special session on education, immigration, and disaster relief funding completed, Tennessee lawmakers are shifting focus to new abortion-related

legislation. Several bills have been filed, reflecting a divide between restricting or expanding abortion access.

- **HB 0014/SB 0003 – Clarifies abortion definition:** Introduced by Rep. Harold Love (D) & Sen. Raumesh Akbari (D), this bill excludes contraception and IVF embryo disposal from Tennessee’s abortion laws
- **HB 0026/SB 0194 – “Unborn Child Protection Act”:** Sponsored by Rep. Gino Bulso (R) & Sen. Joey Hensley (R), this bill prohibits mailing abortion-inducing drugs and imposes \$5M in damages on violators.
- **HB 0027/SB 0187 – “Reproductive Freedom Act”:** Proposed by Rep. Aftyn Behn (D) & Sen. London Lamar (D), this bill establishes a fundamental right to reproductive care and removes multiple abortion restrictions.
- **HB 0179/SB 0345 – Rape & Incest Exception:** Rep. Yusuf Hakeem (D) filed this bill to allow abortion in cases of rape or incest, which Tennessee’s current law does not permit.

These bills highlight ongoing policy battles over reproductive rights in Tennessee.

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IN THE NEWS

- ***Tennessee lawmaker files ‘Pot for Potholes Act’***
A state representative has filed a bill that would allow for the sale of marijuana

and marijuana products in Tennessee and allocate the tax revenue from those sales to state highways.

WKRN.COM - Feb 5, 2025

- ***Protecting constitutional rights and public safety: Bill would prohibit doctors from asking about firearm ownership***

In an effort to protect the constitutional rights of gun owners in Tennessee, lawmakers have filed a bill that would prohibit healthcare providers from asking patients if they own firearms.

WKRN.COM - Feb. 4, 2025

- ***COVID vaccine skeptics could request blood from unvaccinated donors under Tennessee bill***

Blood donations are considered the gift of life, but one Tennessee lawmaker wants to give those who need a transfusion more of a choice in the gift they get.

WKRN.COM - Feb. 5, 2025

- ***Tennessee bill would require GPS devices for persons charged with certain crimes***

A Tennessee lawmaker has proposed legislation which would make it mandatory for individuals arrested for certain crimes to wear a global positioning monitoring system (GPS) device.

NEWSCHANNEL9.COM - Feb. 6, 2025

- ***Proposal to rename Nashville airport after Trump encounters political turbulence***

Efforts by two Republican state lawmakers to rename the Nashville International Airport after President Donald Trump have gained a good share of media attention but little traction among Republican colleagues in the General Assembly.

PRO.STATEAFFAIRS.COM - Feb. 4, 2025

- ***TNJ: New talk about Hagerty for gov; potential successors eye Rose seat***
Just when the Tennessee political set was coming to grips with the likelihood of next year's Republican gubernatorial primary featuring Marsha Blackburn facing off against John Rose, a key Bill Hagerty supporter inserted the state's junior U.S. senator back into the mix.
[PRO.STATEAFFAIRS.COM](https://pro.stateaffairs.com) - Feb. 7, 2025
 - ***TNJ: Weeklong sprint provided a regular session's worth of awards and prizes***
When Gov. Bill Lee's school voucher proposal collapsed amid disagreements between House and Senate Republicans last year, supporters of the effort confidently predicted they would come back and easily push the measure through in 2025.
[PRO.STATEAFFAIRS.COM](https://pro.stateaffairs.com) - Feb. 7, 2025
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