Countdown to the Finish Line

The Last Days of the first of the the 113th General Assembly

On Monday, the House is expected to adopt a flow motion to fast track the budget annual spending plan to the floor. This may put both chambers in a position to aim for adjourning by Friday or Saturday.

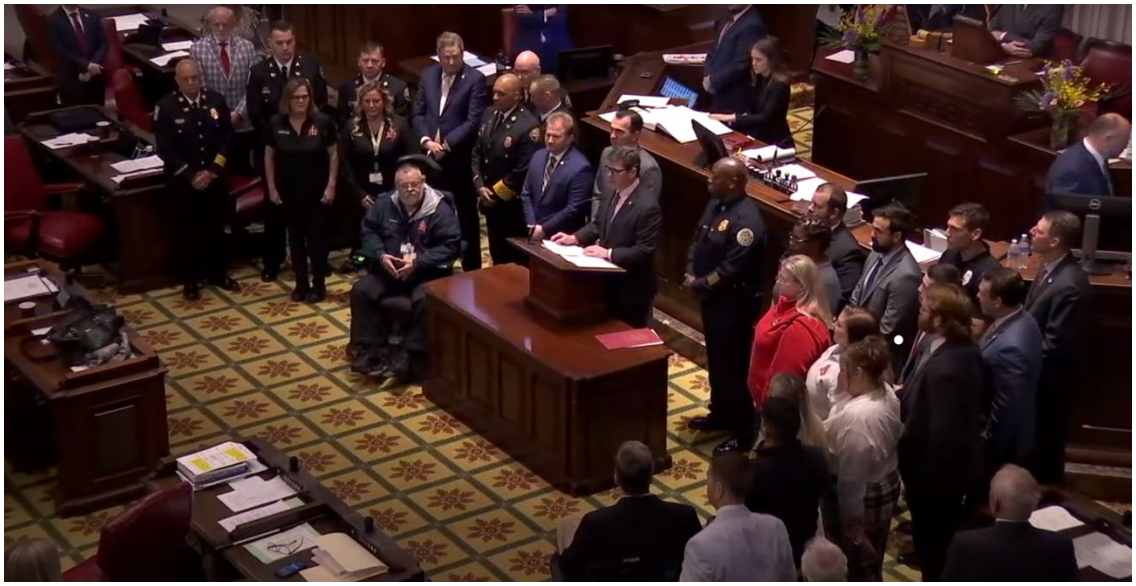
However, it is more probable that the budget will be approved, and lawmakers will come back the following week to wrap up any remaining matters.

JONES & PEARSON RE-CONFIRMED

This week, Nashville Rep. Justin Jones and Memphis Rep. Justin Pearson were reinstated to their seats after being expelled.

Jones was reinstated after the Nashville Metro Council made a unanimous vote to re-appoint him to his seat, while Pearson was reinstated by the Shelby County Commission.

METRO HEROES HONORED IN THE CHAMBER



On Thursday, April 13, the Tennessee House floor was filled with gratitude as the Metro Nashville Police Department, Nashville Fire Department, and Emergency Communications Department members were honored for their heroic response to the Covenant School shooting.

The Representatives commended the remarkable bravery and teamwork exhibited by each department in their valiant efforts to save as many lives as possible.

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The Legislature is advancing a proposed tax cut that would be the largest in state history, slashing $150 million in revenue from the state budget. The measure would lower the state's tax on groceries from 5% to 4.5% and cut the tax on some investment income from 6% to 5%. Supporters of the bill, including Governor Bill Lee, argue that it will provide relief to Tennessee families struggling with the high cost of living.

Opponents of the measure say that the tax cut will disproportionately benefit the wealthy and will harm the state's ability to fund essential services like education and healthcare. The bill is expected to move to a full Senate vote next week after passing through the Senate Finance, Ways and Means Committee on Thursday.

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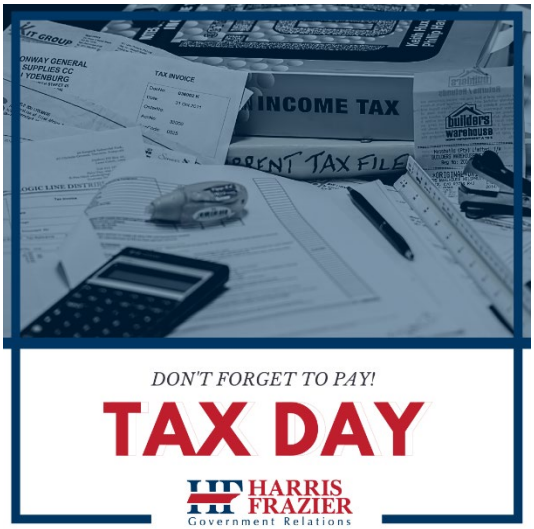
SCHOOL SAFETY LEGISLATION PASSES

In response to the tragic Covenant School shooting, Tennessee's both chambers passed a bill this week (HB0322/SB0274) to improve security measures in schools across the state.

The bill requires schools, including private and church-affiliated ones, to ensure exterior doors are locked while students are present and install bullet-resistant or entry-resistant film on the glass panels of entryways or basement-level windows and doors. Schools must also have a camera system and at least one main entrance with two separate sets of doors. The bill also mandates schools to conduct at least one armed intruder drill, incident command drill, and emergency safety bus drill per year.



REMINDER: While Tennesseans don't pay a state income tax, the IRS deadline to file & pay federal income taxes or request an extension will be this Tues, April 18!

Gov. Bill Lee signed a bill to designate the pumpkin pie as a state symbol thanks to it's sponsor Rep. Lowell Russell (R-Lenoir City).

The resolution assures the pie's recognition as a symbol only during the current assembly and will not be permanently recorded in the state's official Blue Book.

TENNESSEE NEWS

- Rep. Johnny Garrett (R-Goodlettsville) has enlisted U.S. Sen. Bill Hagerty to lobby the Federal Aviation Administration over a bill that would wrest appointments to the Nashville International Airport Authority from the city's mayor. The bill, which proposes the governor and speakers of the House and Senate each nominate three members to the panel, while the mayor serves as a non-voting member, has faced criticism and is likely to face legal challenges.

- Tennessee's general fund surplus has reached $1.3 billion through the first eight months of the budget year, with sales taxes in March beating projections by $112 million and corporate franchise and excise taxes beating expectations by $54 million, resulting in an 8.3% growth rate. The State

- Lawmakers are advancing legislation to give third-grade students an additional chance to avoid being held back if they fail to achieve the standard reading ratings of "on track" or "mastered" on the TCAP test, a requirement put in place in a 2021 special session. The new bill provides for screening tests, additional TCAP attempts, tutoring, and summer school, and gives schools the authority to appeal retention decisions, previously reserved only for parents.

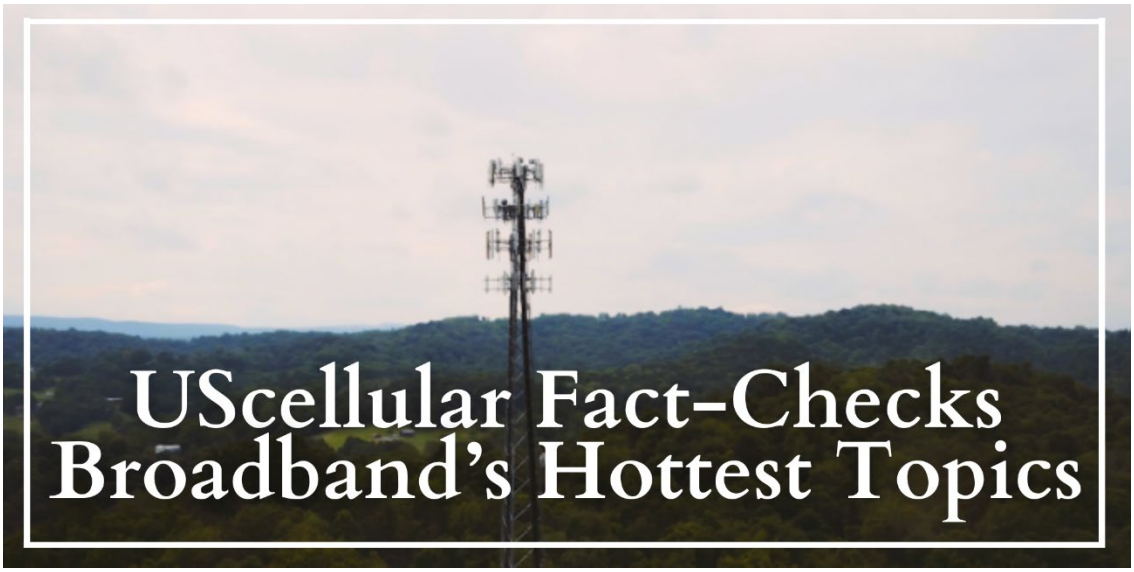
- Both the House and Senate are scheduled to vote on a bill that would regulate the sale of hemp-derived products like Delta 8, with the measure expected to generate about $12 million per year through a special 6% sales tax on the product and annual fees of $500 for suppliers and $250 for retail stores. The bill would

Funding Board had originally predicted growth of below 2.25% for the current year but has since revised its projection to between 7.2% to 7.7%

- Vice President Kamala Harris visited Nashville on Friday, where she gave a speech on gun control and met with Jones and Pearson. In her speech, Harris urged lawmakers to pass common-sense gun laws, citing the recent mass shootings in Atlanta and Boulder as evidence of the need for action. Harris also met with former state representatives London Lamar and John DeBerry, who were removed from their positions last year after speaking out against a bill that would restrict abortion rights.

also set a minimum age of consumption at 21 years old and impose packaging restrictions.

- Top Republicans, including former President Donald Trump, are expected to attend the Republican National Committee's donor retreat in Nashville this weekend. Notable attendees include former Vice President Mike Pence, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu, and Congressman Mark Green.



UScellular, one of the largest wireless carriers in the United States, has released a fact-checking report on some of the hottest topics related to broadband, including 5G, rural broadband, and network performance. There is a lot of talk in Tennessee about broadband, this report aims to clear up some common misconceptions about these topics and provide accurate information to consumers.

Among the key findings, UScellular notes that 5G technology is not just for urban areas but can also be deployed in rural areas to improve connectivity. Additionally, the report highlights the importance of expanding access to rural broadband, noting that 18 million Americans still lack access to high-speed internet. UScellular also points out that network performance is impacted by a variety of factors, including location, device compatibility, and network congestion.

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IN THE NEWS

Judges block implementation of law cutting Nashville council in half

A three-judge panel has blocked the implementation of a new law cutting the size of the Metro Nashville Council in half. The panel is comprised of Nashville Chancellor Pat Moskal, Shelby County Circuit Judge Mary Wagner, and Athens Chancellor Jerri Bryant found the plaintiffs are likely to succeed on their constitutional challenge of the measure. Wagner and Bryant are Republicans while Moskal is a Democrat.

Onthehill.tnjournal.net - April 10, 2023

Commentary: Does the Legislature Have Constitutional Authority to Pass Governor Lee's Call for a Red Flag Law?

On April 11, 2023, Governor Bill Lee called for the Tennessee Legislature to respond to the public's emotional response to the Covenant School murders by enacting a law to make sure mentally ill people do not have access to firearms. He did not use the term "Red Flag" but that is the correct label for the kind of law that Governor Lee described as a "new protective order".

tennesseestar.com - April 13, 2023

Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt named among the 2023 "Best Hospitals for Pediatrics" by Money and The Leapfrog Group

Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt is one of only 25 children's hospitals to make Money/The Leapgfrog Group's first-ever "Best Hospitals for Pediatrics" list and is the only pediatric hospital in Tennessee to earn the

distinction.

"This first-of-its-kind recognition by both Money and The Leapfrog Group honors the hard work of the outstanding physicians, nurses and staff of Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt for their support of our most vulnerable patients. I want to congratulate everyone for the selfless teamwork leading to this award," said C. Wright Pinson, MBA, MD, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Chief Health System Officer for Vanderbilt University Medical Center.
News.vumc.org - April 12, 2023

Legislature poised to dissolve community-led police oversight boards in Nashville and Memphis

The Tennessee Legislature could soon eliminate community-led police oversight boards and replace them with advisory groups with little power to investigate citizen complaints. If enacted, HB0764/SB0591 would dissolve existing boards in Nashville and Memphis within 90 days.

In their place would be seven-member "police advisory and review committees" whose members would be selected solely by a city's mayor—instead of community groups.
citizentribune.com - April 12, 2023

College of Nursing Offers Educational Conference for Those Who Care for Victims of Sexual Assault

The University of Tennessee Health Science Center's College of Nursing is offering a free forensic nursing conference April 24-25 for sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs) and others who provide care for victims of sexual assault. It is called The STEP-UP Extravaganza: An Inter-professional SANE Conference.
news.uthsc.edu - April 13, 2023

Legislation to equip teachers with panic buttons heads to Tennessee governor's desk

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (WZTV) — A bill that would equip Tennessee school teachers with silent panic buttons unanimously passed the state Senate on Thursday, two and a half weeks after a deadly mass shooting at a Christian elementary school in Nashville. Gov. Bill Lee plans to sign Alyssa's Law when it reaches his desk, a spokesperson tells FOX 17 News.

fox17.com - April 15, 2023

Middle Tennesseans Invited to Free Healthcare, Vision, Dental Clinic

What: Ascension Saint Thomas is excited to announce the highly anticipated return of its Medical Mission at Home events after a hiatus due to the pandemic. Residents of Davidson and surrounding counties are invited to the Nashville Fairgrounds on Saturday, April 29, to receive select free medical, dental, behavioral health, and vision care services from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Select prescriptions will be provided at no cost.

nashvillemedicalnews.com - April 11, 2023

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