

What's New on the Hill

Week of March 11th legislative committee calendars: [Senate](#) | [House](#)



We are grateful for the recent visit of distinguished guests at Volunteer Behavioral Health. State Representatives Sparks, Rep. Terry, Rep. Rudd, Rep. Russell along with RC Commissioner Phil Wilson.

Their gracious visit underscores their commitment to mental health advocacy and their recognition of the vital role organizations like VBH play in providing critical support for Tennesseans.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to each of them for taking the time to visit us and for their ongoing dedication to improving mental health resources and awareness in our state!



Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti Announces Solicitor General Transition



Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti recently announced a significant senior staff update. Solicitor General Andrée Blumstein has transitioned to private practice after nearly a decade of exemplary service to the State of Tennessee. Blumstein, the first woman solicitor general for Tennessee, has been honored for her exceptional contributions and commitment to legal excellence.

Taking over the role of Solicitor General is Matt Rice, a native of Johnson City.

Rice, who joined the Office in 2022, has a distinguished legal background including experience at Williams & Connolly in Washington, D.C. A graduate of UC Berkeley School of Law, Rice clerked for notable figures such as Judge Sandra Ikuta and Justice Clarence Thomas. Skrmetti praised Rice's legal acumen, writing skills, and dedication to upholding the rule of law in Tennessee.



HFGR on the Hill

On Wednesday, we were honored to help host the YMCA Day on the Hill, where our passionate advocates convened to address key issues with policymakers. A heartfelt thank you goes out to Secretary of State Tre Hargett for his time and engagement with our group.

Additionally, we also had the Tennessee Primary Care Association's Day on the Hill. They provide care in our communities to uninsured Tennesseans, those on TennCare, and anyone else who comes through their doors. We also

had TNCO's Day on the Hill on Wednesday, marking a day of advocacy and collaboration with our community partners.



100K Businesses No Longer Need to File Business Tax



As we approach the deadline for filing 2023 business tax returns, Tennessee has some great news for small businesses. Thanks to the Tennessee Works Tax Act, recent legislation has brought relief to over 100,000 small businesses across the state.

Effective this year, small businesses with annual gross sales under \$100,000 within a county and/or city are no longer required to file a business tax return. This significant change eliminates the annual filing obligation for qualifying businesses and provides much-needed relief.

The Tennessee Works Tax Act, a proactive measure aimed at supporting small businesses, is set to benefit countless entrepreneurs and local enterprises. This exemption applies to tax periods ending on or after December 31, 2023.

For more details on this groundbreaking development [visit this link](#).

'It's magical': Kids read to therapy dogs in expanding program

We're thrilled to share a heartwarming story featuring our veterinarian client! In a heart-touching initiative, children are participating in a program where they read to therapy dogs, and the results are nothing short of magical.



The program, which continues to expand, allows children to engage with therapy dogs while improving their reading skills. The interaction between the children and the dogs is not only beneficial for the young readers but also incredibly rewarding for the therapy dogs involved.

To read more about this inspiring program and the positive impact it's having on our community, check out the full article [here](#).

Secretary of State Tre Hargett Announces Launch of Tennessee Businesses Against Trafficking

Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett has unveiled the Tennessee Businesses Against Trafficking initiative, a collaborative effort engaging corporations and private entities in combatting human trafficking across the state. Established through legislation in 2023, the program aims to identify, prevent, and address human trafficking with the support of businesses. Participants will adopt a zero-tolerance policy, receive training, and contribute to public awareness campaigns. This innovative resource emphasizes the importance of collective action in safeguarding communities and supporting victims. Businesses interested in joining can find more information at tbat.tnsos.gov.



IN THE NEWS



- **Tennessee General Assembly: The week in photos**
[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://tennessean.com) - March 07, 2024
- **Dueling school voucher bills advance in Tennessee with no compromise in sight**
After more than four hours, tense exchanges and numerous objections, a key House committee passed a sweeping, controversial school

voucher bill on Wednesday. Meanwhile the Senate version cleared its first hurdle in the Education Committee with relative ease.

[WPLN.ORG](https://www.wpln.org) - March 07, 2024

- **Tennessee GOP blocks IVF protection bill in committee over abortion concerns**

Republicans on a Tennessee House subcommittee on Tuesday blocked legislation to codify legal protections for birth control and in-vitro fertilization treatments, arguing the bill is unnecessary and could potentially lead to abortions.

[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://www.tennessean.com) - March 05, 2024

- **Super Tuesday election results in Tennessee: See the latest after polls close**

Voters across Tennessee head to the polls today to pick a presidential nominee and other local candidates who will make it to the ballot in November.

[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://www.tennessean.com) - March 05, 2024

- **Tennessee universal school voucher bill clears two more legislative hurdles after contentious debate**

Gov. Bill Lee's proposal to create a statewide school voucher program easily cleared its first Senate hurdle Wednesday, but took a split vote and five-plus hours of often contentious debate to pass out of a House committee.

[CHALKBEAT.ORG](https://www.chalkbeat.org) - March 07, 2024

- **Tennessee Attorney General Skrmetti would set his own salary under House-approved bill**

Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti would be able to set his own salary under a House-passed measure.

[TENNESSEELOOKOUT.COM](https://tennesseelookout.com) - March 06, 2024

- **Developer-backed bill to end wetlands protections shelved by Tennessee Senate**

A controversial bill to roll back protections on more than 430,000 acres wetlands in Tennessee has been effectively defeated, with a senate committee voting Wednesday to send the measure to a legislative study session over the summer.

[TENNESSEELOOKOUT.COM](https://tennesseelookout.com) - March 07, 2024

- **Tennessee vaccine law pits parental rights against public health**

A law governing childhood vaccinations is among more than a dozen recently passed or pending nationwide that set parental freedom against community and children's health.

[NBCNEWS.COM](https://www.nbcnews.com) - March 07, 2024

- **Changes made to bill that would have banned the sale of cold beer in Tennessee**

A bill that would have banned the sale of refrigerated or cold beer in Tennessee stores has been amended, removing all related language.

[WSMV.COM](https://www.wsmv.com) - March 07, 2024

- **TN AG Skrmetti Joins 26 States in Demanding Instagram Stop Monetizing Child Exploitation**

Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti recently joined a coalition of 27 state attorneys general in sending a letter to Meta Platforms, Inc., (Meta) demanding that Instagram stop monetizing child

exploitation content.

[TN.GOV](#) - March 06, 2024



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