



What's New on the Hill

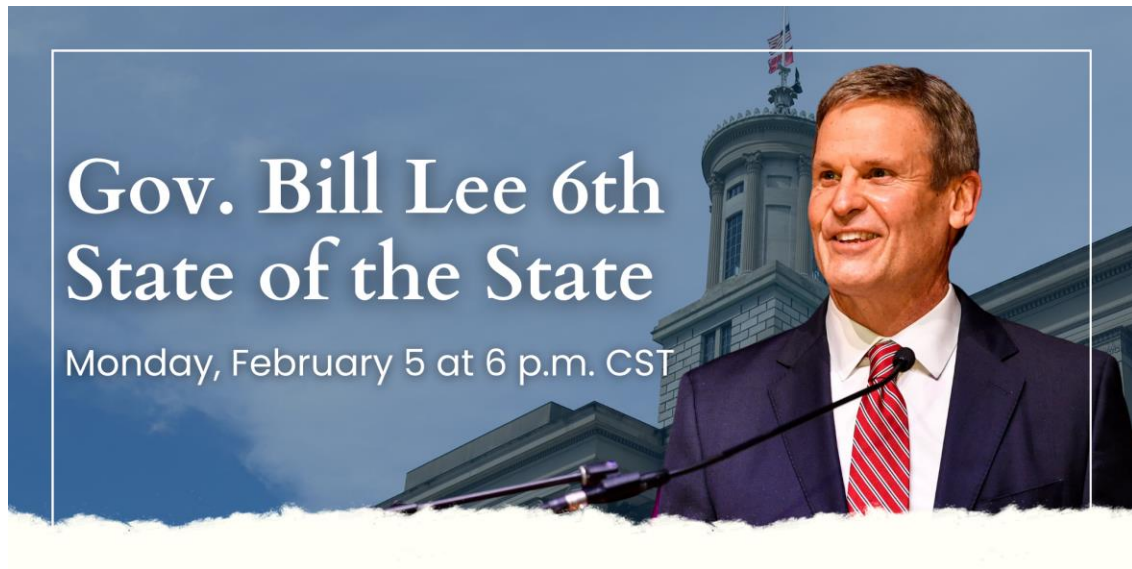
Legislative Updates: Week of January 22, 2024

After a week-long closure due to winter weather, the Tennessee State Legislature resumed its session on Monday, January 22, 2024. Here are upcoming dates of importance:

Wednesday, January 31st - House bill filing deadline

Thursday, February 1st - Senate bill filing deadline

Monday, February 5th - State of the State address



Gov. Lee to Deliver Sixth State of the State Address on February 5

Governor Bill Lee will deliver his sixth State of the State address to the General Assembly and Tennesseans on Monday, February 5, at 6 p.m. CST in the House Chamber of the Tennessee State Capitol.

“Tennessee is continuing to lead the nation as a beacon of opportunity, security and freedom,” said Gov. Lee. “Every Tennessean has an important role to play as we strengthen and secure our state’s future, and in the coming year, I look forward to working with the General Assembly to accomplish our legislative priorities and make life better for all.”

The address can be found on Lee’s [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) channels and will be aired statewide.



Pushback on Overhauling Tennessee's Franchise Tax

Governor Bill Lee's plan to overhaul Tennessee's franchise tax has encountered resistance, including from fellow Republicans in the Legislature. Concerns have arisen over potential legal challenges and the impact of refunding franchise tax payments. As discussions continue, the administration emphasizes tax relief for businesses and modernization. This topic remains at the forefront of legislative debate. [Continue reading >>>](#)



Slayton Named Tennessee State Forester

Heather Slayton has made history as the first woman to be named state forester in Tennessee. Appointed by Governor Bill Lee and Agriculture Commissioner Charlie Hatcher, Slayton succeeds David Arnold, who served for 33 years, five of which were in the top forestry position. Slayton, who joined the department in 2012 and was named assistant forester in 2018, brings a wealth of experience to this important role. Congratulations to Heather on this historic achievement!

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Tennessee Educator Missy Testerman Finalist for 2024 National Teacher of the Year

Missy Testerman, ESL program director at Rogersville City School, has been selected as one of four finalists for the 2024 National Teacher of the Year Award. This recognition comes after Missy was named the 2023-24 Tennessee Teacher of the Year. Her dedication to education and her community, spanning 31 years, has earned her a place among the nation's top educators.

[Follow her journey as she represents Tennessee in this prestigious competition.](#)



Proposal to Allow Death Penalty for Child Rapists Moves Forward

Lawmakers have voted to advance a bill that would permit the death penalty as a punishment for child rape, aggravated child rape, or especially aggravated child rape. Sponsored by Rep. William Lamberth (R-Portland), this bill aims to address heinous crimes against children. While it advances in the legislative process, some lawmakers express concerns and advocate for life imprisonment instead. This proposal is sparking important discussions within the legislature.

[READ MORE](#)



IN THE NEWS



- **Tennessee Bill To Allow Death Penalty For Child Rape In Passes First Legislative Hurdle**

Tennessee could become one of the few states to permit capital punishment for rape of a child under 12.

[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://www.tennessean.com) - Jan. 23, 2024

- **New Legislation Aims To Change Tn Mental Health Laws**

Two months after a stray bullet killed Belmont University student Jillian Ludwig, a new law is in the works that could save lives.

[WKRN.COM](https://www.wkrn.com) - Jan. 25, 2024

- **Study: Students Enrolled In State's Free Tuition Program Are More Successful**

The Tennessee Comptroller's latest evaluation of the Tennessee Promise free tuition program shows participating students earn more credits, remain in higher education institutions and are issued awards at a higher rate than non-Promise students enrolled at the same schools.

[PRO.STATEAFFAIRS.COM](https://www.pro.stateaffairs.com) - Jan. 24, 2024

- **People Are Going Without Food. Legislators Call Out Tennessee For Snap Backlog**

Tennesseans can't put food on the table due to a state system upgrade. It's created a major backlog in processing food stamp applications.

[NEWSCHANNEL5.COM](https://www.newschannel5.com) - Jan. 26 2023

- **'A Nonpartisan Issue': Lawmaker Hopes To Protect Tennesseans Against Ai In Revenge, Child Porn**

One lawmaker's push to add more protections against artificial intelligence

(AI) is meant to help be part of a proactive, comprehensive approach to the technology.

[WKRN.COM](https://www.wkrn.com) - Jan. 25, 2024

- **TN Republican wants to make this Bible — along with other works — an official state book**

Should the Bible be made an official state book of Tennessee? That's one question lawmakers will have to answer this year — again.

[TENNESSEAN.COM](https://www.tennessean.com) - Jan. 22, 2024

- **Registry requests Attorney General investigation of Constitutional Republicans**

The Tennessee Registry of Election Finance is requesting the Attorney General's Office investigate two Constitutional Republican groups that have failed to register as political action committees even though a complainant claims their activities require state spending disclosures.

[TENNESSEELOOKOUT.COM](https://www.tennesseelookout.com) - Jan. 24, 2024

- **Education commissioner says voucher students fared poorly on state test**

Tennessee's education chief admits students using public money to attend private schools haven't performed well on achievement tests, raising questions about whether the state should start another voucher program.

[MANCHESTERTIMES.COM](https://www.manchestertimes.com) - Jan.18, 2023

- **Years After Public Outcry Over Unspent Funds For Needy Families, Tennessee Has \$717m Stockpile**

Five years ago, a conservative think tank made an explosive revelation: Tennessee leaders had allowed a key anti-poverty program to amass a \$730 million surplus — dollars from the federal government that never reached the struggling families for whom they were earmarked.

[TENNESEELOOKOUT.COM](https://www.tennesseelookout.com) - Jan. 22, 2024

- **Tn House Releases Federal Education Funding Report, Disagrees With Senate**

Tennessee is not going to reject federal education funding, at least not yet.

[WATE.COM](https://www.wate.com) - Jan. 25, 2024

- **Tn House Members Don't Recommend Cutting Federal Education Funds — Yet**

The House of Representatives members of the Tennessee General Assembly committee examining federal education funds released their report Thursday, Jan. 25, and recommended greater legislative oversight of federal rules.

[DAILYMEMPHIAN.COM](https://www.dailymemphian.com) - Jan. 25, 2024

- **Will 35,000 phone calls end a bottleneck that has kept Tennesseans from getting food aid?**

The Tennessee Department of Human Services is planning to call 35,000 in one week to restore Tennesseans inadvertently dropped from EBT rolls. Candace Pegues has long relied on public assistance to feed her family. The 38-year-old Memphis mom of three — Pegues is also raising her sister's three children — undergoes dialysis every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Her monthly disability check doesn't stretch far enough to feed six kids

[TENNESSEELOOKOUT.COM](https://www.tennesseelookout.com) - Jan. 24, 2024

- **Chart: What Does Silencing Mean?**

Silence is yet again the Tennessee legislative session's buzzword. Two weeks ago, the Tennessee House approved its updated floor rules along party lines, with Republicans passing around unverified handouts showing Democrats spend more time talking on the floor than their members.

[TENNESSEELOOKOUT.COM](https://www.tennesseelookout.com) - Jan. 22, 2024

- **Tennessee Bill To Expand Newborn Health Disorder Screenings Passes On First Consideration**

This week, a bill to expand the number of disorders that are automatically screened for in newborns when they are born in the state of Tennessee

passed on its first consideration.

[TENNESSEECONSERVATIVENEWS.COM](https://tennesseeconservativenews.com) - Jan. 25, 2024

- **Free Webinar: Tennessee Business Tax Basics**

Join the Tennessee Department of Revenue on January 30 at 9 a.m. for a webinar providing an overview of Tennessee business taxes. The conversation will cover topics such as tax law, determining classification, gross sales, and retailer/wholesaler status. It will also touch on exemptions, exclusions, deductions, credits, and appropriate tax filings.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

- **U.S. Small Business Administration: Small Business Tools and Resources Webinar**

The U.S. Small Business Administration & Public Private Strategies Institute's are hosting a webinar honoring Dr. King and celebrating Black History Month as a part of the webinar series, Invest in America: Small Business Tools and Resources. The series will focus on the educational resources business owners can utilize regarding laws in today's economy. This webinar will cover the Inflation Reduction Act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the CHIPS Bill, and more.

[REGISTER HERE](#)