

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE - WEEK OF MARCH 27, 2023

It was a somber week in Nashville and at the legislature following the horrific shootings at Nashville's Covenant School. Legislators on Monday opted to forego its usual business at its floor sessions, instead using the time to pray and honor the victims of the tragedy. Regular business continued Tuesday, and the week ended Thursday with thousands gathered at the Capitol to protest gun violence.

Thursday's legislative session came to a head when Representatives Justin Jones (D-Nashville), Justin Pearson (D-Memphis), and Gloria Johnson (D-Knoxville) commandeered the legislative podium, chanting into bullhorns at protestors in the gallery above. After a 45-minute recess, both Democratic and Republican leadership worked to quell the situation, and the three legislators were eventually escorted from the podium. Punishment for Jones, Pearson, and Johnson is still to be determined, with options ranging from expulsion to committee removal.

Governor Lee announced Friday night that he will propose millions of dollars in spending on stronger school safety measures, including placing a school resource officer at every public school. Lt. Gov. Randy McNally has indicated he would support red flag gun laws, but specific proposals won't be made clear until early next week.

UPDATES ON LEGISLATIVE ITEMS OF INTEREST

Budget Amendment

Governor Lee's administration is expected to present its appropriations amendment package to the proposed state budget next week. The much-anticipated amendment will reflect the most recent budgetary position of the state and will make adjustments to revenue and non-recurring expenditure requests to the originally proposed budget which was released in February.

Transportation Modernization Act

[HB321/SB273](#), sponsored by Rep. William Lamberth and Sen. Jack Johnson, carries Governor Lee's Transportation Modernization Act language. The legislation has now passed in both the Senate and House.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the Governor's transportation plan.

Convention Center Revenues

[SB648/HB1279](#), sponsored by Sen. Jack Johnson and Rep. Elaine Davis, requires that excess tax revenues can only be used for the following purposes:

- The prepayment or defeasance of debt services or other contractual obligations related to the facility
- The payment of capital expenses. If the capital expenses are expected to exceed \$25 million, then the expenses must be pre-approved by the commissioner of finance and administration
- The payment of operating expenses, including expenses for cleanliness, safety, and maintenance of the development

Additionally, debt must not be issued or refunded without express approval of the state funding board. The legislation also adds the state's constitutional officers as ex-officio members of the authority's board of directors.

The bill passed in Senate State and Local last week. It has not been calendared in the House.

Appointments of Nashville International Airport Authority

[HB1176/SB1326](#), sponsored by Rep. Johnny Garrett and Sen. Paul Bailey, adds the governor and speakers of the General Assembly as appointing authorities for board positions for the Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority. As amended, the authority would consist of an 8-member board, comprised of 6 state-appointed members and 2 mayor-appointed members.

This legislation passed on the Senate floor Monday. It will be heard in House Finance Committee on 4/4.

Appointments for Metropolitan Nashville Sporty Authority

[HB1197/SB1335](#), sponsored by Rep. Ryan Williams and Sen. Paul Bailey, would reconstitute the Metropolitan Nashville Sports Authority and would add state elected officials as appointing authorities for board positions. Details of the board composition will be revealed in an amendment.

This legislation is not scheduled to be heard next week. It is waiting to be scheduled in House Government Operations and in Senate Calendar.

Protecting Tennessee Business and Workers Act

[SB681/HB774](#), sponsored by Sen. Shane Reeves and Rep. Jerome Moon, enacts the "Protecting Tennessee Businesses and Workers Act." The legislation would prohibit a local government from adopting or enforcing an ordinance, regulation, resolution, policy, or another legal requirement that regulates or imposes a requirement upon an employer pertaining to hours worked, scheduling that an employer is required to provide employees, or employee output during work hours. It would also prohibit a local government from imposing a wage or employment benefit mandate unless required by state or federal law. Finally, this bill prohibits a local government from discriminating based on a wage or employment benefits set by a private company if that company meets state and federal employment laws.

This bill has passed the House and is waiting to be calendared for the Senate floor.