

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – WEEK OF APRIL 3, 2023

Conversations about legislation this week were largely overshadowed by the resolutions to expel Representatives Gloria Johnson (D-Knoxville), Justin Jones (D-Nashville), and Justin Pearson (D-Memphis) after they protested for gun reform from the well of the House floor last Thursday. This Thursday, Rep. Jones and Rep. Pearson, the two youngest members of the TN Black Caucus of State Legislators, were each expelled on 72 - 25 and 69 - 26 votes respectively. Rep. Johnson's expulsion resolution failed 65 - 30, falling one vote short of the necessary two-thirds required for passage.

Following their expulsions, their respective county commissions will appoint interim replacements. Nashville Metro Council is scheduled to begin appointment proceedings on Monday afternoon, and they are expected to reappoint Justin Jones. Procedurally, the state would then confirm the county commissions' nominees, but there is a possibility that they would deny the appointments if Jones and Pearson are indeed reappointed.

Updates on Legislative Items of Interest

Budget Amendment

Governor Lee's administration released its budget amendment Tuesday morning. Please find the administration's budget amendment information here: https://www.tn.gov/finance/fa/fa-budget-information/fa-budget-overviews_presentations.html

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 on the Senate Floor Thursday. It has not been calendared in the House.

School Safety

This week, Governor Lee announced a school safety plan in response to the Covenant School shootings. The plan requires LEAs to develop comprehensive school safety programs and provides the following funding:

- o \$30 million to expand a statewide homeland security network with 122 agents serving students at both public and private schools

- \$140 million to establish a School Resource Officer (SRO) grant fund to place a trained, armed security guard at every public school
- \$20 million for public school security upgrades
- \$7 million for private school security upgrades
- \$8 million for additional school-based behavioral health liaisons across the state

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 and will be heard in House Finance Committee on 4/11.

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 scheduled to be heard next week in House Government Operations and is waiting to be scheduled in the Senate.

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 in both the House and Senate.