

**From the Desk  
of the Executive Director**



**Join Us in Nashville!**

In just a few short weeks, municipal officials will gather in Nashville for TML's Annual Legislative Conference. It will be held on March 3rd and 4th at the Downtown Double Tree, just steps away from the Cordell Hull Office Building. Our team has assembled a great line up of informative speakers, as well as Comptroller-approved credited, educational programming on cybersecurity and ethics.

The Conference provides a valuable opportunity for you to collaborate with other officials exchanging ideas and strategies for leading our cities. It's a great use of your time, not only to glean information but to share with other

officials.

Such is especially the case with our legislators. One of the main purposes of our event is to afford officials from across the state the opportunity to be seen and heard throughout the halls of the General Assembly. It serves as a visual reminder to legislators that cities are about real people - just over 60% of Tennesseans to be exact.

So make plans to join us. Set up appointments with your legislators and come advocate for your community. We look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

For more information and to register, go to <https://www.tml1.org/2025-legislative-conference>

**Chattanooga becomes first to use new Voluntary Attainable Housing Incentives program**



Chattanooga has become the first city in Tennessee to take advantage of the new Voluntary Housing Incentives program, following a change in state law spearheaded by Sen. Todd Gardenhire and backed by TML to allow local governments to provide voluntary procedural, zoning, and land use incentives in exchange for attainable housing.

By KATE COIL

Chattanooga has become the first city in Tennessee to offer [Voluntary Attainable Housing Incentives](#), zoning relief for housing developments that provide ten percent of units priced at 80% Area Median Income or below.

This program follows a [change in state law](#) spearheaded by Sen. Todd Gardenhire and [backed by TML](#) to allow local governments to provide voluntary procedural, zoning, and land use incentives in exchange for attainable housing.

"These incentives will encourage the development of housing attainable to working Chattanoogaans at no cost to taxpayers, working alongside our historic zoning reform, new affordable housing PILOT policies and upcoming revolving loan fund to get more housing built that working people can afford," said Mayor Tim Kelly. "I'm proud that Chattanooga is the first city in Tennessee to take advantage of the new law passed by Senator Todd Gardenhire making this possible."

In addition to working with TML's Policy Committee, Chattanooga Director of Housing Policy Megan Miles said last year Chattanooga brought together leaders and housing advocates from other local governments across the state to discuss housing issues at a two-day meeting in Chattanooga. While the national housing crisis is challenging, Miles said the meeting showed state and local leaders can work together to make headway on the issue.

"There are a number of pre-emptions at the state level that prevent local municipalities from being able to implement various programs that are common in other states," Miles said. "This was identified as something we had traction to change at a state level. This was to create another tool for municipalities to encourage affordability. This is not just an urban issue anymore; it's something everyone is grappling with. The more we work together and share, the more progress we can make together."

While the new legislation contains some restraints, Miles said it al-

lows municipalities a lot of flexibility in the types of incentives they offer, how they define affordable housing, and how they can put together a program that best benefits their city.

City leaders also met with local developers to see what type of program they would want to participate in. As part of the state law, the incentives can only be offered in zones that allow five or more multi-family dwellings.

"We also did a complete overhaul of our zoning code last year because we were seeing a lot of rezoning pieces that indicated our zoning code wasn't working the way it was supposed to," she said. "The great thing about doing this in coordination with our zoning code update is that we are doing a complete comprehensive planning process. We are really in a citywide process of thinking about where and why we want to target certain areas for growth. This works great because this program is designed to take place in areas of the city we have already targeted as places we want to see growth."

In Chattanooga, a two-person household earning 80% of the Area Median Income has an annual income of \$56,000. That is approximately the salary of a teacher, or the combined salaries of a school bus driver and a childcare worker.

In exchange for developing housing units priced for Chattanoogaans making 80% Area Median Income or below, developers could get these incentives:

- 30% Density Bonus: Allows developers to have more units within the same building.
- Reduced Parking Minimums: Lowers the minimum number of parking spots the developer must include in a project.
- 30% Height Bonus in designated areas: Allows buildings in designated high opportunity neighborhoods near public transit to be 30% taller than in the base zoning code.

In addition to sitting down with developers and other city leaders, Chattanooga also met with housing advocates. Miles said the number *See HOUSING on Page 5*

**Gov. Bill Lee delivers State of the State**



Lee delivers his seventh State of the State address titled "Tennessee Innovates" before the General Assembly (Photo by Martin B. Cherry/Nashville Banner)

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee delivered his seventh State of the State address to a joint session of the General Assembly in House Chamber of the Tennessee State Capitol.

Prior to the speech, Lee's office also released a preview [video](#) that

highlights the state's incredible success and bright future. The theme of Lee's address was "Tennessee Innovates," encouraging taking new approaches to success for the state.

"2025 should be the year to think bigger and to think boldly about

what's possible, and go there," Lee said. "If Tennessee has led the nation as a beacon of opportunity, security and freedom, why can't we be the nation's capital of innovation too? Somebody is going to determine what *See STATE on Page 5*

**Make plans to attend TML Legislative Conference March 3-4 in Nashville**

Join us in Nashville for the 2025 TML Legislative Conference, slated for March 3-4.

The two-day event features presentations from influential state leaders, provides the perfect opportunity to network with fellow city officials and to meet with your Representatives and Senators to ensure your community's needs are heard by your legislators.

Scheduled speakers include Jim Bryson, Finance and Administration Commissioner; Jason Mumpower, TN State Comptroller; Sen. Page Walley, Vice-Chair Senate State and Local Government Committee; and Dr. Marianne Wanamaker, Dean, Baker School of Public Policy & Public Affairs.

Registration for the conference opens Monday morning, March 3 at 8:30 a.m. with a meet and-greet coffee break with TML's sponsored programs. Lunch will begin at 11:30 a.m. The conference program will run from 12:45 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. Attendees are encouraged to attend the House and Senate floor sessions that evening at the Capitol.

There's also an opportunity to earn two CMFO or Utility Board Training credits during our dynamic Tuesday morning workshops. Topics to include Ethics and Cybersecurity. For more information and to register, go to <https://www.tml1.org/2025-legislative-conference>



Commissioner Jim Bryson  
Finance & Administration



Comptroller Jason Mumpower  
TN Comptroller of the Treasury



Sen. Page Walley  
Vice Chair  
State & Local Gov. Committee



Dr. Marianne Wanamaker  
Dean, Baker School of Public  
Policy & Public Affairs

**Ford Good Neighbor Plan supports West TN cities**

By KATE COIL  
TT&C Assistant Editor

The Ford Motor Company has announced \$9 million charitable investments in Brownsville, Mason, and Stanton to improve the lives of residents surrounding its new Blue Oval City plant in Stanton.

The \$9 million announced as part of the [Ford Good Neighbor Plan for West Tennessee](#) is the largest charitable investment made in rural West Tennessee and is on top of \$21 million Ford has already invested in the region.

Plans for Brownsville include the reopening of a community pool and adding a new splash pad and a new early childcare center at the YMCA in Brownsville. Brownsville Mayor Bill Rawls said the plan shows Ford's commitment to the area and its growth.

"It means we get some financial support as we start to build a partnership with Ford to improve the quality of life of people not just in Brownsville but across West Tennessee," Mayor Rawls said. "We have to



Brownsville Mayor Bills Rawls, far left, along with Ford and other local officials unveil the Ford Good Neighbor Plan at the Brownsville YMCA.

coexist in this space that we call home. This is a long-term relationship. As we prepare for our future together, it is important that we communicate with each other and do what is best for both the people who already live here and the people who will move here."

Stanton Mayor Norman Bauer said Ford employees have already helped city leadership in organizing food drives through non-profit Stanton Feeding Haywood and have provided capital to renovate the Stan- *See NEIGHBOR on Page 3*

# NEWS ACROSS TENNESSEE



## CHARLESTON

Linde, Inc. officials announced the company will build, own and operate a new facility for the supply of industrial gases along the I-75 corridor near Charleston. The company will invest more than \$70 million and create 18 new jobs, most of which will be in logistics. The project comprises of a new air separation unit that will produce liquid oxygen, nitrogen and argon serving various industries in the Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville areas of Tennessee, as well as in northern Alabama and Georgia.

## COLUMBIA

The city of Columbia has acquired the Columbia Aquatics and Recreation Center – formerly known as Muletown Rec – for \$4.3 million. The significant purchase is a key step forward in the city's ongoing commitment to expanding and improving recreational opportunities for residents. The facility will continue to offer all of its current services at more affordable fees, offering three pools and a splash pad as well as a wide range of aquatic recreational opportunities. The city plans to develop the surrounding outdoor spaces to provide more recreation opportunities in the future.

## HENDERSONVILLE

TriStar Hendersonville Medical Center has announced a \$53.6 million expansion that will increase capacity across multiple departments. The expansion will add more than 30,000 square feet of new space, including 24 new medical/surgical inpatient beds. The expansion and renovation project includes 24 new medical/surgical inpatient beds on the third floor, an outdoor dining patio, a new kitchen with upgraded appliances, a renovated laboratory and materials management warehouse and additional shelled floor in the Birth Center for future growth. TriStar Hendersonville was recently named one of Healthgrades' America's 250 Best Hospitals. The hospital was also recognized as one of America's 100 Best Hospitals for stroke care, critical care, pulmonary care, orthopedic surgery, surgical care, and gastrointestinal care and surgery, according to Healthgrades.

## HOHENWALD

Wedlake Industries officials announced the company will expand its manufacturing operations in Hohenwald. Through the project, Wedlake Industries will invest \$10 million and create 46 new jobs. The company's recent acquisition by GZ North America positions Wedlake Industries in closer proximity to two subsidiaries of GZ North America, Nashville Record Pressing and Memphis Record Pressing, which will directly source vinyl record compound from the Hohenwald facility. Upon completion, the expansion will transform Wedlake Industries into North America's largest vinyl record compound manufacturer while continuing to support long-term customers in other industries.

## JOHNSON CITY

The Johnson City Public Art Committee has been approved by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for a Challenge America award of \$10,000. The NEA has approved 272 Challenge America awards nationwide totaling \$2,720,000 as part of the recent announcement of fiscal year 2025 grants. The NEA funds will support the Phil Pindzola

Biennial Sculpture Exhibition, offsetting the costs of the sculpture leases for the upcoming 2025-2027 round. The Public Art Committee will install a total of 15 pieces, beginning in late May. The Phil Pindzola Biennial Sculpture Exhibition is a leased sculpture program supporting 3-dimensional artists working in a variety of materials. For details on Johnson City Public Art initiatives, visit <https://jcpubliart.com/>.

## KNOXVILLE

The city of Knoxville has become the first Tennessee city to join the Charging Smart program, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy's Vehicle Technologies Office and operated by Drive Electric Tennessee. The new technical assistance and designation program provides no-cost technical assistance to local governments in order to facilitate equitable and widespread electric-vehicle adoption in their communities. Knoxville currently has 40 public EV chargers in 14 city-owned parking garages, public parks and municipal buildings. An additional 30 charging slots are being installed in the City County Building garage to support a portion of the city's 40 EV Fleet vehicles, which are utilized by several city departments. Learn more about the Office of Sustainability at [KnoxvilleTN.gov/Sustainability](http://KnoxvilleTN.gov/Sustainability).

## LA VERGNE

The city of La Vergne has been named one of the '2025 Best Places to Work in Tennessee' by Best Companies Group. One of 13 businesses and the only municipality to earn the title, the rankings were determined by a company assessment of publicly or privately held businesses in Tennessee and a survey distributed to those company's employees. The Employee Engagement and Satisfaction Survey, provided by Best Companies Group, consists of nearly 80 statements that employees responded to along with some open-ended questions and demographic questions. The survey analyzes eight core focus areas including leadership and planning, corporate culture and communications, work environment, pay and benefits, relationship with supervisor, and others.

## MILLINGTON

Millington will soon be home to a new, \$25 million outpatient clinic for the Department of Veterans Affairs, which will be the largest clinic of its kind in Tennessee and serve veterans from across the Mid-South. City officials are hoping that the 45,000-square-foot clinic will make the city more of a retirement destination for veterans. The facility will have 50 exam rooms and other rooms that will allow 75 to 100 veterans to be served at one time. The state-of-the-art facility will be on 4.5 acres of land and include 200 parking spaces. The clinic is expected to be complete by December with a groundbreaking held in January. In addition to creating 200 construction jobs, the facility is expected to generate more than 100 permanent medical and related facility positions. Millington is already home to an estimated 7,500 military, civilian, and central personnel assigned to or who work on the Naval Support Activity Mid-South base in the city.

## OAK RIDGE

Oak Ridge will become the first city to host the Southeastern Conference (SEC) Rowing Cham-

## Kingsport breaks ground on second BlueCross Healthy Place



The BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Foundation and the city of Kingsport recently gathered to celebrate the groundbreaking of the new BlueCross Healthy Place at Riverwalk Park. The park, located along the Holston River, spans 8.8 acres and connects to the Kingsport Greenbelt trail system. It provides a unique blend of natural beauty and recreational opportunities, as well as cultural and ecological features. Features at the BlueCross Healthy Place will include community pavilions, sports courts, a splash pad, inclusive play area, fitness area, recreational water access, and restrooms. The BlueCross Foundation is providing \$6.5 million for this project build and an additional \$1.3 million for a maintenance fund, bringing the total investment to \$7.8 million. This is the second BlueCross Healthy Place in the city, following the BlueCross Healthy Place at the Kingsport Miracle League Complex, which opened in 2020.

## Dyersburg breaks ground on spec building



Officials with the city of Dyersburg and Dyer County have broken ground on a new 100,000-square-foot speculative industrial building. The structure is the culmination of years of teamwork from the Dyersburg IDB, city of Dyersburg, Dyer County government, Dyersburg Electric and numerous community members. The site was originally purchased in 1998. Funding for the project was provided through a \$5 million grant from the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development.

ampionship with the event set for May 11, 2025, on Melton Lake. The University of Tennessee's rowing team will be competing against teams from Alabama, Oklahoma, and Texas during the event. Rowing is one of the newest sports added to the SEC. The rowing venue at Melton Lake has more than 30 miles of well-sheltered and calm water, as well as fully buoyed 7-lane 1,000- and 2,000-meter racecourses for spring races. Since 1978, the area has been used as a spring racecourse for the Oak Ridge Rowing venue, and in 2017, the Oak Ridge Rowing Association installed an additional 13.5-meter-wide racing lane.

## THOMPSON'S STATION

Real estate investment trust Simon has announced that Thompson's Station will be the newest site of their luxury shopping and lifestyle destination. The new Nashville Premium Outlets will offer premier shopping, dining, entertainment, and mixed-use destinations at the intersection of Interstate 65 and I-840 in Thompson's Station. Construction of the 325,000-square-foot mixed-use center is expected to begin in 2026 with plans for 75 retailers, restaurants, and a hotel. There will also be potential additions of residential options and big-box retailers. Simon is also the owner of Opry Mills and the Mall at Green Hills.

## Tullahoma firefighters make unique cold weather rescue



The Tullahoma Fire Department rescued a duck trapped in an icy pond during a recent snow. A local resident discovered one of the male ducks on the pond was partially frozen and stuck to the ice in the pond with nearby ducks swimming nearby and expressing distress. After being unable to free the duck themselves, residents reported the incident to the Tullahoma Fire Department and the Middle Tennessee Raptor Center. Five firemen responded to the scene and were able to retrieve the duck from the pond using waders. The duck was taken to recover in a warm environment for two nights before being returned to the pond. Officials with the Middle Tennessee Raptor Center praised the Tullahoma Fire Department for their quick response.

# WAUFORD

J. R. Wauford & Company, Consulting Engineers, Inc.

# Ford Good Neighbor Plan supports West Tennessee cities

**NEIGHBOR.** *from Page 1*  
 ton Cannery Cafe at the Stanton Cannery, a local business incubator.  
 Bauer said Ford has also helped purchase much needed equipment for the Stanton Fire Department and is partnering with the United Way to build a Ford Community Center in Stanton.

“Ford Motor Company has proven itself as a good neighbor to the Stanton community, located in the epicenter of its Blue Oval City, well before the announcement of their Good Neighbor Plan,” Mayor Bauer said. “Through conversations with our leadership and community, they have found areas that they jumped in. With other projects in the works, Ford has truly shown themselves as Good Neighbors.”

The Ford Good Neighbor Plan has also created an Equitable Growth Advisory Council made up of 30 community leaders that is working to identify and address barriers to equitable growth in communities around Blue Oval City who have helped identify key needs in social services, economic opportunity, and infrastructure for the area.

Mayor Rawls is part of the Equitable Growth Council Ford created to help determine the best way forward for the communities in and around the Blue Oval Development.

“We are creating a space and a future that is full of opportunity together,” he said. “The Good Neighbor Plan has resources for farmers family-owned property, people who need legal help, and financial literacy. They are also protecting our heritage in addition to day-to-day lives Ford made a major contribution to our Tina Turner statue that will be erected just across from where she went to school. Even before this plan was announced, they made a major contribution to our firefighter training facility. We continue to make investments in people because they are our biggest asset, and we thank Ford for being a partner in that.”

Mayor Bauer said Ford has been involved with Stanton “since before the shovels hit the ground at Blue Oval City.”

“Representatives have been engaged with our community through listening sessions and their attendance at community events,” Mayor Bauer said. “They are interactive with the community with conversation and surveys. It is evident that these conversations and surveys are reviewed as many of the comments are acted on. For instance, last summer, community members completed a survey suggesting that the former Stanton Elementary School be used to establish a community center. This past fall was the ground-breaking ceremony for the project.”

The relocation of a major employer presents certain challenges – especially to smaller communities like Stanton – but Bauer said the re-



Officials with Ford and Stanton municipal leadership break ground on the new Ford Community Center in Stanton, to be housed in the former and historic Stanton School building. Built in 1948 to educate African American students before desegregation, the school will be renovated and upgraded to provide important services to community members focused on economic mobility, food security, physical mobility and entrepreneurship services.



lationships Ford is already building in the community show they want to help address those challenges.

“Private sector companies, no matter the size, are likely to have some level of impact on the community. The larger the company, the bigger the impact,” Bauer said. “With open dialog, companies can know the municipalities plans and requirements early, but, more importantly, the tough conversation is discussing the limits of the municipality to support the project. Municipalities must plan for transportation improvements, emergency services, increased daily visitors, and increased housing. Ongoing conversation is critical. It is my hope that, as the Blue Oval begins to operate, Stanton and our relationship with Ford will grow. We hope that Ford remains a fixture in our community events and our communications continue to propel our community



West Tennessee municipal officials and other local leaders meet with Ford in Jackson as part of the community engagement process. The Good Neighbor Plan is the result of ongoing public engagement between Ford and the communities in the Blue Oval City region to ensure all parties are working together and for the same goals.

forward.”

Outdoor pavilions for farmers markets and construction and renovations of community centers are planned in Stanton and Mason. A playground will also be built in Mason with plans for five more playgrounds located throughout Haywood County.

Other initiatives the company will finance that will benefit all communities include:

- Helping residents with emergency rent, utility, and home repair needs
- Legal assistance for low-income families and individuals

- Affordable transportation initiatives to expand rural transit
- Entrepreneurship programs
- Youth sports and science camps as well as music, arts, and cultural programs
- Grants for community center facilities and programs
- Funding for public safety officers and patrol cars
- Fresh food investments
- Heritage and culture preservation investments
- Improved Hatchie River access and beautification funds
- Funding for after-school programs, farmers’ markets, and community gardens.

Ford officials said investments will be rolled out in the next 12 to 18 months and that the company plans to continue working with local residents and community leaders as it is implemented.

“Together, we are working to make sure the next chapter in this region’s story is about opportunity, while preserving and celebrating the vitality and culture that makes West Tennessee so special,” says Gabby Bruno, director of Community Relations at Ford.

More in-depth information on the plan and how to apply for programs being offered through it [is available here.](#)

## No loan is too large or too small



The City of Madisonville recently closed a \$700,500 note issued to finance the purchase of a new fire truck. The city has used TMBF loan programs seven times since 1999. Seated L to R are: City Recorder Sherri McCrary and Mayor Scott Hunt. Standing is Steve Queener, TMBF Marketing Representative.



The City of Dyersburg first used TMBF loan programs in 1999 and has used the programs eight times. The latest was in late December – a \$4,000,000 fixed rate draw loan to finance fire trucks and the construction of a gym. Seated is Dyersburg Mayor John Holden. Standing L to R are: Steve Anderson, City Treasurer; Justin Hanson, TMBF Marketing Representative; and Scott Ball, City Recorder.



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# PEOPLE

**Travis Bishop** has been selected as the new chief financial officer and city recorder for the city of Kingsport following the retirement of longtime CFO and Recorder Lisa Winkle after 18 years of service. Bishop comes to Kingsport from the UT Municipal Technical Advisory Service (UT-MTAS) where he has served as a financial consultant. He is also an instructor for the certified municipal finance officer (CMFO) program. Prior to joining MTAS, he served as the town recorder for Erwin and an audit manager at Roderfer Moss & Co. PLLC. Bishop is a CPA and holds a master's in accounting from Liberty University and a bachelor's degree in business administration from East Tennessee State University.



Travis Bishop

lierville Masonic Lodge and St. Andrew's Episcopal Church.

**Jewel Jordan** has been selected to fill a vacancy on the Collierville Board of Mayor and Alderman. A resident of Collierville for more than 40 years, Jordan brings a wealth of experience in community service, leadership and problem-solving to the role. A local business owner, Jordan has been active in numerous boards and organizations, including 12 years on the Collierville Planning Commission, the Collierville Police Advisory Board, and Main Street Collierville. He holds a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics from Tennessee State University and as worked as a realtor and certified home inspector.



Jewel Jordan

**Capt. Don Dallenbach** of the Hendersonville Fire Department died Jan. 12, 2025, at the age of 58 after a brief battle with pancreatic cancer. Dallenbach was a 32-year veteran of the Hendersonville Police Department where he most recently served as a Captain on C Shift at Station 5. He was described as "a loving husband, father, and mentor to many in and out of the fire service" who always "provided professionalism, compassion, and servant leadership to us all in this community."



Don Dallenbach

**Mark King**, assistant chief of administration for the Collierville Fire Department, has announced his retirement after more than 40 years of service. King began his career as a paramedic with Medic Ambulance of Memphis in 1982. He joined the Collierville Fire Department in 1984 as their first paramedic, briefly leaving to work with the Germantown Fire Department before returning to Collierville in 1986. He served as CFD's medical director and is responsible for the current ALS (Advanced Life Support) engine companies, and the addition of the Ambulance transport service. He has served as administrative chief since 2005 and in 2024 served as president of the Mid-South Fire Chiefs Association.



Mark King

**Curtis Halford**, the former State House Representative who served District 79 from 2009 to 2023, died Jan. 24, 2025, at the age of 81. Prior to his service in the General Assembly, Halford served as a Gibson County commissioner and as the public works superintendent for the city of Dyer. A veteran of the U.S. Air Force, Halford also earned a degree in accounting from Draughtons Practical Business College - now Daymar College - in Nashville. The Republican lawmaker served on the agriculture, health and human resources, and ethics committees and was appointed to represent Tennessee on the National Conference of State Legislatures.



Curtis Halford

**Melody Lehas** retired as the city recorder of White Bluff after 35 years of service. Lewis joined the city as its recorder in August 1989, having previously worked as a teacher's aide at White Bluff Elementary School, the Tennessee Department of Human Services, and for the Dickson County Commission. Lewis' interest in government came from her father Bruce Corlew, who had served as a Dickson County Commissioner.



Melody Lewis

**Charles Hall** has been appointed to fill a vacant position on the Collierville Board of Mayor and Alderman. A sixth-generation Collierville native, Hall owns Hewlett and Dunn Boot and Clothing Company on Collierville's Town Square with his wife. Hall began work with the company in 1998, buying a partial interest in the store in 2004 and purchasing the entire business in 2020. Hall holds a degree from the University of Mississippi and has leadership roles with the Col-



Charles Hall

**Jim Sells**, longtime mayor of Rogersville, will step down after nearly 48 years as mayor and more than 50 on the Rogersville Board of Mayor and Alderman. Sells was first elected as an alderman in 1971 and then ran for mayor in 1977. He was recently elected to his twelfth term as mayor in 2021. Rogers is the longest served mayor in Tennessee, second to McLemoresville's Mayor Phil Williams, and is the sixth-longest serving mayor in the U.S.



Jim Sells

## Tennessee Congressional delegation receives committee assignments

Committee assignments have been finalized for both chambers as members take their seats in the 119th U.S. Congress.



### SENATE

**U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn** retained her seats on the Committees on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; Finance; Judiciary; and Veterans' Affairs. She will also join the Committees on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and on the Joint Economic Committee.



U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn

**U.S. Sen. Bill Hagerty** has retained his seats on the Committees on Appropriations; Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; Foreign Relations; and Rules and Administration. Hagerty was also appointed to the Joint Committee on Printing.



U.S. Sen. Bill Hagerty

### HOUSE

**District 1: U.S. Rep. Diana Harshbarger** has been assigned to the Committee on Energy and Commerce. She previously held assignments on the Committee on Education and Labor and the Committee on Homeland Security.



U.S. Rep. Diana Harshbarger

**District 2: U.S. Rep. Tim Burchett** has retained his seats on the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. He has also been assigned to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.



U.S. Rep. Tim Burchett

### District 3: U.S. Rep. Chuck Fleischmann

Fleischmann has retained his assignments to the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. Fleischmann also serves as chair of the Appropriations' Committee's Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies.



U.S. Rep. Chuck Fleischmann

### District 4: U.S. Rep. Scott DesJarlais

DesJarlais has retained his assignments to the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Armed Services.



U.S. Rep. Scott DesJarlais

### District 5: U.S. Rep. Andy Ogles

Ogles has been assigned to the Committee on Financial Services and the Committee on Homeland Security.



U.S. Rep. Andy Ogles

### District 6: U.S. Rep. John Rose

Rose has retained his assignments to the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Financial Services.



U.S. Rep. John Rose



### District 7 U.S. Rep. Mark Green

Green has retained his assignments to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Homeland Security, of which he is chairman.



U.S. Rep. Mark Green

### District 8: U.S. Rep. David Kustoff

Kustoff has retained his assignment to the Committee on Ways and Means.



U.S. Rep. David Kustoff

### District 9: U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen

Cohen has retained his assignments to the Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, but is no longer a member of the Committee on Natural Resources. He is the ranking member on the Transportation Committee's Subcommittee on Aviation.



U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen

The 119th Congress convened on Jan. 3, 2025, and will continue to meet through 2027.

## Changes to Germantown public works announced

Germantown has announced two new members of its public works team as the city's longtime public works director retires.

**Bo Mills** will retire as Germantown's public works director in April after nearly four decades of service to the city. Mills joined the city in 1985 and has served as director of the department since 2004. During his tenure with the city, he also served as assistant public works director for seven years and solid waste coordinator for six years, overseeing numerous legacy projects for the city.

Mills also served as president of the American Public Works As-



Bo Mills

sociation in 2017 and as president of TCAPWA in 2005, representing the state chapter as a delegate to the national association from 2000 to 2010. Mills will help in the transition of the city's new public works leadership.

**Allen "Oz" Broughton** will step into the role of public works director, coming to Germantown from the Port of San Diego where he served as operations and maintenance manager and later as assistant director of the general services department. He was the senior management analyst for the city of Coronado, Calif.

A former Marine Corps colonel with 15 years' executive leadership

experience, Broughton was selected for his management expertise. Broughton is a member of the International City Managers Association, the American Public Works Association and the Maintenance Superintendents Association.

**Nicholas Pulido** has also been selected as the new assistant public works director for the city of Germantown. Pulido brings nearly 15 years of experience in the U.S. Navy where he served as a chief engineer overseeing water production, treatment, and sewage systems. He also holds a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt from the Naval Recruiting Command station in Millington.



Oz Broughton



Nicholas Pulido

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# Gov. Lee delivers state address, lists budgets priorities

STATE. *from Page 1*

the future looks like. That should be Tennessee. Just like a business innovates to better serve their customer, or as science innovates to save lives, or as an athlete innovates to change the game, this is a time for us to innovate to create a brighter future for Tennesseans.”

Lee highlighted ways the state is already innovative, such as how it adapts to emerging industry and works to make government more efficient.

“I’ve been saying for years – the state with the workers will win every time,” Lee said. “That is even more true today. Together, over the last six years, we have recruited more than \$37 billion in capital investment that has resulted in 234,000 new jobs. Tennessee is a top contributor to our nation’s economy because of our willingness to adapt and welcome emerging industries. Limited government is knowing how to do more with less. More bureaucracy does not mean better service. Businesses already know this – government should do the same.”

This success in business and the state’s influx in new residents, leading to housing concerns across the state.

“Once again, U-Haul has ranked Tennessee among the top five most moved-to states,” Lee said. “Ninety of our 95 counties are experiencing population growth. While it’s a point of pride, it’s also a call to action. Whether you’re born in Tennessee or choose to move to Tennessee, we want you to stay in Tennessee. Our state needs a housing plan that makes this key part of the American Dream possible.”

Notable highlights from the governor’s \$59.5 billion budget include:

## Economic Opportunity & Tax Relief

- \$35.6 million investment in Tennessee’s Rainy Day Fund, bringing Tennessee reserves to nearly \$2.2 billion, the largest in state history
- \$7 million to expand the Tennessee Youth Employment Program to operate year-round, double its participation, and reach even more underserved communities
- \$45.8 million for Rural Development Grant Fund to enhance Tennessee’s rural and distressed communities through site development, community asset improvements, strategic planning and downtown revitalization
- \$25 million for FastTrack grants to recruit new business to Tennessee and support workforce development
- \$6.3 million to create a statewide Micro-Credentialing Program to develop short-term, targeted certifications that equip Tennesseans with high-demand skills identified by industry and state partners
- \$25 million to expand the RevV Program to connect private companies with Tennessee’s research institutions to drive research and development and job creation
- \$5 million to create TN Accelerates, a partnership between Tennessee Economic and Community Development and the Department of Labor and Workforce to create customized workforce training programs tailored to the specific needs



Lawmakers applaud Gov. Bill Lee’s State of the State address (Photo by John Partipilo)

- of incoming and existing businesses
- \$5 million for the Tennessee Entertainment Commission to fund incentive grants to strengthen Tennessee’s music and film industry
- \$10 million for the Rural Grant Opportunity Fund to match funding for at-risk and distressed counties seeking state and federal grants
- \$10 million for the Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer Matching Funds to match federal funds assisting Tennessee startups in securing competitive research and development grants

## Housing & Infrastructure

- \$1 billion to TDOT to address the state’s infrastructure needs, including expediting existing road projects and funding new projects across rural and urban Tennessee
- \$60 million to create the Starter Home Revolving Loan Fund to support construction of new, affordable starter homes for hardworking Tennesseans, prioritizing rural communities
- \$30 million to fund the Rural and Workforce Housing Tax Credit, making it easier to build homes and businesses

## Disaster Relief

During the special legislative session in January 2025, Gov. Lee and the General Assembly appropriated more than \$450 million in direct disaster relief as part of a [comprehensive](#) plan to support ongoing recovery efforts and allow for proactive preparation for future emergencies. Gov. Lee’s proposed FY25-26 budget includes the following additional investments:

- \$4 million to implement and maintain a Mesonet system, which will monitor weather-related and flooding threats in the state
- \$3 million to upgrade TEMA’s regional response vehicles
- Education

## Public Education Investments

- \$198.4 million for teacher bonuses in recognition of their hard work and dedication and for leading the nation in student achievement and growth
- \$244 million to strengthen education through the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA) formula growth,

- including teacher pay raises
- \$62.7 million for K-12 infrastructure and facilities funding
- \$27.3 million for summer learning programs to support students between school years
- \$25 million further investment in the Fast Growth Fund, to support fast-growing districts
- \$17 million for Grade A School Grants
- \$10 million to provide paid parental leave for Local Educational Agency employees

## Expanding Choices

- \$145.9 million for Education Freedom Scholarships, to empower parents with the freedom to pick the right school for their child and have a say in where their tax dollars are spent – regardless of income or zip code

## Higher Education

- \$12 million to create the TennesseeWORKS Scholarship, a new award that will cover every penny of Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCAT) tuition and fees for all students while relieving the extra cost burden of tools and equipment for those most in-need
- \$52.8 million to fully fund the outcomes-based funding formula, which may be used for program improvements that assist higher education institutions in meeting outcomes including student progression, degree production, research and service, efficiency metrics, and other measures related to institutional mission
- \$2.27 million to develop Tennessee Board of Regents’ Center for Workforce Development to expand workforce training for businesses and industries, including specialized onboarding and apprenticeship programs, in partnership with TN Accelerates
- \$2 million to create a common application system for Tennessee’s community colleges, streamline student transfer, and implement a statewide customer relationship management system to enhance student outreach and support

## Strong & Healthy Families

- \$95.5 million utilizing Shared Savings to enhance long term care services and supports for older adults and people living with disabilities
- \$41 million to support the

Department of Children’s Services (DCS) with placement of children within the provider network

- \$7.2 million to expand the WAGES Program and reduce turnover in Tennessee’s childcare workforce by increasing pay and rewarding greater education
- \$5.9 million to cover childcare for more working families through an expansion of the Smart Steps Child Care Program and ease the benefits cliff
- \$24 million to continue a Department of Health pilot program to address unmet dental service needs and increase the number of dentists in Tennessee
- \$11.8 million to reduce wait lists in the OPTIONS and Senior Nutrition programs
- \$10.9 million to expand programming at the Boys & Girls Club of Tennessee
- \$5 million to increase bed capacity at the Middle Tennessee Regional Mental Health Institute
- \$3 million for a partnership between Department of Children’s Services (DCS) and Department of Disability and Aging (DDA) to provide additional support services for children in DCS care with intellectual and developmental disabilities

## Safe Neighborhoods

During the special legislative session in January 2025, Gov. Lee and the General Assembly passed a robust legislative [agenda](#) and appropriated \$5 million to prepare Tennessee to assist in implementation of the Trump Administration’s illegal immigration policies. Gov. Lee’s proposed FY25-26 budget includes the following additional public safety investments:

- \$130 million further investment in the Violent Crime Intervention Fund to support local law enforcement and local jurisdictions through grants to fund evidence-based strategies to improve public safety
- \$75 million to establish Downtown Public Safety grants to increase public safety in downtown areas with businesses and commercial activity
- \$38 million in funding for an additional 117 State Troopers and related support staff to improve public safety across the state
- \$5 million to further expand the Statewide School Resource Officer (SRO) Program Grant,

which places SROs in each K-12 public school and public charter school in Tennessee

- \$3.7 million in funding for an additional 22 TBI positions to support victim services, intelligence analysis, aviation, security, Medicaid fraud enforcement, and administration
- \$1.3 million in additional funding for Houses of Worship Security Grants
- \$1 million to expand the school-based behavioral health liaison program, giving students across Tennessee schools important resources and mental health support

## Conservation

- \$100 million to execute a comprehensive regional water resource plan to ensure long-term water needs are met while protecting the ecological health of the Duck River
- \$52 million to create five new Tennessee State Parks, with the goal of funding a total of eight new state parks by the time Gov. Lee leaves office, setting the Tennessee record for the most state parks created by one administration
- \$6.2 million to address maintenance needs at Tennessee State Parks, preventing a backlog of deferred maintenance
- \$40 million for environmental cleanup, including creation of a comprehensive water resource management plan in the Duck River region, state water revolving fund projects and electric grid enhancement
- \$30 million to aid Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency’s capital outlay and maintenance needs

## Agriculture

- \$25 million to create a Farmland Conservation Fund
- \$20 million in additional funding for the Agricultural Enterprise Fund and Agricultural Enhancement Fund, both of which are utilized to aid Tennesseans in creating and expanding agricultural, food and forestry businesses and make long-term strategic investments in rural communities

## Energy

- \$50 million to create the Small Modular Reactor (SMR) Grant Fund to support Tennessee Valley Authority’s Clinch River Nuclear SMR project to position Tennessee as a leader in next-generation nuclear energy
- \$10 million further investment in the Nuclear Energy Fund to attract advanced nuclear technology companies
- \$2.6 million to develop the nation’s first regulatory framework for commercial nuclear fusion power
- \$10 million further investment in Governor’s Investment in Vocational Education (GIVE) to support nuclear workforce education, as recommended by the Nuclear Energy Advisory Council
- \$20 million for the Federal Grant Matching Fund, to support proposals from Tennessee universities and businesses applying for research funding from federal agencies like the National Science Foundation and Department of Energy

# Chattanooga first to use new Voluntary Attainable Housing Incentives program

HOUSING. *from Page 1*

of middle-income families – often working families like teachers and firefighters – are becoming significantly financially burdened by housing costs is rising according to local data. As a result, even more pressure is put on lower-income families who are housing burdened.

Miles said Chattanooga officials also realized there has been a bit of a mismatch in the past between what consumers want and what the market was making available. Rather than larger three-, four-, or five-bedroom units, many families wanted studio and one-bedroom apartments but were forced into larger units due to availability. Populations like seniors, empty nesters looking to downsize, and young couples and professionals would prefer smaller units.

“It’s important to develop mixed-income communities to ensure that Chattanooga is not just growing and benefiting people at the highest income brackets. We want

all of our citizens to live in great neighborhoods with walkability and feel included in Chattanooga’s growth. This is a great example of getting creative and working together to solve this problem in a way that doesn’t cost the city any dollars.”

Goals of the program include:

- Boosting the supply of attainable housing to reduce competition and open up rental options renters can afford,
- Leveraging a voluntary, market-driven tool that rides the wave of current development by allowing developers to build more in exchange for moderately priced housing, and
- Driving attainable housing development with zero financial commitment from the city. Benefits come from added units enabled by incentives

While the program is a valuable new tool, Miles said [it is one of many](#) that Chattanooga is using to build a better housing ecosystem. The voluntary incentive program

can also be stacked with the city’s PILOT incentives.

“We want to try to have as many incentives as possible to bring private developers to the table and give them the opportunity to include affordable housing in their projects,” Miles said. “Last year, we updated our PILOT program to make it more flexible for developers. If they do choose to stack both of those, we are going to limit the units that the PILOT will subsidize to 60% AMI or below. We want to offer as much flexibility and opportunities as we can. Our previous PILOT program was more of a blunt instrument, and didn’t work for a lot of developers and projects.”

The Voluntary Incentives Program will take effect this spring. More information about the program can be found on the city’s [affordable housing programs page](#). To watch a presentation from Chattanooga Director of Housing Policy on these voluntary incentives, [click here](#).



Feedback from citizens found that many residents actually prefer units with fewer bedrooms and yard space. This is especially true of groups like retirees and empty nesters who are downsizing or young couples and professionals who are still working their way up to a single-family unit.

## STATE BRIEFS

Tennessee ended 2024 with a 3.6% unemployment rate in December, an increase from the previous month. Tennessee's unemployment rate remains below the national rate of 4.1%. Between November and December, Tennessee employers added 500 nonfarm jobs. The health care and social assistance sector accounted for the biggest gains, followed by local government and the real estate, rental, and leasing sector. Over the past year, total nonfarm employment across the state increased by 45,400 jobs. The largest increase was in the health care and social assistance sector, followed by the professional, scientific, and technical services sector and durable goods manufacturing.

The state of Tennessee will receive more than \$900 million in opioid abatement funds as part of settlement with Purdue Pharma and the Sackler Family with a bipartisan coalition of 15 states. Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti said the \$7.4 billion

settlement – including \$6.5 million from the Sackler family – will be paid out over a 15-year period. The settlement also reflects the end of the Sackler family's control of Purdue and bars them from selling opioids in the U.S.

The TBI has unveiled two new resources aimed at protecting Tennessee's senior population. The SafeSeniorTN campaign, available online at [www.SafeSeniorTN.com](http://www.SafeSeniorTN.com), puts information on fraud prevention and protection from state experts easily accessible. TBI is also asking seniors and their families to use TBI Find, a mobile app that connects the public with up-to-the-minute information about Silver Alerts issued in Tennessee. Seniors and their loved ones can upload key information to the app's CareKit feature, which can help officials get out Silver Alerts more quickly in the event of an emergency. The app also provides key information on resources and support to help protect high-risk seniors.

## State December revenues \$39.7M above estimates

Tennessee revenues exceeded budgeted estimates for the month of December.

Finance and Administration Commissioner Jim Bryson reported that total December tax revenues were \$1.9 billion, \$39.7 million more than the budgeted estimate but \$21.0 million less than December 2023.

General fund revenues were \$36.7 million more than the December estimate, and the four other funds that share in state tax revenues were \$3.0 million more than the estimates.

On an accrual basis, December is the fifth month in the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

"December's total tax receipts surpassed our budgeted expectations for the month," Bryson said. "Sales tax revenues, reflecting November's taxable sales activity, slightly exceeded our monthly estimates and demonstrated notable growth compared to this same time last year. Corporate tax receipts, or franchise and excise taxes, also outperformed our December expectations.

"We are pleased that tax revenues are aligning closely with our expectations. However, we will maintain careful oversight of future revenues and expenditures to ensure we stay balanced."

On a year-to-date basis, August through December, total tax revenues are 0.21% less than the budget estimate, or \$17.7 million less than expectations. When compared to this same period last year, total tax revenues have decreased by \$15.3 million or 0.18%.

General fund revenues are 0.55% less than the year-to-date budgeted estimate, or \$38.9 million lower. Likewise, year-to-date general fund collections compared to this same period last year have remained nearly flat with \$0.3 million in growth.

### Individual tax performance compared to December 2024 Budgeted Estimates:

- Sales Taxes: Above estimate by 0.46% or \$5.4 million

- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Above estimate by 5.90% or \$25.7 million
- Fuel Taxes: Above estimate by 1.75% or \$1.9 million
- All other taxes: Above estimate by 4.64% or \$6.7 million
- Year-to-date performance compared to Budgeted Estimates:
- Sales Taxes: Above estimate by 1.56% or \$92.9 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Below estimate by 12.92% or \$163.0 million
- Fuel Taxes: Above estimate by 0.66% or \$3.6 million
- All other taxes: Above estimate by 6.39% or \$48.9 million

### Individual tax performance compared to December 2023:

- Sales Taxes: Up 3.23% or \$37.3 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Down 12.59% or \$66.6 million
- Fuel Taxes: Up 3.58% or \$3.7 million
- All other taxes: Up 3.14% or \$4.6 million

### Individual tax performance compared to August through December 2023:

- Sales Taxes: Up 5.66% or \$324.3 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Down 24.92% or \$364.7 million
- Fuel Taxes: Up 0.89% or \$4.8 million
- All other taxes: Up 2.55% or \$20.3 million

The budgeted revenue estimates for 2024-2025 are based upon the State Funding Board's consensus recommendation from November 29, 2023, and adopted by the second session of the 113th General Assembly in April 2024. Also incorporated in the estimates are any changes in revenue enacted during the 2024 session of the General Assembly. All monthly estimates are available on the state's website.

## TDEC accepting applications for Solid Waste Management grant program

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) is accepting applications for the first round of solid waste materials management grants this year for communities and other eligible entities across the state.

Applications for Waste Reduction and Organics Management grants are available Feb. 28-April 11 for municipalities, counties, and not-for-profit entities.

Technical Assistance grants are available for applications on Feb. 28-March 28 for Development Districts to offer free assistance with annual solid waste reporting and grant activities for all municipalities and counties.

Applications for grants in other categories of solid waste materials management will be open in the weeks ahead. The Materials Management Grants Administration Program in TDEC's Division of Solid Waste Management encourages and supports local communities and other eligible entities to meet their solid waste and recycling goals.

Local governments can divert more waste from landfills through infrastructure upgrades and provide convenient opportunities for residents to get engaged in the process. Recycling directly impacts every resident of Tennessee and manufacturers who use materials collected in their manufacturing process.

Grants will be offered in four other categories—Convenience Center, Used Automotive Fluid Collection Center, Household Hazardous Waste Collection and Facility Operations, and Recycling Equipment as well as a Recycling Rebate for the

## State awards \$7.5M in water, wastewater planning grants to 23 municipalities, others

Funds for water and sewer system planning were awarded to 23 municipalities as part of 36 grants totaling \$7.5 million awarded by the state.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee and Department of Economic and Community Development Commissioner Stuart C. McWhorter announced recipients of funds through the Infrastructure Planning Grant (IPG) program. The funding is part of the Rural Economic Opportunity Act and will assist communities and utility districts across Tennessee with long-term planning for their water and sewer systems.

"Efficient utility infrastructure is crucial to economic development," said Gov. Lee. "I thank the General Assembly for funding this program and commend the 36 grantees for stepping up to help our communities strengthen local infrastructure and plan for the future."

The IPG program is open to utility systems that serve distressed counties and rural communities on the financially distressed utility system referral list. Funds can be used in the following program categories: water system mapping and modeling, water system analysis, sewer system mapping and modeling, sewer system analysis, asset management related activities and regionalization studies.

"Having strong infrastructure in place is critical to a community's economic growth. These grantees will be able to use this funding to at-



TDEC has announced the first round of applications for various solid waste grant programs.

tract other grants and funding that will prepare their systems for growth," said Commissioner McWhorter. "I congratulate those receiving funding through the IPG program and look forward to seeing how these 36 projects will spur future economic growth."

The calendar for grant application openings is:

- **Waste Reduction and Organics Management Grants:** Feb. 28-April 11 at 4:30 p.m.
- **Technical Assistance Grants:** Feb. 28-March 28 at 4:30 p.m.
- **Convenience Center and Used Oil Grants:** May 15-June 30 at 4:30 p.m.
- **Household Hazardous Waste Collection and Facility Operations, Recycling Equipment, and Recycling Rebates:** Sept. 4-Oct. 15 at 4:30 p.m. (All times are Central time)

All grant applications are submitted online via the department's Grants Management System (GMS). More information about the TDEC grant program for solid waste ma-

terials management is also available online.

Waste Reduction grants are authorized by the Solid Waste Management Act of 1991 and are supported by the Solid Waste Management Fund, which is administered by TDEC. The fund receives revenues from a state surcharge on each ton of solid waste disposed in landfills.

Used oil grants are authorized under the Used Oil Collection Act of 1993 and are funded by the Used Oil Collection Fund, which receives its revenue from a fee collected against every quart of oil sold.

TDEC will host a series of grant workshops throughout the state starting Jan. 17 at the Southwest Tennessee Development District and March 5 at Montgomery Bell State Park. To sign up for workshops, visit the Grants Administration website.

Applications from communities and utility districts were based on controller eligibility, and these systems have been referred to the Board of Utility Regulation (formerly the Utility Management Review Board or the Water and Wastewater Financing Board) because of their net position, non-revenue water or high levels of debt. For more information, visit [here](http://www.tdec.state.tn.us).

Municipality	Grant Amount
Bulls Gap	\$190,000.00
Byrdstown	\$100,000.00
Centerville	\$250,000.00
Collinwood	\$152,000.00
Dresden	\$357,500.00
Henning	\$200,000.00
Jasper	\$461,344.00
Dunlap	\$199,500.00
Loretto	\$71,751.00
Madisonville	\$200,000.00
Mason	\$305,000.00
Rocky Top	\$149,625.00
Rutledge	\$224,438.00
Sharon	\$210,000.00
South Pittsburg	\$97,375.00
Spencer	\$95,000.00
Spring City	\$118,750.00
Springfield	\$199,500.00
Tellico Plains	\$249,375.00
Surgoinville Utility District	\$130,000.00
Tennessee Ridge	\$200,000.00
Trenton	\$211,400.00
Woodbury	\$350,000.00

## State announces 11 new site development grants

Gov. Bill Lee and Department of Economic and Community Development Commissioner Stuart C. McWhorter announced 11 new Site Development Grant recipients, including nine projects to benefit municipalities.

The grants, totaling more than \$17 million, are designed to help communities invest in infrastructure and engineering improvements to land economic development projects and achieve Select Tennessee site certification.

The grants awarded this round include:

- **Benton County IDB:** Smith Property, \$1,937,050 – Property purchase
- **Clarksville-Montgomery County Area Economic Development Council, Inc.** Clarksville Montgomery County North Industrial Park, \$600,000 – Access road construction and due diligence
- **Cleveland and Bradley County IDB:** Spring Branch Industrial Park Lots 8 & 9, \$2,946,186 – Property grading
- **Coffee County Industrial Board:** Manchester Industrial Park, \$1,610,450 – Sewer infrastructure
- **Fayetteville and Lincoln County IDB:** Runway Centre Industrial Park, \$3,500,000

– Speculative building construction

- **Fentress County IDB:** Clarkrange Regional Business Park, \$100,000 – Due diligence
- **Morristown Industrial Development Board:** East TN Progress Center Lot 10, \$4,000,000 – Speculative building construction
- **Paris-Henry County Industrial Committee:** Paris-Henry County Industrial Park, \$1,123,760 – Property clearing and due diligence
- **Scott County IDB:** Airport Industrial Site, \$66,500 – Due diligence
- **Trenton Economic and Industrial Development Board:** Trenton IDB Building, \$20,000 – Due diligence
- **Union City:** Northwest TN Regional Industrial Center, \$1,100,000 – Property clearing and grading

Applications were reviewed by an advisory committee made up of TNECD, Austin Consulting, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the TDEC and the TDOT.

Each application was supported by the community's senator and representatives in the Tennessee General Assembly

**Tennessee Municipal League**  
2023-2024 Officers and Directors

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Paige Brown  
Mayor, Gallatin
- VICE PRESIDENTS**  
Julian McTizic  
Mayor, Bolivar
- Kevin Brooks  
Mayor, Cleveland
- DIRECTORS**  
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City Mayor, Morristown (District 2)
- Stefanie Dalton  
Vice Mayor, Red Bank (District 3)
- Johnny Dodd  
Councilman, Jackson
- Darrell Duncan  
Vice Mayor, Kingsport (District 1)
- Roland Dykes  
Mayor, Newport
- Tim Ellis  
City Manager, Goodlettsville (District 5)
- Bethany Huffman  
Alderman, Millington (District 8)
- Tim Kelly  
Mayor, Chattanooga
- Indya Kincannon  
Mayor, Knoxville
- Keith Morrison  
City Administrator, Algood (District 4)
- Freddie O'Connell  
Mayor, Metro Nashville
- Jessica Salamaida  
Vice Mayor, Nolensville (District 6)
- Joe Pitts  
Mayor, Clarksville
- Blake Walley  
City Manager, Savannah (District 7)
- Ron Williams  
Mayor, Farragut
- Paul Young  
Mayor, Memphis
- AFFILIATE DIRECTOR**  
Kay Senter, City Council, Morristown (TMBF)  
Jay Evans, Asst. City Manager, Brentwood (TCMA)

- TML AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS**  
TN Assn. of Air Carrier Airports  
TN Building Officials Assn.  
TN Assn. of Chiefs of Police  
TN Assn. Municipal Clerks & Recorders  
TN Government Finance Officers Assn.  
TN Fire Chiefs Assn.  
TN Fire Safety Inspectors  
TN Assn. of Floodplain Management  
TN Assn. Housing & Redevel. Auth.  
TN Municipal Attorneys Assn.  
TN Municipal Judges Conference  
TN Chapter, American Public Works  
TN Recreation and Parks Assn.  
TN Chapter, American Planning  
TN Personnel Management Assn.  
TN Assn. of Public Purchasing  
TN Section, Institute of Transport  
TN Public Transportation Assoc.  
Assoc. Independent & Municipal Schools  
TN Renewable Energy & Economic Development Council  
TN Urban Forestry Council  
TN Stormwater Assn

- TML SPONSORS**
- FEATURE LEVEL**  
GovDeals  
SERVPRO  
Rackley Roofing
- DIAMOND LEVEL**  
PATH  
Voya Financial Advisors
- PLATINUM LEVEL**  
Keep TN Beautiful  
RSA Advisors  
TN Electric Cooperative Association  
Verizon
- GOLD LEVEL**  
Asa Engineering  
AT&T  
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- SILVER LEVEL**  
Alexander Thompson Arnold  
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Energy Systems Group  
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Holiday Designs  
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Mark III Employee Benefits  
Mattern & Craig, Inc.  
OpenGov  
Pavement Restorations, Inc.  
Performance Services  
Recreational Concepts  
Rehrig Pacific  
Sherill Morgan  
Siemens  
Simmons Wealth Management  
Southeast Cement Promotion Assoc  
Tennessee Development District Assoc  
The Jefferson Health Plan  
Thompson & Litton  
Trane Commercial Systems  
TriGreen Equipment  
Veregy  
Waste Connections of TN  
Waste Management
- BRONZE LEVEL**  
A2H, Inc.  
Deckard Technologies  
Employee Benefit Specialists  
Flock Safety  
Gallagher Benefits Service  
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Public Entity Partners  
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# How to improve government efficiency — from the easy wins to the tough challenges

BY RAGHU KRISHNAIAH  
*University of Phoenix*

In an era of shrinking government budgets and growing demands on public services, the spotlight on inefficient operations is increasingly glaring.

The public sector is under pressure to do more with less, but unlike companies, which run primarily on a profit motive, governments must balance a range of objectives — everything from societal welfare to political realities. This complexity can slow efforts to streamline operations, and it raises a key question: How can governments boost efficiency without losing sight of their core missions?

It's a long-standing challenge. But with citizens expecting more from their governments — and often comparing them unfavorably and unfairly with the private sector where speed, productivity and innovation are constant goals — the stakes have risen.

As a chief operating officer in the private sector, I understand how business rewards performance and how that drives much of its efficiency and have wondered what it would take for governments to attain similar outcomes. Private employees know that failure has consequences, and that excellence is rewarded. In government, job security tends to be stronger while accountability seems to be weaker.

There are several possible solutions. A shift toward performance-based systems would significantly improve how the government does business, particularly if employees are

given the tools and training needed to meet higher expectations. But accountability alone may not be enough.

Many government workers, the people closest to the day-to-day operations, need more autonomy. Too often public employees' hands are tied when trying to make improvements, stifled by layers of oversight and mired in bureaucracy.

Clerks, case workers and computer professionals who understand the challenges best usually don't have decision-making power. They're in the trenches but have little control over how battles are fought and won. Allowing them to take responsibility for results, while holding them accountable, would build a stronger culture of pride and responsibility in public service. That, in turn, could mirror the productivity found in the business world.

A critical part of the push for efficiency is smarter use of technology. Governments have made progress, though slower than industry at large. Many departments and agencies, for example, have missed the memo on going paperless. Doing so could save at least \$725 billion, according to a McKinsey & Co. report.

Routine tasks like processing forms and back-office paperwork can be automated with data analytics and digital tools. Imagine the gains if public servants spent less time on mundane tasks and more time addressing the real needs of the people they serve.

Information, professional, educational, scientific and technical services are at the forefront of AI integration, while construction, agriculture, fishing and hunting and transportation lag behind, according to the Bipartisan Policy Center.

The government would be in that latter group, but could easily adopt similar tools, using them to reduce the time civil servants spend on routine matters. Freed from tedious tasks, workers could focus on more complex issues, where human input is critical.

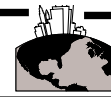
This leads to a more proactive government. Rather than sending late notices for unpaid taxes, how about reminding citizens ahead of time or preventing fraud before it has occurred instead of addressing it after are examples of how governments could implement AI to gain greater efficiency — and build trust.

A government that acts as a helpful partner, instead of a bureaucratic authority, will boost public satisfaction and internal morale. Of course, structural complexity remains one of the biggest barriers to reform. Unlike corporations, where a CEO can make swift decisions, governments are bogged down by competing political interests and revolving leadership. Transparency requirements, while essential, can slow decision-making to a crawl.

Governments are also by nature risk averse. The political costs of failure are high, and public money is at stake. Betting on emerging technologies has not been the traditional role of government. But there is enough evidence now to start targeting improvements. Focus first on improving routine tasks, and the momentum for larger change will build over time.

In the end, improving government efficiency is about more than just cutting costs. It's about building systems that work better for the people they serve and giving public employees the resources and authority they need to demonstrate just how good they can be.

## NATIONAL BRIEFS



**More retirement age Americans are remaining in the workforce than ever before** with the number of Americans aged 65 or older in the workforce increasing 33% between 2015 and 2024. In that same time, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found the labor force for all Americans aged 16 to 64 has only increased at a rate of 9%. The reason more retirement-age Americans are working comes from the country's aging overall population and shifts in the retirement system. The change from employer-funded pensions to 401ks has left many with financial needs to remain employed longer with Social Security not filling gaps.

**U.S. employers added 143,000 jobs in January, down from the 307,000 created in December and 261,000 in November.** Economists had predicted the economy to add 170,000 new jobs in January. The unemployment rate still fell to 4% in the same month. Average hourly wages rose by

0.5% from December to January and 4.1% from January 2024 to January 2025. Employers are maintaining their current workforce but not hiring significantly or laying off employees. Inflationary pressure from wage gains is also being offset by healthy U.S. productivity growth. Job growth is expected to slow from its 2024 average of 160,000 new jobs per month to a monthly average of between 100,000 and 150,000 in 2025.

**More than 3.2 million Americans had been issued tax refunds as of Jan. 31, 2025,** with the average refund amount \$1,928, according to the Internal Revenue Service. The IRS expects more than 140 million individual findings through April 15 and the average refund amount could change as more filings come in. The average refund last season was \$3,138, about 1% lower than the previous average refund for 2023. The IRS sends most refunds within 21 days of filing with filers able to check the status of their refund via the "Where's My Refund?" tool or the [IRS2Go](#) app.

**Americans have a higher confidence in local governments than the federal government on a variety of issues,** according to a survey by the Pew Research Center. The survey found 61% of U.S. adults had a favorable view of their local government compared to 22% feeling positively about the federal government. Additionally, 64% of Americans felt their local elections were run and administered well but only 43% felt they could say the same about elections across the country. While 52% of respondents felt their local public schools were well run, only 22% felt the could say the same about public schools nationwide. Americans were also more likely to express confidence in local news organizations (74%) than national outlets (66%). Likewise, only 17% of Americans feel crime is a major concern in the area where they live but 63% feel concerned about crime in the U.S. overall. They also tend to rate the performance of their local police force higher than departments nationwide. Researchers believe feeling more connected to their local community and having more personalized experience with local issues than national ones may be why.



**Feb. 22: Oak Ridge**  
[Oak Ridge Children's Museum International Festival](#)  
Join us for our annual International Festival, a Children's Museum of Oak Ridge tradition! The Festival features a variety of world cultures through performances, food, crafts, children's activities, and more.

**Feb. 22: Townsend**  
[Tennessee Winter Beer Fest](#)  
Join us for the best craft beer festival around. Enjoy a beautiful open-air setting at Company Distilling in Townsend with several local Tennessee breweries that will bring their best brews for sampling and voting along with delicious food, live music, a silent auction, and proceeding benefiting New Hope Blount County Children's Advocacy Center.

**Feb. 28-March 1: Etowah**  
[30th Annual Cousin Jake Tullock Bluegrass Festival](#)  
The Historic Gem Theater and Depot Lawn in Etowah will host bluegrass and gospel performances honoring the legacy of local legend Cousin Jake Tullock.

**Feb. 28-March 2: Pigeon Forge**  
[Chuck Wagon Cookoff Weekend](#)  
This 3-day event includes an intimate dinner concert, cowboy church and an annual cookoff competition. Chuck wagons will gather at Clabough's Campground for this one-of-a-kind outdoor cooking event.

**March 1: Knoxville**  
[18th Annual Mardi Growl](#)  
Young-Williams Animal Center will host Knoxville's favorite pet parade and party.

**March 15: Bell Buckle**  
[Daffodil Day](#)  
Every March Bell Buckle bursts into full bloom with a colorful explosion of daffodils and marks the arrival of spring by inviting everyone to come enjoy a day full of fun, family-friendly activities.

**March 15: Erin**  
[63rd Annual Irish Celebration](#)  
The Irish Celebration in Erin is an annual event with more than 150 vendors, a carnival with rides and games, and a grand parade. The event has been named one of the Top 10 Irish Celebrations in the United States.

**March 21: Linden**  
[17th Annual Blooming Arts Festival](#)  
This highly anticipated event will transform the charming streets of downtown Linden into an artistic hub, showcasing an array of visual and performing arts. Visitors can expect more than 150 exhibitors featuring fine arts, crafts and regional artisans, alongside live music performances spanning various genres and local food vendors offering a taste of Southern cuisine.



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Ed Stewart, ChFC, CLU, CF  
Financial Advisor

# TVA's Jeff Lyash discusses Integrated Resource plan, future of power

The Tennessee Valley Authority is the nation's largest public power provider, generating and distributing power to 153 local power companies across seven-states in the Tennessee Valley region while supporting economic development efforts as well as environmental stewardship.

TVA President and CEO Jeff Lyash shares his thoughts on TVA's draft Integrated Resource Plan – what it is, what's in it, and why it matters to the region.



**TT&C: Tell me a little about the Integrated Resource Plan and why it's important.**

**Jeff Lyash:** The Integrated Resource Plan, or IRP, is a comprehensive study that evaluates the region's future power needs, resources TVA could use to meet those needs, and the potential cost, environmental and operating impacts of these options. We like to say the IRP is like a compass, providing strategic direction for how TVA can continue to provide affordable, reliable, resilient and increasingly cleaner power for future generations.

The IRP study includes an environmental review called an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with the IRP.

**TT&C: Why is TVA doing the IRP now?**

**JL:** The last IRP was completed in 2019. Since then, we've monitored key planning signposts – or market signals – and those have indicated it's time for a new evaluation and IRP. We started the process in 2023 with a scoping period.

**TT&C: What are some of those signposts or signals?**

**JL:** The region is growing at three times the national average – with more people moving in as well as more industry coming to the region. Energy demand is increasing; policies and regulations are changing; industrial companies are electrifying their operations; and new, cleaner technologies are emerging.

Taken together, these signposts suggested that it was time to refresh our planning foundation, the IRP, to ensure we have a comprehensive backdrop to support future decisions-making.

**TT&C: What are some of the findings in the draft IRP?**

**JL:** The IRP analyzes 30 different portfolios, based on different combinations of scenarios we could find ourselves operating in and then the strategies we could use in those scenarios.

At a high level, the draft IRP results indicate that, depending on how the future unfolds, we'll need to add between 9 and 26 gigawatts of new capacity to meet the region's energy demand between now and 2035.

New generation is needed in any scenario to cover the growth in demand we're seeing, but also to account for planned asset retirements. And much of that new generation needs to be dispatchable, which means we can turn it on and off as needed based on the demand at any given time.

We also see adding more solar. The IRP also addresses emerging technology, like new nuclear, and our work in that space positions us well to incorporate that technology as it becomes more available.

In all cases, a balanced portfolio, or one that uses a mix of different generation types, is most valuable because it allows each type to perform at its best so the system works together to ensure we're providing affordable, reliable, resilient and increasingly cleaner energy for the Valley region.

**TT&C: You mention 2035, but doesn't this IRP look out to 2050?**

**JL:** That's right. The draft IRP analyzes potential ways the resource portfolio might evolve between now and 2050 and provides more specific insight to inform our strategic portfolio decisions between now and 2035. We refer to the IRP as being like a compass because it gives us a direction, but it only points at the horizon. A lot of research goes into learning what needs and obstacles exist between us and reaching that

horizon. Public input is one of the things that helps us learn. So while we are planning out to 2035, this work helps us see much further.

**TT&C: Does the IRP address energy efficiency or demand response programs?**

**JL:** Yes, the IRP does account for both of those. Energy efficiency helps reduce energy needs, particularly between now and 2035, and we expect demand response programs will grow with the system and the use of smart technologies to help reduce energy peaks. We look forward to working with our customers and local power companies in this area.

**TT&C: How will the recommendations in the IRP be used by TVA?**

**JL:** The final IRP, which will be published later this spring, will help TVA make decisions around asset strategy and long-term financial planning. It gives parameters for us to consider as we evaluate how to best maintain and expand our system so we can continue to reliably and affordably provide power to the region.

**TT&C: Why does the IRP continue down the path of adding natural gas when TVA has publicly discussed aspiring to reduce its carbon footprint?**

**JL:** The IRP reflects the need for firm, dispatchable generation, and natural gas fits that bill. It's a cleaner, more affordable option that also is flexible enough to accommodate additional renewables on the system. So we can turn it on and off when needed, either when demand is high or when renewables are not generating electricity.

**TT&C: How has the public/stakeholders been engaged in the IRP process?**

**JL:** Public engagement is a vital part of the IRP process. The general public has had the opportunity to participate at every step – from the scoping period to the publication of the draft.

We've held several virtual webinars and stakeholder meetings to gather feedback as the draft was being developed and we held 10 in-person Open House meetings once it was published. We received over 2,500 comments that will also inform the final IRP, which again, we'll publish later this spring.

Throughout the process, we've also worked closely with the IRP Working Group, a key group of stakeholders that includes representatives from our customers, local governments and communities, and government and non-governmental agencies.

The Regional Energy Resource Council (RERC), a federal advisory committee that provides formal advice to the TVA Board of Directors, also is engaged in the process. These groups have been extremely beneficial in developing the draft IRP.

**TT&C: How might the recommendations in the IRP impact rates?**

**JL:** The IRP evaluates cost across a few different metrics, like total system cost or the cost of a particular portfolio, but it does not project rate actions or prescribe rate design.

**TT&C: Does the IRP give local communities a "heads up" on any projects or sites that may be coming in the next decade?**

**JL:** The IRP does not get into site-specific evaluations or considerations. That said, TVA will engage communities once we determine the need to evaluate a resource in a specific area.

**TT&C: What are the next steps?**

**JL:** TVA is evaluating public



Jeff Lyash, TVA President and CEO



Lyash visits the control room of a TVA nuclear plant.



Lyash on the ground with TVA employees working on recovery efforts following Hurricane Helene.



**T T & C : What's your final word on the IRP?** Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) President and CEO Jeff Lyash meets with employees. TVA is in the process of developing its Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), which will help guide the future of public power throughout the Tennessee Valley region.

**JL:** Resource planning is a vital activity for all utilities, and TVA is no exception especially given the growth in this region. The difference between TVA and other utilities, though, is that we

have stakeholders, not shareholders.

Our mission – our mandate, really – is to make life better for the people of the Tennessee Valley, and providing reliable, affordable,

resilient and increasingly cleaner energy is a key piece of that mission. The IRP gives us the best opportunity to plan for and execute on that mission for decades to come.