



February 4, 2016

## State of the State

The General Assembly began the fourth week of session with Governor Haslam's State of the State address. The Governor presented a balanced \$34.8 billion proposed budget before a joint session. The budget proposes the biggest increase in education in state history, with 261 million new dollars for public education, including \$104.6 million for teacher salaries.

## FY2016-17 Budget

The proposed budget includes \$24 million in state funds for the Employment and Community First (ECF) CHOICES program to allow the state to serve more people currently on the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities' waiting list. It also proposes \$1.27 million to increase the number of drug recovery courts from 41 to 50 and for two additional veterans' courts.

Other notable budget investments are: \$130 million from the General Fund to repay the Highway Fund; \$12.8 million for facilities and homeland security upgrades for the Military Department; and \$10 million for the Department of Economic and Community Development's Rural Development Initiative.

The complete text of the Governor's speech and archived video is available [here](#). You can find the Governor's FY2016-17 budget [here](#).

Commissioner Larry Martin, Department of Finance and Administration, presented the Governor's proposed budget to the Finance, Ways and Means Committee in both the House and Senate. The House and Senate will initiate departmental budget hearings beginning next week and each agency of state government will get a legislative review in the coming weeks.

## House

The House Republican Caucus met this week and elected Rep. Timothy Hill (R-Blountville) as Majority Whip, following Rep. Jeremy Durham's (R-Franklin) recent vacation of the position. Rep. Hill defeated Rep. Ron Travis (R-Dayton) in a 38-33 vote. Rep. Hill and Rep. Travis were the only two declared candidates seeking the position. The Majority Whip is in charge of counting votes within the Caucus, as well as leading campaign efforts for GOP incumbents in the House.

Rep. Bill Dunn's (R-Knoxville) private-school voucher bill passed out of Calendar and Rules Committee and will be up for a floor vote Monday, February 8. This will be the first time the voucher issue is taken up on the House Floor, which may make for a late night!

## **Congress**

U.S. Rep. Stephen Fincher (8th Congressional District) announced he is not seeking re-election. State Senator Brian Kelsey (R-Germantown) and George Flinn, a radiologist in Memphis, have pulled qualifying papers to run for Rep. Fincher's congressional seat. Early in the week, Rep. Steve McManus (R-Cordova) announced plans to run, but later reconsidered and will instead run for a final two-year term in the Legislature. On the Democratic side, Roy Herron, former state senator and Tennessee Democratic Party chairman, who lost to Rep. Fincher in 2010, said that he's thinking about running.

## **Of Interest**

Lobbyists and tigers and bills - oh my! At this year's Tennessee State University Day on the Hill, students showcased their research and innovative initiatives with a robotic tiger that moved and roared, startling many unsuspecting passersby, including one Anne Carr.