



March 24, 2016

You know you are in for a fun week, when there are cows, goats and sheep outside of Legislative Plaza. Nothing livens the place up more than, well, livestock. Rep. Andy Holt (R-Dresden) presided over the Ag Day on the Hill festivities, including the infamous House vs. Senate shucking contest, which was won again this year by Speaker Harwell and her bi-partisan House team.

The Senate held a moment of silence on Wednesday for the victims of the Brussels attacks. Flags will be flown at half-staff until Saturday. There was a special presentation in the House to honor the life and legacy of U.S. Senator Fred Thompson. His sons and grandson accepted the resolution, which you'll see in our photo of the week.

A 'Transitional' Senate Speaker

Senate Majority Leader Mark Norris (R-Collierville) announced on Monday that he has a plan in which Sen. Randy McNally (R-Oak Ridge) would become a 'transitional' Senate speaker. Under Sen. Norris's scenario, the Senate Republican Caucus would agree soon for a Sen. McNally "transitional" speakership. The traditional timetable would be to settle the issue in the Caucus after the November elections, but Sen. Norris said an agreement soon could avoid a divisive distraction in this year's legislative elections. Sen. McNally announced his intention to seek the office of Speaker of the Senate/Lt Governor on the floor of the Senate today. McNally represents Anderson and Loudon counties and part of Knox County. First elected in 1978, Sen. McNally is the longest-serving current member of the Legislature.

House Rep Brings AR-15 to Subcommittee

In presenting his bill to expand background checks on gun purchases, Rep. Mike Stewart (D-Nashville) brought an AR-15 style rifle that he purchased online and picked up in a restaurant parking lot without having to submit to a background check. The bill was heard in House Civil Justice Subcommittee and failed on a voice vote. The bill, and the presentation, made national news. You can read about [here](#) and [here](#). The companion bill was referred to Senate Judiciary Committee but has had no action.

Guns on Campus

The Senate voted 29-4 to let private schools and universities allow guns on their campuses. The bill, SB 1559, is sponsored by Sen. Mike Bell (R-Riceville). The companion bill passed on the House Floor today by a 79-12 vote and is headed to the Governor's desk.

Helmet Bill Fails

The Senate Finance, Ways and Means Committee voted 6-5 against a bill to allow insured motorcyclists who are at least 21 years old to ride without a helmet. The bill's sponsor, Sen. Kerry Roberts (R-Springfield), testified that ending the helmet law would be a boon to tourism. Opponents argued that police would have no way of knowing which riders held proper medical coverage, and that state hospitals would be left to cover the cost of treating the brain injuries of uninsured motorcyclists. The companion bill has been taken off-notice in the House.

Committees and Subcommittees hold final calendars

Multiple House and Senate Committees completed “final” calendars this week and adjourned “subject to the call of the chair.” This means that no regular meetings will be scheduled, but the chair can call a meeting with notice given to the full House or Senate.

Appropriations Process Beginning

The Finance Committees of both the House and Senate will hear presentations next week on the Haslam administration’s recommended amendment to the appropriations bill. Additionally, the Finance committees will begin hearing from individual members on budget amendments filed by legislators.

Photo of the Week:

Today the late U.S. Senator, Fred Thompson was honored on the House Floor. Pictured are: Rep. Barry Doss (R-Leoma), Tony Thompson (son), Dalton Thompson (grandson), Speaker Beth Harwell, Dan Thompson (son), and Rep. Gerald McCormick (R-Chattanooga). We are pleased to have Dalton Thompson as our legislative intern this year.

