



511 Union Street
Suite 710
Nashville, TN 37219
615.255.2643 office
615.254.4866 fax



April 14, 2016

The General Assembly could adjourn as early as next Tuesday, April 19. We're keeping an eye on things as unfinished business will move quickly at this point.

Another thing moving quickly? Candy reserves at Legislative Plaza. Relationship building is great, but the key to being a successful lobbyist is the ability to subsist on nothing but vending machine food and drink. Luckily, the House celebrated 75 years of M&Ms this week and the good people at Mars sent cases of M&Ms and Twix to the Legislature. Dinner is served!

Also celebrated this week, the anniversary of Jack Daniels. The Senate honored the 150th anniversary of Jack Daniels on the Floor Monday night. Candy and whiskey aside, the true harbinger of the end of Session is seersucker, as evidenced in one of our two photos of the week. In our second photo, we recognize a well loved state employee who is retiring after 42 years of service.

Budget

Both House and Senate Finance Committees passed the \$34.8 billion 2016-17 state budget this week. The Senate took up the budget on the Floor Thursday morning and passed it by a 32-1 vote, with Sen. Lee Harris (D-Memphis) voting no. Before the vote, Majority Leader Mark Norris (R-Collierville) said, "When folks back home ask you what's the most important thing you do, it's balance and pass the budget every year."

The House took up the budget Thursday afternoon. After an hour of debate, the budget passed on an 87-7 vote. The budget includes \$261 million for K-12 education with \$105 million of that designated for teacher raises, \$100 million for the rainy day fund, \$130 million for road construction, and \$1.7 billion for higher education. A legislative addition to the budget includes a 1% reduction in the Hall Income Tax.

End of Session

The General Assembly is on track for Session to end next week, slightly later than original predictions of April 15. On Monday of this week, House Majority Leader McCormick said he's very confident the Legislature will still be in Session one week from today (next Monday). On Wednesday, Senate Majority Leader Norris outlined the plan to pass the budget this week, and adjourn sometime next week.

3-Star Healthy Project

This week, Speaker Harwell, joined by Governor Haslam, announced the creation of a health

coverage expansion task force. The “3-Star Healthy Project” task force, made up of four republican state legislators, will be asked to develop experimental pilot programs to make health care more efficient and to increase access to care for the uninsured. The task force will provide proposals for approval and consideration from federal health officials, and plans to meet with federal authorities in June.

Retiring Lt. Gov. Ramsey Honored

On Monday night, the Senate passed a resolution honoring Lt. Gov. Ramsey for his service to the state. With his family beside him, the Lt. Gov. listened as the resolution was read aloud, including this part: “WHEREAS, Ron Ramsey has lived the dream; Ron Ramsey continues to live the dream; and Ron Ramsey will always live the dream.” You can read the full resolution [here](#).

Candidate Lists

As mentioned last week, we have a complete list of state and federal candidates who filed petitions to run on the November ballot. You can find the list of qualifying candidates [here](#). There is a large number of legislative incumbents facing opposition: 82 of 96 House incumbents, and 9 of 10 Senate incumbents. There are 6 Senators and 17 House incumbents with no opposition, including Sens. Massey (R-Knoxville), Yager (R-Kingston), Niceley (R-Strawberry Plains), Haile (R-Gallatin), Stevens (R-Huntingdon), and Norris (R-Collierville). There are 22 candidates for U.S. Rep. Stephen Fincher’s open Congressional seat.

Photo of the Week:

Rep. Dan Howell and Rep. John Forgety doing the people’s work and looking sharp doing it!

My House seat mate, Rep Forgety & I showed up dressed alike. Starting our own singing group 😄



The importance of legislative staff cannot be emphasized enough. Mary Watts currently works for Rep. Cameron Sexton, Chair of House Health Committee. Mary has worked for various legislators in her 42 years and we wish her well in her retirement!

