

TENNESSEE COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS
ASSOCIATION

DAVID CONNOR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TCCA News

Contact Us:

TCCA
226 Capitol Boulevard Bldg
Suite 700
Nashville, TN 37219-1896

Office: 615.532.3767
Fax: 615.532.3769
Cell: 615.440.3959

tcca.connor@tncounties.org
tcsa.himes@tncounties.org

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Statement of Disclosure of Conflict of Interest Due January 31

All local elected public officeholders are required under the Comprehensive Governmental Ethics Reform Act of 2006 to file a "Statement of Disclosure of Interests" annually. For local officials, the Statement of Disclosure of Conflict of Interest (form ss-8005) must be filed with the Tennessee Ethics Commission by January 31, 2010. Even if your circumstances have not changed since last year, a new form must be filed annually. As a local official, you have the option to file electronically through this website: <http://www.tennesseeanytime.org/conflict/> or by mail by printing off the form and instructions found at <http://www.tennessee.gov/sos/tec/forms/ss-8005.pdf>.

Special Session on Education Continues – K-12 reforms Enacted

Last week, the General Assembly re-convened in regular session then quickly adjourned into a special session to focus primarily on education issues. The first week the legislature spent most of its time on K-12 issues, as the state was facing a January 19 deadline for sending in a "Race to the Top" grant application to the Federal Government. Only those reforms enacted and in place by the 19th could be included in the application. According to Governor Bredesen, one principal area of weakness in Tennessee's application related to the use and availability of student performance data in the teacher evaluation process. To correct this weakness, Bredesen introduced legislation in the special session that comprehensively revised the teacher evaluation process and proposed other reforms related to persistently struggling schools. Tennessee is requesting a grant of approximately \$485 million to advance reforms around four specific areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the work place and to compete in the global economy;
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

One theme that was repeated in speeches by the Governor and in testimony by Department of Education officials before committees was that these additional federal dollars would not be used to create on-going liabilities that would continue after the grant period. In other words, the additional federal dollars would be spent on innovative short term reforms and fixes that do not require continued funding from the state or local governments after the program is over. The TCCA board heard information about the K-12 proposals and discussed them on January 13, the second day of the special session. After consideration, the board resolved to support the initiatives with the understanding that the legislation did not create new on-going costs for counties. Late Friday evening, the House and Senate passed the K-12 initiative and adjourned for the holiday weekend. With that legislation in place, the state finalized its grant application. It is expected that finalists for Race to the Top grants will be announced in March, with the final award coming in April. For more information on the "Race to the Top" grant program, visit <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>

January 20, 2010

Voter Confidence Delay Passed by Senate

In a brief session last Tuesday, the Senate took up one controversial issue before adjourning to the special session. The Senate considered and then passed legislation to delay the implementation of the Voter Confidence Act to 2012. The House passed legislation to delay implementation last year, but the Senate fell one vote short of passing the bill on the last day of session in 2009. After lengthy discussion and debate and consideration of several amendments, the Senate voted 22-10 to delay implementation of the act to the 2012 election cycle. The legislation will now go to the Governor for his consideration. This was an issue of concern to many county governments and was discussed extensively at regional meetings of the TN County Commissioners Association last fall.



Update on State Finances

The state's fiscal year continues its trend of negative tax revenue growth, with tax collections falling below budgeted estimates again in December. State revenue collections for the month – reflecting November retail sales activity - were \$766.7 million, which is \$54.2 million less than the state budgeted. This represented the 19th consecutive month of negative sales tax growth. Sales tax collections were \$16.6 million less than the estimate for December. The December growth rate was negative 2.88%. The bulk of December under-collections were in franchise and excise tax collections which were \$29.5 million below the budgeted estimate of \$143.8 million. Gasoline and motor fuel collections for December decreased by 2.70% and were \$4.3 million below the budgeted estimate of \$66.7 million. Year-to-date collections for the first five months of the budget year were \$169 million less than the budgeted estimate. For the full report, click [here](#) or visit the State Comptroller's website at: <http://www.state.tn.us/comptroller/>.



Registration Open For County Government Day; Meeting to Be Held March 23-24

Registration for County Government Day, being co-sponsored again on March 23-24 by the County Officials Association of Tennessee and the Tennessee County Services Association, is now open. County officials are asked to register now for the meeting, which has become an annual event aimed at providing them with front-row seats to the 106th General Assembly, which reconvened earlier this month on January 12. Hotel accommodations at the Nashville Sheraton Downtown traditionally sell out quickly for the meeting, so county officials are being asked to contact the hotel directly for reservations. Neither COAT nor TCSA is responsible for making hotel arrangements for county officials. Contact the host Sheraton Nashville Downtown by calling (615) 259-2000. Additionally, officials should complete the registration form attached [here](#) and return it to TCSA-COAT. The meeting begins on Tuesday, March 23, with an afternoon of membership meetings for the various COAT and TCSA affiliate associations. The following morning, the meeting will conclude immediately following a breakfast and general session for all delegates. Afterwards, officials will adjourn the two-day meeting and head toward the Legislative Plaza on their own for meetings with legislators and legislative committees. To register with TCSA or COAT for the conference, send the attached registration form to: Debbie Blanchard, 226 Capitol Blvd., Ste. 700, Nashville, TN 37219.

