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TCCA News

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Volume 2, Issue 3

April 9, 2010

Tennessee Wins First Round Race to the Top Grant

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced recently that Delaware and Tennessee have won grants in the first phase of the Race to the Top competition.

"We received many strong proposals from states all across America, but two applications stood out above all others: Delaware and Tennessee," Duncan said in announcing the winners. "Both states have statewide buy-in for comprehensive plans to reform their schools. They have written new laws to support their policies. And they have demonstrated the courage, capacity, and commitment to turn their ideas into practices that can improve outcomes for students."

"This is a landmark opportunity for Tennessee," said Governor Bredesen. "Our success in Race to the Top speaks to the commitment we've made to meaningful and significant improvement in public education, and the funds provided by the grant will carry us forward in a dramatic and positive direction."

Delaware will receive approximately \$100 million and Tennessee \$500 million to implement their comprehensive school reform plans over the next four years. As with any federal grant program, budgets will be finalized after discussions between the grantees and the Department, and the money will be distributed over time as the grantees meet established benchmarks.

The \$4.35 billion Race to the Top Fund is an unprecedented federal investment in reform. Additional grants will be made available in the future. The Race to the Top state competition is designed to reward states that are leading the way in comprehensive, coherent, statewide education reform across four key areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace;
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals how to improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
- Turning around their lowest-performing schools.

Forty states and the District of Columbia submitted applications for the first phase of grants. Delaware and Tennessee were selected from among 16 finalists who presented their proposals to panels of peer reviewers earlier in March. The peer reviewers awarded the highest scores to Delaware and Tennessee, giving the two states high marks for the commitment to reform from key stakeholders, including elected officials, teacher's union leaders, and business leaders. In both states, all school districts committed to implementing Race to the Top reforms. Delaware and Tennessee also have aggressive plans to improve teacher and principal evaluation, use data to inform instructional decisions, and turn around their lowest-performing schools. In addition, both states have put in place strong laws and policies to support their reform efforts.

Tennessee's complete Race to the Top proposal can be found on the state Department of Education Web site at www.tn.gov/education.

More information is available online at: <http://www2.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2010/03/03292010.html>.

April 9, 2010

February Revenue Collections Now Available

State revenue collections once again fell short of budgeted estimates. Overall February revenues were \$638.9 million, which is \$47.1 million less than the state budgeted. "This entire fiscal year has brought us negative growth in the sales tax, which is almost two-thirds of our revenue," Finance and Administration Commissioner Dave Goetz said. "Moreover, the running total is now 21 consecutive months of negative growth in sales tax collections since January 2008, when the downward economic spiral began for us in Tennessee." While gasoline and motor fuel collections for February decreased by 3.86%, collections were \$180,000 over the budgeted estimate of \$68.3 million. Tobacco tax collections were \$4 million under the budgeted estimate. The year-to-date growth rate for seven months is negative 5.84%. The budgeted revenue estimates for 2009-2010 are based on the State Funding Board's consensus recommendation adopted by the first session of the 106th General Assembly in May of 2009, and are available on the state's Web site at <http://www.tn.gov/finance/bud/budget.html>. To view the full report, you can visit the TCCA web-site at www.tncountycommissioners.org or [click here](#).



County Government Day a Success

From the Executive Director:

The 2010 TCSA/COAT County Government Day recently concluded on March 24th in Nashville. Some members of TCCA were in attendance. Thanks to all of you who turned out for the event. For those who were unable to attend, I wanted to give a brief recap of what occurred. On Tuesday March 23rd, our board of directors discussed and considered several bills impacting counties that were moving through the General Assembly. We also discussed the proposed state budget and I provided the board an overview of areas where the proposed budget impacted county government. Relative to this issue, the board considered and voted to authorize an "Open Letter to the General Assembly" to express the general concerns of county commissioners about how state budgetary changes affect local government. This letter has now been delivered to all members of the State Legislature. You can read a copy of the full text on the TCCA Website or by clicking [here](#). Legislators were also provided with a document entitled "Understanding County Budgets" that describes the primary services counties provide and outlines the existing mandates for funding that county commissions must meet. That document is also available on our website or by clicking [here](#). These same materials were provided at the TCCA Membership meeting that same day. In addition, graphs were available that showed a breakdown of how counties were spending their money on the various services they provide. Many of our members in attendance in Nashville were able to share these materials with their legislators. On Wednesday morning, we had a legislative breakfast where we heard from the Governor and the speakers of both the House and Senate. The meeting concluded with an educational workshop that included an overview of the state's Race to the Top Grant, an update on campaign finance requirements for the election year and a discussion of upcoming Governmental Accounting Standards that will impact county budgeting. I hope to see you at our legislative conference in Gatlinburg on June 8th and 9th when we can hopefully give you a final update on what happened in the legislative session. The chairs of the House and Senate Finance Committees have been invited to speak at our general session at that conference. For information about that meeting, go to our website [here](#).

New Internet Resources

- New TACIR Data Site on Tracking the Impact of the Economy:

The Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations has developed new information on the impact of the economy on Tennessee. This data is being presented in partnership with the Business and Economic Research Center at MTSU. To link to this information go to: <http://frank.mtsu.edu/~berc/tacir/tacir.html>

- New On-Line Newsletter of the TN Secretary of State:

Secretary of State Hargett is now producing an on-line newsletter focused on topics related to his office. You can find it at www.tn.gov/sos/newsletter/Vol1_1.pdf.

