

Weekly Update



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On May 21, 2011 the Tennessee General Assembly adjourned for the year. Prior to adjournment, budget talks with Governor Haslam's administration resulted in vital improvements being made to curb harmful cuts. The Governor's original budget contained devastating and catastrophic cuts that would have drastically affected the lives of our citizens. The preliminary budget cuts included nursing homes, the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, dental services for children and many others. Fortunately, this funding was restored while passing a balanced budget without new taxes.

House Bill 2008, the "Tort Reform" bill, pushed by the Governor and his administration, passed the House and Senate and is expected to be signed into law soon. During debate in the House Judiciary Committee, Democrats introduced an amendment to ensure that caps on jury awards would not benefit felons who injured people in the commission of their crimes. The amendment, popularly known as the "O.J. Exception" in reference to the jury award against O.J. Simpson states that "limitations on the amount of non-economic damages shall not apply to personal injury and wrongful death actions if the defendant's act or omission results in the defendant being convicted of a felony under the laws of this state, another, or under federal law, and that act or omission caused the damages or injuries." When the bill went to the Senate, the Senate stripped the amendment off.

House Bill 1869, which ups the penalty for protestors against our military, has been sent to the Governor for his signature. The message this legislation sends is that if you come near the families of our soldiers during their mourning, you will be fined and jailed. A recent Supreme Court ruling upheld the right of free speech relating to certain groups protesting at funerals. While the court ruled that a group has the right to protest peacefully, and while their speech cannot be restricted simply because it is upsetting or arouses contempt, they are obligated to comply with police guidance on where their picketing can be staged. This bill changes the penalty for those who violate the 500 foot boundary requirement from a Class C misdemeanor (penalty not greater than 30 days imprisonment or a fine not to exceed \$50) to a Class B misdemeanor (penalty up to 6 months in prison or a minimum fine of \$500). This bill passed with a vote of 95 to 0.

House Bill 7 passed by a vote of 57 to 35, and requires a voter to present qualified photographic identification before voting. I believe this legislation disenfranchises senior citizens and those with low income.

House Bill 2156, which passed by a vote of 75 to 22, extends unemployment benefits for more than 28,000 struggling Tennesseans. Democrats fought hard to get this extension put into the budget. More than \$60 million in federal money will fund the extension, with the cost to the State being about \$3 million. This is for those who have lost their jobs in our hard hit economy. It will help those who want to go back to work to keep a roof over their heads. The money used to fund this will go right back into Tennessee's economy in the form of purchasing essential needs.

House Bill 130, called the "anti-teacher union bill" and the "anti-teacher bill", passed both the House and Senate. Many of you have asked about the vote on this one. The votes on this much debated bill were as follow:

House Vote

Ayes.....55
Noes.....40
Present and not voting.....1

Representatives voting aye were: Alexander, Brooks H, Brooks K, Butt, Carr, Casada, Cobb, Dean, Dennis, Elam, Eldridge, Evans, Faison, Floyd, Ford, Forgety, Gotto, Halford, Hall, Hardaway, Hensley, Hill, Holt, Hurley, Johnson C, Johnson P, Keisling, Lundberg, Maggart, Marsh, Matheny, Matlock, McCormick, McDaniel, McManus, Miller D, Montgomery, Niceley, Pody, Powers, Ragan, Rich, Sanderson, Sargent, Sexton, Shipley, Sparks, Swann, Watson, Weaver, White, Williams R, Wirgau, Womick, Madam Speaker Harwell -- 55.

Representatives voting no were: Armstrong, Bass, Brown, Campbell, Camper, Coley, Cooper, Curtiss, DeBerry J, DeBerry L, Favors, Fitzhugh, Gilmore, Harmon, Harrison, Hawk, Jones, Kernell, McDonald, Miller L, Moore, Naifeh, Odom, Parkinson, Pitts, Pruitt, Ramsey, Richardson, Roach, Shaw, Shepard, Sontany, Stewart, Tidwell, Todd, Towns, Turner J, Turner M, Williams K, Windle -- 40.

Representatives present and not voting were: Lollar -- 1

Senate Vote

Ayes.....19
Noes.....12
Present and not voting.....1

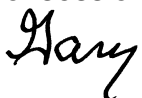
Senators voting aye were: Beavers, Bell, Campfield, Crowe, Faulk, Gresham, Johnson, Kelsey, Ketron, McNally, Norris, Roberts, Southerland, Summerville, Tracy, Watson, Woodson, Yager, Mr. Speaker Ramsey -- 19.

Senators voting no were: Barnes, Berke, Burks, Finney L, Ford, Harper, Herron, Kyle, Marrero, Overbey, Stewart, Tate -- 12.

Senators present and not voting were: Henry -- 1.

House Bill 761 mandates that insurance companies cover up to \$1,000 per hearing aid, once every three years, for minor children. This bill passed 89 to 5.

This will be the last "Weekly Update" until next year when we return to session. In the meantime, I will be sending out "Moore From the Hill" on a monthly basis. I am in the office often when we are out of session, so please contact me if I may assist you in any way.



Weekly Update is for Informational Purposes Only