



THE INFORMANT NEWSLETTER

A biweekly newsletter for the Tennessee constituent

TN Bills March 2020

TN HJR0657 — Making State Attorney General an Elected Office

Latest Action: Failed in s/c Civil Justice Subcommittee of Judiciary Committee
3/10/20

Bill Text: <http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/111/Bill/HJR0657.pdf>

Bill Summary: This legislation, which was filed in December of 2019, would change the electoral law of the state involving the office of Attorney General and Reporter, currently occupied by Herbert H. Slatery III. Beginning in 2024, this office would be elected by the entirety of the state voting populace, as opposed to being selected by the state's supreme court justices.

Bill Impact: On March 10th, this bill failed, never making it to Governor Lee's desk. This serves as an affirmation of the state's current system, whereby the Attorney General is selected by the justices of the Supreme Court. It is an undeniably unique system, as forty-three states elect their Attorney Generals democratically. The majority of the remaining seven are appointees of the states' Governors, while Tennessee's system is the only of its kind.

TN HJR0748 — Tennessee as a Second Amendment Sanctuary

Latest Action: Reset on Regular Cal. for 6-1-20 3/20/20

Bill Text: <http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/111/Bill/HJR0748.pdf>

Bill Summary: This bill seeks to create a recognition on behalf of the state of potential problems with violating the Second Amendment, and therefore declare Tennessee a Second Amendment Sanctuary, with the intent to maintain the right to bear arms.

Bill Impact: This bill is put in the context of not only the violent government-inflicted atrocities of the twentieth century, but also the public debate on individual gun ownership today. It's sponsors argue that taking guns away allows for such atrocities, and therefore actions by various other states are unacceptable and will be countered by this legislation. It is a partisan bill, consisting of twenty-five Republican sponsors. It not only condemns the ideas behind the actions of lawmakers such as the Democratic Governor of Virginia Ralph Northam, but also goes as far as to make Tennessee a sanctuary for those fleeing from Second Amendment violations in their own states, mentioning Virginia by name. For context, Governor Northam temporarily banned guns from certain areas during a perceived crisis earlier this year, and has since, even very recently, signed hosts of gun control bills into law. This bill aims to announce Tennessee's opposing position.

TN HB1670 — Discontinuing Nathan Bedford Forest Day

Latest Action: Action def. in Naming, Designating, & Private Acts Committee to 3/24/2020

Bill Text: <http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/111/Bill/HB1670.pdf>

Bill Summary: Nathan Bedford Forrest Day is currently observed on July 13th. This bill intends to discontinue this observance, beginning upon passage.

Bill Impact: While countless states in the American Southeast have experienced and continue to go through many controversies surrounding statues depicting confederate warriors, Tennessee is no different, especially regarding Confederate Commander and founder of the Klu Klux Klan, Nathan Bedford Forrest. Memphis, one of the state's few major cities, was divided over the removal of a statue of this figure only a few years ago, and the division has persisted into this legislative cycle in multiple manners. Already, a piece of legislation aimed at removing his bust from the state capitol has been debated in committee, and this bill follows in the same vein. The overall impact would be less concrete, as it is evident that this day is not widely observed or celebrated as it is, but it would be symbolic. It would serve as a statement of condemnation towards Forrest and other confederate figures, as well as perhaps a sign that bills sponsored exclusively by Democrats can still pass in the massive Republican majority.

TN HB2778 — Designating The Bible as the State Book

Latest Action: Reset on Regular Cal. for 6–1–20 3/20/20

Bill Text: <http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/111/Bill/HB2778.pdf>

Bill Summary: Taking effect immediately, this bill would designate the Holy Bible as the official state book.

Bill Impact: With forty-four sponsors, this bill appears to be on its way to passing. Tennessee has often been considered the core, or belt, of the southern “Bible Belt”, even as the nation is spiritually and culturally divided on such issues. This bill appears to be a re-affirmation of that status, making the Bible itself the official book of the state.

TN HB0095 — Eliminating Sales Tax on Feminine Hygiene Products

Latest Action: Placed on s/c cal Finance, Ways, and Means Subcommittee for 3/18/2020 3/11/20

Bill Text: <http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/111/Bill/HB0095.pdf>

Bill Summary: This bill would remove the sales tax in the state of Tennessee from all feminine hygiene products.

Bill Impact: This legislation is building off of a previous bill, which aimed to remove taxes on these products merely on Tax Day. This bill seeks to remove it comprehensively on these products, taking effect later this year if passed. Along with other bills in recent sessions removing various professional privilege taxes, this bill lowers the amount of revenue coming in. Fortunately, these are cuts that the state can afford, as the rainy day fund is currently financed.

TN HB1585 — Requiring Chemical Castration for Pedophilic Sex Offenders

Latest Action: Def. to Summer Study in Criminal Justice Subcommittee 3/10/20

Bill Text: <http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/111/Bill/HB1585.pdf>

Bill Summary: This bill enforces a penalty of chemical castration, as a condition of parole, on those convicted of sexual offenses involving a victim under thirteen years old. The chemical castration mentioned, according to the bill, “reduces, inhibits, or blocks the production of testosterone, hormones, or other chemicals in

a person's body", through the application of various medications.

Bill Impact: This legislation is clearly intended to act both as a punishment and as a deterrent. In this regard, it is extraordinarily similar to the controversial death penalty. If passed, there would certainly be a large fiscal cost for the facilitation of the punishments. The question—like with the death penalty—is whether or not such a punishment deters and disciplines criminals enough so that the cost is outweighed by the societal benefit. It is a question that the Tennessee State Legislature is debating and will answer in the coming months.

“The liberties of a people never were, nor ever will be, secure, when the transactions of their rulers may be concealed from them.”

— Patrick Henry
Founding Father of The United States of America



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