



## Session Closing - Legislative Recap

The 114th Tennessee General Assembly adjourned its first regular session on April 22, 2025, capping a legislative period marked by major policy shifts and significant budgetary adjustments. Lawmakers addressed a wide range of issues, including education reform, disaster relief, and immigration enforcement. The General Assembly is scheduled to reconvene for its second session on January 13, 2026.

At the outset of the term, lawmakers held a special session to advance Governor Bill Lee's key initiatives on school choice, disaster response, and immigration policy. Major outcomes included the passage of the Education Freedom Scholarship Act, which expanded the state's school choice program; the approval of a \$450 million disaster relief package for areas affected by Hurricane Helene; and the creation of a new immigration enforcement division within the Department of Safety. Together, these measures reflected the governor's priorities and resulted in more than \$1 billion in new state spending.

Throughout the regular session, the legislature made substantive changes to Governor Lee's proposed \$59.5 billion budget, ultimately approving a \$59.8 billion plan. Lawmakers reallocated roughly \$179 million to fund their own priorities, emphasizing healthcare, workforce development, and emergency preparedness. One significant revision was a reduction in funding for the Duck River, with \$65 million allocated—down from the originally proposed \$100 million—to support regional water supply planning, hydraulic modeling, and habitat conservation. Despite the cut, the investment remains notable due to the river's role in supplying water to approximately 250,000 Tennesseans. Other adjustments included cuts to a proposed starter home loan fund and zoo expansion, alongside increased investments in TennCare services, technical education, and disaster aid.

Looking ahead, Tennessee voters will decide on three constitutional amendments on the November 3, 2026, ballot. Each has passed in two consecutive General Assembly sessions, meeting the requirement for inclusion.

The Bail Reform Amendment would allow judges to deny bail in cases involving serious felonies, such as second-degree murder or aggravated rape of a child, when the proof is evident or the presumption great. Currently, bail can only be denied in capital cases. Supporters believe the change would improve public safety, while critics warn of civil liberties concerns and increased pretrial detention.

The Crime Victims' Rights Amendment, also known as Marsy's Law, would expand constitutional protections for victims, guaranteeing their rights to be notified of and heard in court proceedings, as well as receiving restitution. The amendment aims to ensure victims are treated with dignity and respect throughout the justice process.

The third measure, the Prohibition of Statewide Property Tax Amendment, would ban the state from ever imposing a property tax. Though Tennessee currently has no such tax, this amendment would constitutionally prevent any future legislature from introducing one, offering long-term protection for property owners.

These amendments will appear in the ballot following the gubernatorial race. To be ratified, each must receive a majority of votes cast in the gubernatorial election—not just a majority of those voting on the amendment itself, making voter participation especially critical in shaping the future of Tennessee's constitution.