

June Meeting Summary: *Sam McKenzie & The State of Tennessee's General Assembly*

6-23-2025 at The 201 Café and Wine Bar

The Anderson County Democratic Women's Club honored Sam McKenzie with a welcome address, where he provided an update on the recent Tennessee General Assembly legislative session. McKenzie, a member of the Tennessee Black Caucus of State Legislators, served as chairman during the 113th General Assembly. Since 2020, he has represented District 15 in Knoxville and serves on the Education Committee, Health Committee, Government Operations Committee, and the House Ethics Committee. Prior to his current role, he served on the Knox County Commission from 2008 to 2016.



In his opening remarks, McKenzie succinctly described the current state of the Tennessee Legislature as “a mess.” Despite the challenges facing Nashville, he emphasized the importance of our voices being heard in the legislative process. McKenzie discussed several critical pieces of legislation and their potential impacts on Tennesseans. He also expressed his desire for an interactive audience engagement, inviting feedback and new ideas for legislation. McKenzie explicitly stated that if individuals or groups have suggestions for legislation, they should contact him for further discussion.

McKenzie underscored the detrimental consequences of our current weak government, which has resulted in the enactment of legislation that will leave an unfortunate legacy for Tennessee.

The Voucher system has been passed, and it will result in the erosion of our public school system. The ultimate cost of transferring public dollars to private schools will ultimately lead to bankruptcy. TCAT scores are still higher in public schools, aside from the fact that students with special needs will not receive accommodations in private schools, leaving the financial burden on the public sector.

Immigration Issues. It is a duty to educate a child. Removing children, kicking out children from school is simply mean and spiteful. ICE is acting like it is a part of the military, leading to even greater polarization. Immigration is a border and federal issue, and it should not be a part of the education of children.

Project 2025. This is a product of the Heritage Foundation that has invested time and money to have an impact on both the Federal and local levels. It is important to remember that “All politics is local,” making it important for all of us to be active in each of our communities. The Democrats must be able to win locally, and that is up to us. Attacks on important aspects of our way of life today will be eroded or eliminated by the continued assault of this agenda.

On a positive note, some good things have been passed. Funding for the Scarboro Five has been approved. Senator Massey has legislation that can protect IVF and contraceptive use. It is important to remember our values and to continue to advocate for healthcare, good jobs with benefits, education, and strong neighborhoods.

At this point, the floor was opened up for questions from the audience. Discussion followed on some of the following issues:

Housing Crisis: Nothing effective is happening, and there is no investment in housing programs.

Iran Bombing: We do not need to send troops; this was done by Executive Order, which is no way to govern.

Obama’s Iran Agreement: Trump ended it. We can do much more with negotiations that are more tactful and mindful.

Regarding local politics, Rep. McKenzie asserts that our current Representative is significantly superior to Ragan, and there is a possibility that McNally may withdraw from the race to secure that seat. He also mentioned Murfreesboro and Clarksboro as potential contenders. Memphis must support a single candidate. Additionally, there is an opportunity with the seat in Rutherford County.

The Democratic Party’s brand is a cause for concern. To foster growth, it must adopt a “Bigger Tent Party” approach. Some rural counties may have limited exposure to Democratic values. While we are compassionate, it is crucial to acknowledge issues such as the “rich white/poor Black county divisions,” which are detrimental to the state and can be exacerbated by legislation that allows these pockets to exist negatively.

Healthcare in Tennessee is in crisis. The erosion of services has already commenced and will only worsen. This situation disproportionately affects rural communities, which often vote against their own interests.