

2015 LEGISLATIVE SCORECARD

for

TENNESSEE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY & NASHVILLE
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL



The Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce facilitates community leadership to create economic prosperity. Through partnerships with our members and elected officials, we work to ensure that business needs are a top consideration when policy decisions are made.

MAKING YOUR BUSINESS VOICE COUNT

The Chamber values our partnership with elected officials as we work together to create jobs and build communities. Every year, the Chamber's board of directors adopts a legislative agenda based on issues identified by our members in our annual policy survey. We then share this agenda with state and local elected officials.

Throughout the year, we work to provide information to our members and advocate as a collective business voice for Middle Tennessee. We are pleased to share our 2015 Legislative Scorecard, which reports how our elected leaders have voted in the past year in four policy areas:

- An environment where business can prosper;
- Talent development of the region's workforce;
- Quality of life that attracts and retains residents and workers; and
- Regional efforts to ensure economic prosperity.

In order to create an environment where your business can succeed and the region can prosper, we help our members engage in policy decisions that directly impact their business:

- **Listen:** Our annual policy survey allows us to listen to members about their business needs.
- **Inform:** Our annual legislative agenda provides information about legislative issues important to business.
- **Report:** Our annual legislative scorecard reports the impact made through our advocacy efforts.
- **Influence:** Middle Tennessee Business Voice offers members a direct way to influence policy decisions.

2015 SPECIAL SESSION: INSURE TENNESSEE

In February, Gov. Haslam convened a special session of the General Assembly to review Insure Tennessee, a plan to expand Medicaid health care coverage to working-age adults earning below 138 percent of the federal poverty level through two private-market insurance options. The administration estimated that 280,000 of the more than 400,000 eligible Tennesseans would enroll in one of the two plans in the first year of implementation.

Insure Tennessee, a waiver to the state's Medicaid program, would provide two options for eligible consumers:

- The "Volunteer Plan," which would provide a voucher to consumers to purchase insurance offered by their employer. This voucher could be used for out-of-pocket expenses associated with the purchased coverage or to pay for premiums on employer plans that cover at least 50 percent of the total premium cost.
- The "Healthy Incentives Plan," which was modeled after flexible spending accounts and provided an opportunity for members to earn credits by making healthy choices and responsibly using the health care system through preventive care and screenings. Enrollees in the Healthy Incentives Plan may choose any insurance provider offered through the TennCare program, but must pay monthly premiums as well as co-pays.

Insure Tennessee would have been funded by a 100 percent federal match through 2016. After 2016, federal funding would pay between 90 and 100 percent of the cost of the program. The funding gap created by reduced federal dollars would be bridged through the state's hospital assessment, resulting in no new taxes for Tennesseans. The program would have automatically terminated if the funding model was modified in any way, either by the federal government or Tennessee hospitals.

The Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce supports the expansion of health insurance coverage to working Tennesseans to avert a scenario in which many Tennessee businesses are hit with tax penalties unique to states that choose not to expand Medicaid, while also reducing the number of uninsured individuals, which helps offset the Affordable Care Act's cuts to local hospitals.



Insure Tennessee (SJR 7001) failed in the Senate Health and Welfare Committee on Feb. 4.

Senators voting **in support of** the plan were: Sen. Richard Briggs (R-Knoxville); Sen. Ed Jackson (R-Jackson); Sen. Massey (R-Knoxville) and Sen. Jeff Yarbrow (D-Nashville).

Senators voting **against** Insure Tennessee were: Sen. Mike Bell (R-Riceville); Sen. Janice Bowling (R-Tulahoma); Sen. Rusty Crowe (R-Johnson City); Sen. Todd Gardenhire (R-Chattanooga); Sen. Brian Kelsey (R-Collierville); Sen. Frank Nicely (R-Strawberry Plains); and Sen. Kerry Roberts (R-Springfield).

2015 TENNESSEE GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE SCORECARD

	CHAMBER LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY	ACTION	
AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE BUSINESS CAN PROSPER	Insure Tennessee		Took action supporting Chamber position Took action opposing Chamber position or failed to pass legislation supporting Chamber position No definitive action on this issue or no action recorded
	Judicial Selection		
	Business Property Rights		
	State Minimum Wage		
	Affordable Housing		
	Public Leaseholds		
	Economic Development Incentives		
	For-profit Benefit Corporations		
TALENT DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION'S WORKFORCE	College- and Career-ready Standards		
	Aligned Assessment		
	High-quality Pre-K		
	Teacher Evaluation System		
	School Vouchers		
	Post-secondary Completion		
	Capital Improvements for Higher Education		
	In-state Tuition		
	Increase IT Workforce		
	ACT/SAT Opt-out		
	Elected School Superintendents		
	Differentiated Compensation for Educators		
	QUALITY OF LIFE THAT ATTRACTS AND RETAINS RESIDENTS AND WORKERS	Preserving the Federal Role in Immigration	
REGIONAL EFFORTS TO ENSURE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY	Transit Funding		
	Transparent Development and Zoning Policies		

2015 STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE BUSINESS CAN PROSPER



Insure Tennessee

In 2012, the Supreme Court affirmed that the Affordable Care Act, which passed in 2010, allows states to choose whether to participate in the law's Medicaid expansion. This year, Gov. Haslam proposed "Insure Tennessee," a plan to expand Medicaid health care coverage to more than 200,000 working-age adults earning below 138 percent of the federal poverty level through two private-market options.

Chamber Position

Support Medicaid expansion through Gov. Haslam's Insure Tennessee plan to alleviate and prevent increased health care costs to business.

Bill Summary

SJR 7001 (Overby) and SJR 93 (Overby/Yarbro) authorized implementation of Insure Tennessee through a TennCare waiver. The Chamber supported these bills.

Status

In a special session, the legislature took action opposing the Chamber's position. SJR 7001 failed in a Senate Select Committee on Health and Welfare on Feb. 4. During the regular legislative session, SJR 93 failed in the Senate Commerce & Labor Committee on March 31.



Judicial Selection

Since 1994, appellate and Supreme Court judges have been nominated by a state commission, appointed by the governor and retained or removed by the Tennessee electorate every eight years. Despite a system that worked well for Tennessee, there was disagreement around whether the Tennessee constitution allowed for a retention election for these officeholders. On Nov. 4, 2014, voters approved new constitutional language that preserves the current process for selecting appellate and Supreme Court judges, but requires legislative confirmation of each appointment. In order to fully implement the new system in accordance with the constitutional amendment, legislation must be adopted that establishes procedures for legislative confirmation.

Chamber Position

Support a new legislative confirmation process for state appellate judicial appointments.

Bill Summary

SB 1/HB 142 (Kelsey/Lundberg) establishes procedures for the appointment, confirmation and retention of appellate court judges approved by voters in November 2014. The Chamber supported this bill.

Status

The legislature took action in opposition to the Chamber's position by failing to pass legislation. The bill passed the full Senate on April 16. A different version passed the full House on April 22. The bill died for the year when a conference committee report was rejected by the Senate on April 22. However, the governor will still be able to fill judicial vacancies. The attorney general has opined that the governor may still appoint appellate court judges if the General Assembly does not legislate a confirmation process, according to the recently amended Article VI, Section 3 of the Tennessee constitution.



Business Property Rights

In 2013, the General Assembly passed legislation that decriminalized storing guns or ammunition on property where it is prohibited by the landowner, making it more difficult for Tennessee businesses and property owners to exclude firearms from their property. The 2013 legislation did not create a civil cause of action against employers for enforcing policies prohibiting the storage of firearms or ammunition on their property. This year, the General Assembly considered legislation that would create new legal and economic challenges for Tennessee businesses terminating an at-will employee who brings a firearm or ammunition onto the employer's property, weakening the state's right-to-work status.

Chamber Position

Support the right of businesses to enforce personnel policies regarding guns in the workplace.

Bill Summary

SB 1058/HB 994 (Green/Todd) creates a civil cause of action against any entity, including businesses, for enforcing policies prohibiting the storage of firearms or ammunition on their property, effectively making gun ownership a protected class and exposing employers to potential legal liability for terminating employees who violate such policies. The Chamber opposed this bill.

Status

The legislature took action in opposition to the Chamber's position. This bill passed the full House and Senate on March 23. It became effective July 1.



Statewide Minimum Wage

Tennessee has no laws concerning overtime, minimum wage or the regulation of salaried employees, deferring instead to federally mandated wage policies. Currently, five states (Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and South Carolina) do not have a minimum wage.

Chamber Position

Oppose the implementation of a state minimum wage for private businesses, leaving the federal government to set the minimum wage level.

Bill Summary

Multiple bills were filed that would have created a statewide minimum wage. SB 659/HB 579 (Kyle/Hardaway) would have created a minimum hourly wage capped at \$10.10, or 0.5 percent higher than the federal minimum wage, by 2017, as well as a \$6.15 minimum hourly wage for employees paid by tips. SB 1063/HB 1257 (Harris/Turner) would have established a minimum wage of at least \$10.10 per hour, adjusted annually according to the Consumer Price Index. The Chamber opposed these bills.

Status

The legislature took action supporting the Chamber's position. SB 659/HB 579 and SB 1063/HB 1257 failed in the House Consumer and Human Resources Subcommittee on March 25.



Affordable Housing

Davidson County residents living in poverty are less likely to have the education they need to obtain a job in the region and, as a result, are less likely to be employed. When they do obtain employment, they are more likely to have a job that does not guarantee access to affordable housing. Many of the strategies used by local governments to finance affordable housing developments rely on a mix of private dollars, tax incentives and federal programs. During the summer of 2014, the Davidson County Tax Assessor's Office sent the Metro Development and Housing Authority (MDHA) an unexpected tax bill of nearly \$400,000 based on an assessment of two developments in Davidson County that received tax credits purchased by private developers to help finance the project without the need for additional debt from construction bonds. These types of unexpected tax bills jeopardize Nashville's ability to continue to build affordable housing communities because rental income, in order to remain affordable, will not generate enough revenue to cover the tax bills. One way communities across the state have chosen to address this challenge is to issue a PILOT (payment-in-lieu-of-taxes) agreement in which the Housing Authority and project developers agree upon a dollar amount to compensate the local government. This prearranged agreement, approved by local governing bodies, satisfies the development's local tax liability. However, Davidson County is the only county in the state that does not have this flexibility.

Chamber Position

Support local government's ability to promote economic development and affordable housing through public/private partnerships.

Bill Summary

SB 1118/HB 732 (Yarbro/Love) allows Davidson County to authorize MDHA to issue and accept PILOT payments from lessees that operate publicly owned affordable housing developments. The Chamber supported this bill.

Status

The legislature took action supporting the Chamber's position. This bill passed the full Senate on March 19 and the full House on April 6. It became effective July 1.



Public Leaseholds

Long-term public leaseholds are critical to ensure the stability of local government services including airports, stadiums, and convention centers. In 2014, the Tennessee General Assembly passed a bill that required leases of real property owned by local governments that exceed 30 years to receive approval from the county commission. Additionally, the bill changed the tax assessment for leases that exceed 50 years creating uncertainty about when tax liability on these leases would commence.

Chamber Position

Support local government's ability to promote economic development and affordable housing through public/private partnerships.

Bill Summary

SB 741/HB 822 (Kelsey/Lollar) clarifies that public leasehold provisions passed last year do not apply to leases with airport authorities and that any tax liability for leases greater than 50 years does not become effective until year 51 of a lease. The Chamber supported this bill.

Status

The legislature took action supporting the Chamber's position. This bill passed the full Senate on April 21 and the full House on April 22. It became effective May 18.



Economic Development Incentives

Tennessee, especially Middle Tennessee, is consistently ranked as one of the best places in which to do business. In order to maintain a competitive business environment where companies choose to create jobs, it is critical to preserve valuable economic development tools and incentives.

Chamber Position

Support local government's ability to promote economic development and affordable housing through public/private partnerships.

Bill Summary

SB 322/HB 291 (Norris/McCormick) makes permanent the Jobs Tax Credit, a credit against a business's franchise and excise taxes based on their capital investment and total jobs created, while eliminating several obsolete incentive programs. The bill also established a new Research and Development Credit to attract high-paying jobs to the state. The Chamber supported this bill.

Status

The legislature took action supporting the Chamber's position. This bill passed the full Senate on April 21 and the full House on April 22. It became effective July 1.



For-profit Benefit Corporations

Benefit corporations are a new type of for-profit entity that give businesses the option of incorporating to pursue a social cause, in addition to the traditional focus on investor return. Benefit corporations are treated the same as other for-profit entities for tax purposes, and they must report annually to their board and investors how the business has advanced its chosen public benefit purpose. This business model has become increasingly attractive to entrepreneurs. Since 2010, 26 states and the District of Columbia have passed and implemented benefit corporation legislation, resulting in more than 2,100 of these businesses being created in states outside Tennessee, most within the past year alone.

Chamber Position

Support legislation enabling the formation of "benefit corporations," for-profit corporations that also choose to create a material, positive impact on society.

Bill Summary

SB 972/HB 767 (Dickerson/Powell) creates the For-Profit Benefit Corporation Act and authorizes the formation of for-profit benefit corporations in Tennessee. Modeled after Delaware's statute, the bill requires businesses to adopt a specific corporate purpose and publish an annual report assessing their overall qualitative performance. The Chamber supported this bill.

Status

The legislature took action supporting the Chamber's position. This bill passed the full House and Senate on April 22. It will become effective January 1, 2016.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION'S WORKFORCE



College- and Career-ready Standards

In 2013, Tennessee had the largest academic growth of any state on the National Assessment of Education Progress, commonly known as “the nation’s report card,” making it the fastest-improving state in the nation. This growth is attributable to several factors, including greater accountability for teachers and more rigorous K-12 education standards. While the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were adopted by Tennessee in 2010 and implemented in classrooms across the state, Gov. Haslam announced a review of the state’s K-12 academic standards in November that continued through spring 2015.

Chamber Position

Support the continued implementation of more rigorous K-12 standards that focus on college and career readiness and an aligned assessment to measure student achievement.

Bill Summary

SB 1193/HB 1348 (Beavers/Weaver) prohibited the implementation of the CCSS and an aligned assessment from certain vendors. The Chamber opposed this bill. SB 1163/HB 1035 (Bell/Spivey) requires the Department of Education to implement a process to review and replace the CCSS with a new set of standards by the 2017-2018 school year designed to prepare students for college and career. The bill also establishes a standards review committee for specific subject areas. Each committee is required to include parents and educators from K-12 and higher education. The Chamber supported this bill.

Status

The legislature took action in support of the Chamber’s position. SB 1193/HB 1348 failed in the House Education Instruction and Programs Subcommittee on March 25. SB 1163/HB 1035 passed the full House on April 20 and the full Senate on April 21. It became effective May 11.



Aligned Assessment

Aligning assessments to the K-12 education standards used to inform classroom instruction is critical for teachers, parents and students to have a real and authentic picture of each child’s academic achievement and progress from year to year. In 2014, the Tennessee General Assembly delayed the implementation of a new assessment aligned to the state’s standards until the 2015-2016 school year, while requiring the Department of Education to undertake a request for proposals process to select a new assessment.

Chamber Position

Support the continued implementation of more rigorous K-12 standards that focus on college and career readiness and an aligned assessment to measure student achievement.

Bill Summary

SB 803/HB 1264 (Nicely/Womick) would have prohibited the use of any Measurement Inc. tests, the entity that successfully bid for the contract to create a new assessment for Tennessee students aligned to the current K-12 education standards. The bill also required the General Assembly to approve the adoption of any assessment replacing the TCAP Achievement Test. The Chamber opposed this bill.

Status

The legislature took action supporting the Chamber’s position. This bill was taken off notice in the Senate Education Committee and deferred to 2016 in the House Education Instruction and Programs Subcommittee.



High-quality Pre-K

High-quality pre-kindergarten (pre-K) programs help children prepare to perform better in kindergarten, elementary school and throughout life. A high-quality pre-K program includes qualified teachers using a research-based curriculum aligned to current standards in age-appropriate classrooms. In December 2014, the Tennessee Department of Education secured a federal grant to expand pre-K in Davidson and Shelby Counties. The Davidson County portion represents \$33 million to expand voluntary pre-K by 400 seats.

Chamber Position

Support the expansion of high-quality pre-K education for 4-year-old children.

Bill Summary

SB 1031/HB 159 (Ketron/Casada) would prohibit the state distribution of federal funds for pre-K expansion to select local school districts if a court decided that such a selective distribution violated state law. The Chamber opposed this bill.

Status

The legislature took action supporting the Chamber's position. This bill was never scheduled for a hearing in the Senate and was referred to the House Local Government Subcommittee on March 31.



Teacher Evaluation System

Research has confirmed the most important in-school determinant of student academic success is the quality of the teacher and classroom instruction. Necessary reforms to the teacher evaluation system in 2010 have created an annual evaluation process that incorporates student achievement, academic growth and principal observations, with feedback. Due to the current misalignment between standards and assessment, with the plan for a new assessment in the 2015-2016 school year, Gov. Haslam proposed temporary changes to the state's evaluation system.

Chamber Position

Maintain an annual teacher evaluation system that includes student performance in order to improve instruction in the classroom.

Bill Summary

SB 119/HB 108 enacts the "Tennessee Teaching Evaluation Enhancement Act" and adjusts the criteria used in teacher evaluations by phasing in the weighted average of individual student growth data in school years 2015-2016 through 2017-2018. Clarifies that local school districts have discretion in how they factor student achievement data into employment decisions, including compensation. The Chamber supported this bill.

Status

The legislature took action in support of the Chamber's position. This bill passed the full House on March 26 and the full Senate on March 30. It became effective April 16.



School Vouchers

School vouchers are scholarships issued by the government to offset the cost of sending a child to a private K-12 school. As of January 2015, 14 states and the District of Columbia had some form of a voucher program. The way in which a student qualifies to receive a school voucher varies from state to state.

Chamber Position

Oppose school voucher legislation that does not provide “real choice with accountability;” support school voucher legislation that requires participating students to take the same state-mandated tests as public school students, provides voucher amounts sufficient to cover the cost of participating schools, and contains additional design elements to ensure successful implementation.

Bill Summary

Multiple bills were filed to create a school voucher program. SB 122/HB 210 (Kelsey/H. Brooks) and SB 999/HB 1049 (Gardenhire/Dunn) proposed a scholarship program that would allow low-income students in underperforming public schools to use the district’s state and local per-pupil funding to pay private school tuition. Because these bills did not require students receiving a scholarship to take the same state-mandated test as public school students, the Chamber opposed these bills.

Status

SB 122/HB 210 passed the Senate Education Committee on Feb. 5, but never received a vote in the House Education Administration and Planning Subcommittee. SB 999/HB 1049 passed the full Senate on March 30, but was taken off notice in the House Finance Subcommittee on April 21. Because both bills were simply delayed and not defeated in a committee, they may be brought back up for consideration during the 2016 legislative session.



Post-secondary Completion

The minimum skill level employers require for their workers is increasing in the region. In response, Tennessee set a goal that 55 percent of the adult population will have a postsecondary credential by 2025. The Nashville region needs an additional 150,399 degree holders to meet this goal. Currently, there are 225,179 adults age 25 and older who have obtained some college, but have not received a degree. Statewide, there are between 900,000 and 1 million adults with some college but no degree.

Chamber Position

Support strategies to reach the state’s college completion goal of 55 percent of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential.

Bill Summary

SB 605/HB 646 (Norris/McCormick) creates the Community College Reconnect Grant to help adults complete a postsecondary degree or credential. Beginning in fall 2015, eligible adult students may attend a Tennessee College of Applied Technology at no cost. The Chamber supported this bill.

Status

The legislature took action in support of the Chamber’s position. This bill passed the full Senate on April 13 and the full House on April 20. It became effective July 1.



Capital Improvements for Higher Education

Each year, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission produces a list of needed capital improvement projects for higher education, including many Middle Tennessee projects. Funding for these projects in the state's capital budget helps ensure the region's higher education institutions have the infrastructure necessary to prepare our future workforce.

Chamber Position

Support investments in higher education that increase college completion and promote affordability for students.

Bill Summary

SB 1399/HB 1374 (Norris/Sargent), this year's appropriations bill, contains line items totaling more than \$36 million for capital projects at Vol State and Nashville State Community Colleges, as well as Austin Peay State University, Middle Tennessee State University and Tennessee State University, including more than \$4 million for career and technical education programs. The Chamber supported this bill.

Status

The legislature took action in support of the Chamber's position. This bill passed the full House and Senate on April 16. It became effective July 1.



In-state Tuition

In Tennessee, whether or not a student is granted in-state tuition is determined based on his or her residency. This means students who live in Tennessee and are graduates of Tennessee high schools but are not U.S. citizens are charged out-of-state tuition by our state's public colleges and universities.

Chamber Position

Support in-state college tuition rates for Tennessee high school graduates whose parents may be undocumented.

Bill Summary

SB 612/HB 675 (Gardenhire/M. White) would have allowed undocumented students who were lawfully present in the United States to pay in-state tuition at public colleges and universities if they graduated from a Tennessee high school, obtained a GED or HiSET credential, or completed a high school in Tennessee home school program. The Chamber supported this bill.

Status

The legislature took action opposing the Chamber's position by failing to pass the bill. The bill passed the full Senate on April 16, but was one vote short of receiving a constitutional majority, 49-47, in the House on April 22. The bill was re-referred to the House Calendar and Rules Committee and requires a two-thirds majority vote by members of that committee to move the bill back to the House floor for another vote.



Increase IT Workforce

Information technology is an important and rapidly growing industry cluster in Middle Tennessee. According to a report issued by the Nashville Technology Council, between 2012 and 2013, the number of jobs for computer software engineers increased by 4.8 percent, and computer systems analysts increased by 3 percent.

Chamber Position

Support policies designed to grow the information technology workforce in Tennessee.

Bill Summary

No bills were filed on this issue.

Status

No action is recorded on this issue because there were no bills filed relative to the IT workforce in 2015. For this reason, this issue is not included in the individual vote count.



ACT/SAT Opt-out

Tennessee is one of several states that require every student to take the ACT or SAT, making these tests the closest thing the state has to a high school exit exam. ACT and SAT results provide a measure of college-and career-readiness and determine HOPE scholarship eligibility and a student's Tennessee Promise award.

Chamber Position

Oppose changes in state law to allow high school students to opt out of the ACT and SAT college entrance exams.

Bill Summary

SB 516/HB 449 (Hensley/Byrd) would allow high school students to opt out of taking the ACT and SAT. The Chamber opposed this bill.

Status

The legislature took action in support of the Chamber's position. This bill failed in the House Education Instruction and Programs Subcommittee on March 11.



Elected School Superintendents

Prior to 1992, some Tennessee school systems allowed for both the popular election of a school superintendent and the popular election of a school board, creating a contradictory governance structure with blurred lines of accountability. The 1992 Education Improvement Act requires all school systems to adopt a corporate governance structure in which an elected school board appoints a director of schools as its sole direct report.

Chamber Position

Preserve the current system for selecting school superintendents, in which these leaders are appointed by an elected school board to ensure a clear and accountable governance structure.

Bill Summary

Multiple bills were filed to establish a process for the election of school superintendents. SB 391/HB 907 (Niceley/Powers) establishes, through local referendum, a system to elect school superintendents. SB 1291/HB 1189 (Hensley/Van Huss) would require a referendum to be held to renew the contract of a director of schools. The Chamber opposed these bills.

Status

The legislature took action supporting the Chamber's position. SB 391/HB 907 failed in the Senate Education Committee on April 1. SB 1291/HB 1189 was deferred to 2016 in the House Education Administration and Planning Subcommittee and taken off notice in the Senate Education Committee.



Differentiated Compensation For Educators

In 2007, the Tennessee General Assembly passed legislation requiring all school districts to develop and implement a differentiated compensation plan to attract and retain high-quality teachers. Additionally, the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce’s 2014 Education Report Card recommended that Metro Nashville Public Schools should reform the pay supplement systems to financially reward teachers who assume leadership roles at their schools. These reforms allow schools and districts to tailor staff compensation to better meet the unique needs of their students.

Chamber Position

Support flexibility for local school districts to tailor compensation decisions to meet district needs.

Bill Summary

SB 1308/HB 1117 (Bailey/Alexander) would require the state funds in any state-approved teacher raise to be applied toward increasing the state salary schedule, instead of toward a local district’s differentiated compensation strategy. The Chamber opposed this bill.

Status

The legislature took action supporting the Chamber’s position. This bill was taken off notice in the Senate Education Committee and deferred to 2016 in the House Finance Subcommittee.



Preserving the Federal Role in Immigration

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in June 2012 that the federal government has the sole authority to set immigration policy. Until Congress passes comprehensive immigration reform, states may continue to try to solve the problem of illegal immigration on their own, creating inconsistent laws across state lines that result in a more challenging and less welcoming environment. In November, the president issued an executive order to protect an estimated 5 million undocumented parents of U.S.-born children from being deported, allowing them to obtain a work permit and social security number. The plan also seeks to bolster border security and focus primarily on deporting undocumented persons who commit serious crimes. In addition, the plan would allow highly skilled foreign workers who enter the country through the H1-B visa program to more easily change employers, as well as allow their spouses to seek employment. The future of the president’s executive orders is uncertain and as many as 25 states, including Tennessee, have announced plans to take legal action against the president’s orders, seeking to block their implementation.

Chamber Position

Support comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level, as well as efforts to maintain our identity and brand as a welcoming, inclusive city, region and state.

Bill Summary

No bills were filed on this issue.

Status

No action is recorded on this issue because there were no bills filed relative to immigration in 2015. For this reason, this issue is not included in the individual vote count.

REGIONAL EFFORTS TO ENSURE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

— Transit Funding

Middle Tennessee will welcome more than 1 million new residents to the area within the next 10 years, adding thousands of vehicles to our existing roads. Growing regions across Tennessee will require partnership from the state in solving congestion issues and identifying funding solutions for regional mass transit options.

Chamber Position

Support participation from the State of Tennessee in funding priority mass transit projects in the state's metropolitan areas.

Bill Summary

No bills were filed on this issue.

Status

No action is recorded on this issue because there were no bills filed relative to transit funding in 2015. For this reason, this issue is not included in the individual vote count.

— Transparent Development and Zoning Policies

A lack of clear definition, transparency and predictability around the development process can create barriers to investment by making it difficult for businesses to operate or expand.

Chamber Position

Support predictable and transparent planning and zoning policies that promote economic growth.

Bill Summary

No bills were filed on this issue.

Status

No action is recorded on this issue because the Chamber did not take a position on any bills relative to planning and zoning in 2015. For this reason, this issue is not included in the individual vote count.

Priority Work

Establish working and resource relationships with Metro government candidates (mayor, vice mayor, Metro Council) for transition into a new administration.

Status

The Chamber offers data and other topic briefings to elected officials and candidates throughout the year and during campaigns. To date, Chamber staff have held 48 meetings with mayoral, vice mayoral and council candidates on key topics including community and regional data, economic development, education and workforce. The Chamber and the Greater Nashville Association of Realtors co-hosted a mayoral candidate forum with more than 400 attendees, and the Chamber's Area Advisory Councils held forums with Metro Council candidates within specific districts. The Chamber Research Center's Dr. Garrett Harper also participated in a candidate training session hosted by the Nashville Business Coalition that attracted 50 council candidates.

On the Metro level, the Chamber's policy team reached out to members on the following issues:

- Construction noise (350 members)
- Downtown flood wall (200 members)
- Alternative district zoning (170 members)
- Downtown Code (50 members)
- Cultural Heritage District Overlay (15-member study group)

48

MEETINGS

58

HOURS

8

STAFF

2015 NASHVILLE METRO COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE SCORECARD




CHAMBER LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

ACTION

AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE BUSINESS CAN PROSPER

Partnership 2020 Contract
 Sustainable Fiscal Policies
 NashvilleNext
 Development-ready Economic Development Sites
 Transparent Development and Zoning Policies
 Economic Impact Analysis
 Economic Development Tax Credits and Incentives
 Government Regulation of Private Business



-  Took action supporting Chamber position
-  Took action opposing Chamber position or failed to pass legislation supporting Chamber position
-  No definitive action on this issue or no action recorded

TALENT DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION'S WORKFORCE

School Funding
 School Reform
 Public/Private Partnerships



QUALITY OF LIFE THAT ATTRACTS AND RETAINS RESIDENTS AND WORKERS

Public Infrastructure
 Downtown Core
 Poverty and Homelessness
 Welcoming and Inclusive City



REGIONAL EFFORTS TO ENSURE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Infrastructure Investment
 Affordable Housing



2015 NASHVILLE METRO COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE SCORECARD

AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE BUSINESS CAN PROSPER



Partnership 2020 Contract

Nashville Metro Government has invested in Partnership 2020—the Chamber’s public-private economic development initiative—since 1990. The contract with the city includes job-creation and expansion efforts in Davidson County and proactive marketing to relocation prospects and site consultants.

Chamber Position

Support job-creation efforts in Davidson County through the public/private Partnership 2020 contract between Metro government and the Chamber.

Bill Summary

The mayor’s operating budget, BL2015-1122 (Pridemore), includes funding for the Chamber’s P2020 economic development contract with the city. This year’s contract included a 25 percent increase in funding to support the Chamber’s small business initiatives. The Chamber supported this bill.

Status

Metro Council took action supporting the Chamber’s position. Chamber staff met with 37 members of the 40-member council for a contract briefing. The bill was adopted by the council on June 17.



Sustainable Fiscal Policies

In 1962, Nashville and Davidson County became the first form of consolidated government in Tennessee. This action resulted in a more efficient and cost-effective government. The Chamber monitors processes and policies that result in cost-effective and efficient outcomes, particularly related to the long-term health of the city. One issue of importance—managing the impact of the city’s unfunded liabilities related to Metro Nashville’s benefits systems is critical to ensuring the future solvency of the system and economic prosperity of the city. In 2013, Mayor Karl Dean appointed a Study and Formulating Committee to assess Metro employee partner benefits and the system of benefits for current and future Metro employees.

Chamber Position

Support responsible fiscal policy that ensures the long-term prosperity of the city.

Bill Summary

RS2014-1269 (Weiner) extended the term of the Study and Formulating Committee until March 31, 2015 in order for the committee to complete its assigned task. The Chamber supported this bill.

Rules and confirmation: support the re-appointment of a citizen Study and Formulating Committee to advise the city on the fiscal impact of the city’s pension and benefits system for retired Metro employees.

Status

The council took action in opposition to the Chamber’s position on RS2014-1269. This bill failed on November 4.

The council took action in support of the Chamber’s position on the reappointment of the Study and Formulating Committee on December 16.



NashvilleNext

In March 2012, Mayor Dean launched the NashvilleNext process as a 25-year vision for the city. The NashvilleNext process included five phases focused on community input, vision and mapping, policy and creation of the plan. Currently, the process gathered input from more than 17,000 community members. A draft report was made available for public comment in March and the Metro Planning Commission held public hearings. High-capacity mass transit, affordable housing and increased walkability were among the highest priority issues identified in the plan.

Chamber Position

Support the adoption of a NashvilleNext plan that has economic prosperity and job growth as a guiding principle.

Bill Summary

No bills were filed on this issue. The Metro Planning Commission is responsible for granting final approval of the NashvilleNext plan. The Chamber supports adoption of the plan.

Status

Because no bills were filed on this issue in 2014-2015, it is not included in the individual vote count. As a member of the NashvilleNext steering committee through 2014 and 2015, the Chamber worked to ensure economic prosperity is a guiding principal of the final plan. NashvilleNext was officially adopted by the Metro Planning Commission on June 22.



Development-Ready Economic Development Sites

Real estate is a critical element in the site selection process, and Nashville has a limited inventory of available land to attract corporate headquarters and accommodate existing business expansions. This creates a need for an inventory of available properties and their development potential, as well as a common vision around redevelopment and revitalization in the city.

Chamber Position

Support the need to have developable sites ready for investment in order to create jobs and build the city's property tax base.

Bill Summary

No bills were filed on this issue.

Status

Because no bills were filed on this issue in 2014-2015, it is not included in the individual vote count.



Transparent Development and Zoning Policies

A lack of clear definition, transparency and predictability around the development process can create barriers to investment by making it difficult for business to operate or expand.

Chamber Position

Support predictable and transparent development and zoning policies that encourage development, investment, and support for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Bill Summary

BL2014-992 (Gilmore) proposed limits on the time builders may transport materials or engage in construction activities that exceed 70 dB. The Chamber opposed this bill recommending, instead, an administrative solution.

BL2014-776 (Gilmore) proposed the creation of a Music City cultural heritage overlay district (16 acres on Broadway, Second Ave. N. and Printer’s Alley). The Chamber facilitated input into the ordinance with a focus on property rights.

BL2015-1053 (Gilmore) amends the downtown code text affecting access, development and design processes. The Chamber opposed this bill in its original form, but, after facilitating input into the final ordinance, has moved to support the legislation.

BL2015-1121 (Steine) amends the zoning code related to artisan manufacturing. The Chamber supports this bill.

BL2015-1153 (Hunt) amends the zoning code to add alternative zoning districts and modify district standards. While facilitating input, the Chamber has not yet taken a position on this bill.

Status

The council took action supporting the Chamber’s position by deferring **BL2014-992** indefinitely on February 3 and adopting an administrative policy and process on April 6. Because the bill did not receive a vote on third reading, it is not included in the individual vote count.

BL2014-776 was deferred indefinitely on August 19. Because the bill did not receive a vote on third reading, it is not included in the individual vote count.

BL2015-1053 was deferred until a July 7 public hearing.

BL2015-1121 was deferred until a July 7 public hearing.

BL2015-1153 was deferred to a July 21 public hearing.



Economic Impact Analysis

In 2013, the Chamber convened a Planning and Zoning Policy Task Force to study the current planning and zoning policies within Metro government. The task force recommended that consideration and analysis be given to the economic impact of text amendments, zoning changes initiated by city government and any other land development-related legislative items as requested by Metro Council members.

Chamber Position

Consider, as part of the analysis of proposed legislation and government initiated zoning changes, the economic impact on business and jobs within Nashville.

Bill Summary

No bills were filed on this issue.

Status

Because no bills were filed on this issue in 2014-2015, it is not included in the individual vote count.



Economic Development Tax Credits and Incentives

Designed to generate positive economic returns by creating jobs and generating new tax revenue, economic development tax credits and incentives are valuable investments critical to maintaining a competitive business environment in Tennessee and Davidson County.

Chamber Position

Support the use of local government tax credits and incentives for economic development as additional tools to encourage the location or expansion of business in Nashville.

Bill Summary

Economic development incentives for Davidson County relocation or expansion projects:

BL2014-990 (Maynard)

BL2014-953 (Pridemore)

RS2014-1289 (Pridemore)

BL2015-1128 (Pridemore)

BL2015-1143 (Pridemore)

BL2015-1127 (Pridemore)

Status

The Council took action supporting the Chamber's position by approving incentives for:

- Small business grants (BL2014-990)
- Bridgestone PILOT (BL2014-953)
- Bridgestone (RS2014-1289)
- Asurion (BL2015-1128)
- Community Health Systems (BL2015-1143)
- AIG (BL2015-1127)

The Chamber supported these bills.



Government Regulation of Private Business

Federal, state and local governments have, for years, regulated private business in a number of ways. Generally, regulations that ensure consumer safety or establish the enforcement of standards for conducting legitimate activity are universally accepted. In recent years, Metro Council has proposed a number of bills and resolutions that aim to regulate the management of private business by specifying the hours an establishment may operate, the total number of locations one business may have, or the products displayed on store shelves. This encroachment into the private sector can negatively impact growth, creates a complex regulatory environment and limits economic freedom.

Chamber Position

Support an effective legislative body that makes decisions in a deliberate, yet timely manner that promotes consistency and predictability across the city.

Bill Summary

BL2015-1009 (Holleman) restricted the hours that cash advance, check cashing, or title loan establishments may operate within the county. The Chamber opposed this bill because it excessively overregulated private business.

Status

The council took action supporting the Chamber's position. The bill failed by a vote of 2 to 35 on Feb. 3.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION'S WORKFORCE



School Funding

In order for Metro Schools to offer the programs and support necessary to boost academic performance and close the student achievement gap, they need appropriate funding from local, state and federal sources.

Chamber Position

Support operational and capital funding for public education as a city budget priority.

Bill Summary

The mayor's operating budget, BL2015-1122 (Pride-more), increases funding for Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools by \$36 million, an increase of more than 4 percent from the previous year.

Status

The council took action supporting the Chamber's position. The MNPS operating budget was adopted by the council on June 16 and included the Chamber's Report Card recommendation for dedicated financial compensation for teachers who take on additional leadership responsibilities.



School Reform

Recognizing that today's students are tomorrow's workforce, the Nashville Area Chamber has made public education its No. 1 priority. The Academies of Nashville are reforming our high schools with an innovative approach that prepares each student for college and career through curricula enriched by real-world experiences in Metro Nashville Public Schools' 12 zoned high schools and the implementation of the college and career-ready K-12 education standards, a set of expectations created to help students develop greater critical thinking skills and expose them to real world concepts. This area must continue to remain a budget priority for the city.

Chamber Position

Support school reform efforts that improve graduation rates and academic achievement.

Bill Summary

No bills were filed on this issue.

Status

Because no bills were filed on this issue in 2014-2015, it is not included in the individual vote count.



Public/Private Partnerships

Community colleges provide affordable education opportunities to many first-generation college students and working adults seeking additional education, technical training and certifications. As businesses increasingly demand higher skills, our region's future workforce needs will depend on expanded access to our community college system. Cost of tuition is often a significant barrier to achieving a postsecondary credential. NashvilleAchieves, an extension of the tnAchieves program, is a public/private partnership to eliminate the tuition cost to any senior in Nashville public schools who pursues a postsecondary credential at community college or college of applied technology.

Chamber Position

Support public/private partnerships that address the city's postsecondary completion and workforce needs.

Bill Summary

No bills were filed on this issue.

Status

Because no bills were filed on this issue in 2014-2015, it is not included in the individual vote count.

QUALITY OF LIFE THAT ATTRACTS AND RETAINS RESIDENTS AND WORKERS



Public Infrastructure

Investing in public infrastructure is critical to improving the quality of life in any growing metropolitan area. For Nashville, venues and amenities like First Tennessee Park, Music City Center, Bridgestone Arena and Nissan Stadium are all important to attracting and retaining Nashville businesses, workers and residents.

Chamber Position

Support investments in public infrastructure and entertainment that have a strong business and financial case and broaden Nashville's reputation as a livable city.

Bill Summary

BL2015-1067 (Gilmore) authorized the redevelopment of the Nashville Convention Center to include retail, office space, and other mixed-use development. The Chamber supported this bill.

Status

The council took action supporting the Chamber's position. The bill was adopted by the council on May 5.

Related Position

Oppose charter amendment 3 on the August 6 ballot that changes implementation of Metro construction projects due to "local hire" requirements

Amendment Summary

Amendment 3 requires 40 percent of construction work hours on Metro projects in excess of \$100,000 be performed by workers who are Davidson County residents. The Chamber opposes the amendment for various reasons, including its questionable constitutionality, the impact of additional project costs to taxpayers, the skilled construction labor shortage in the region, and the expense and difficulty of its enforcement.

Status

Amendment 3 is on the August 6 ballot. Though the local hire issue bypassed a vote by the Metro Council, the outcome affects Metro construction projects and budget.



Downtown Core

Downtown Nashville is a neighborhood and business district that serves as a major economic engine for the county through sales and property tax collections which only continue to grow. Its infrastructure must be supported and protected in order to preserve the city's current positive economic trajectory and status as the core. The city's Unified Flood Preparedness Plan (UFOO) includes a recommendation to build a flood wall to create greater flood prevention in downtown.

Chamber Position

Support the development of the downtown core as essential to the growth of Davidson County and the region.

Bill Summary

Amendment 1 (Todd) to the Capital Improvements Budget (BL2015-1142) removed the downtown flood wall, a recommendation of the city's Unified Flood Preparedness Plan, from the CIB, making it ineligible for funding. The Chamber opposed this amendment.

Status

The council took action opposing the Chamber's position. The amendment was adopted by the council on June 9.



Poverty and Homelessness

In order to succeed as a community, our efforts must focus on eliminating barriers to prosperity for all Nashvillians. A 2014 community needs evaluation found that 17.8 percent of all people in Davidson County live below the poverty line. The Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency’s annual “point in time” count of homeless in the city found that, in 2014, there were 2,301 homeless people living in Nashville.

Chamber Position

Support projects and programs that eliminate barriers to prosperity, such as poverty and homelessness reduction.

Bill Summary

No bills were filed on this issue.

Status

Because no bills were filed on this issue in 2014-2015, it is not included in the individual vote count. The Chamber continues to focus on these issues through its annual leadership study mission, this year to Salt Lake City. Best practices and awareness often lead to policy or process change.



Welcoming and Inclusive City

Nashville, named “America’s Friendliest City,” recently became one of the 25 largest cities in the country. A welcoming and inclusive environment is vital to building a global city that continues to attract and retain businesses, workers, visitors and investment from all over the world.

Chamber Position

Support efforts to maintain our identity and brand as a welcoming, inclusive city.

Bill Summary

No bills were filed on this issue.

Status

Because no bills were filed on this issue in 2014-2015, it is not included in the individual vote count. The Chamber focused on best practices related to immigration and inclusion in its annual leadership visit to Salt Lake City.

REGIONAL EFFORTS TO ENSURE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY



Infrastructure Investment

Nashville is a thriving city and is expected to continue growing, adding almost 1 million new residents to the area by 2035. New development along the city's busiest corridors—including offices, hotels and residential buildings—is expected to double commute times. In order to meet the transportation needs of these new residents and visitors, keep pace with future growth and mitigate future traffic congestion, Nashville must invest in infrastructure that encourages rapid mass transportation.

Chamber Position

Support the expansion of Metro Nashville's multi-modal transit systems and a dedicated funding source for regional mass transit infrastructure that has a strong business case for success.

Bill Summary

RS2015-1371 (Tygard) terminated capital dollars for the Amp project with a strong recommendation to support MTA's strategic planning process. The Chamber supported the resolution.

Status

The council took action supporting the Chamber's position. The resolution was adopted by the council on Feb. 4.



Workforce Housing

Workforce and affordable housing are key needs for Davidson County to retain and attract residents and workers. Currently, Nashville-area residents spend nearly a quarter of their household income on housing. The Nashville region ranks 95th among American cities on the 2013 Housing Affordability Index, which ranks the ability for a family earning the median income to have more than enough income to qualify for a mortgage loan on a median-priced home.

Chamber Position

Support efforts for workforce housing programs and projects to ensure people from all socioeconomic levels have the opportunity to live in Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County.

Bill Summary

BL2015-1139 (Bedne) establishes "inclusionary zoning" and requires all residential development in Davidson County to reserve at least 14 percent of all units for affordable or workforce housing. The Chamber opposes this bill.

Status

Final council action on BL2015-1139 and BL2015-1147 will occur after the print deadline of this publication.

BL2015-1147 (Banks) requires the Metro Planning Commission to amend the Metro zoning code to require affordable and workforce housing units as part of residential developments, and to establish rules and regulations pertaining to the implementation of such requirements. The Chamber supports this bill because it provides a comprehensive and inclusive approach to address affordable and workforce housing needs.



NASHVILLECHAMBER.COM