

Every Student Matters, Every Vote Counts

EdTrust-Tennessee

9/2/2026



Poll

Who We Are



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- 2 The 2026 Election Cycle and Primary Results

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 - Federal Education Funding
 - Early Childhood Education
 - Tennessee Education Lottery Shortfall
 - Book Bans in Tennessee

- 6 Resources and Next Steps

Today's Speakers



Jeff Strand

Assistant Director of Government Relations,
EdTrust-Tennessee



Jenny Mills McFerron

Director of Policy and Research, EdTrust-
Tennessee

Today's Speakers



**Pratik
Dash**

Tennessee
Immigrant and
Refugee Rights
Coalition (TIRRC)



**Venita
Doggett**

Memphis Interfaith
Coalition for
Action and Hope
(MICAH)

Today's Speakers



**Blair
Wriston**

EdTrust-National



**Courtney
Mott**

Save the
Children Action
Network (SCAN)



**Bob
Obrohta**

Tennessee
College Access
and Success
Network
(TCASN)



**Roshan
Neil**

ACLU of
Tennessee

2026 Primary Results and Looking Ahead

2026 Primary Results & Looking Ahead

Key Trends and Takeaways

- **Congress:** Tennessee's Congressional delegation will change significantly in 2027
- **Tennessee Governor:** Tennessee's first female Governor, new leader since 2019
- **Tennessee Senate:** Significant leadership changes, but only 1 or 2 new members
- **Tennessee House:** At least 14 new House members
- Unusual Elections Ahead in **Memphis**

Important General Election Dates

- **October 5:** Voter Registration Deadline
- **October 14-28:** Early Voting
- **November 3: Election Day**

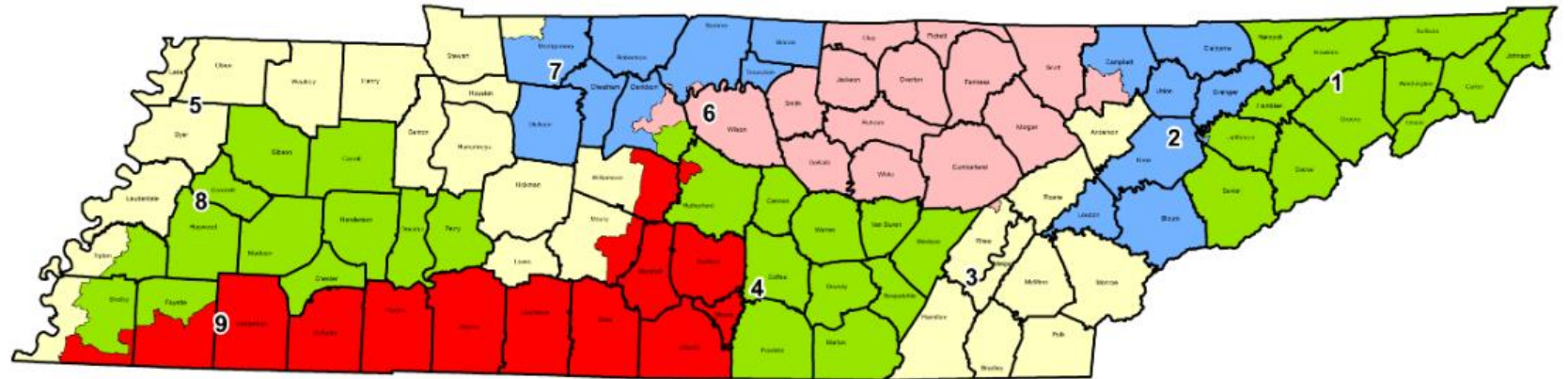
Changes to TN's Congressional Delegation

U.S. Senate

- **Senator Bill Hagerty** is up for re-election
- If **Senator Marsha Blackburn** is elected Governor, a special election will occur in 2027

U.S. House

- **Districts 5, 6, and 9** will have new Congressional representation following incumbent primary losses and retirements (Rep. Andy Ogles, Rep. John Rose, Rep. Steve Cohen)



Redistricted Congressional Map, Tennessee Secretary of State
<https://sos.tn.gov/announcements/2026-congressional-redistricting>

Changes in the Tennessee Senate

Significant changes likely following the retirement of the Lieutenant Governor

- **Speaker of the Senate Randy McNally** (R-Oak Ridge) is retiring after representing District 5 for 40 years
 - Jimmy Matlock (R) and David Miller (D) will be on the ballot in November
- **Leader Jack Johnson** (R-Franklin) and **Chairman Paul Bailey** (R-Sparta) are pursuing the Speaker role
 - **Speaker Pro Tempore Ferrell Haile** (R-Gallatin) has decided not to pursue the role
- Anticipate more substantive changes to committee membership and leadership
- The rest of the membership of the Senate will remain the same, barring the outcome of the 9th Congressional district race

Changes in the Tennessee House

Membership shifts in the House

- **11 members** of the House in 114th General Assembly did not run for re-election, and **3 incumbents** were defeated in their primaries
 - Three members served as committee chairmen (Chairman John Crawford, R-Bristol/Kingsport, Chairman Debra Moody, R-Covington and Chairman Dennis Powers, R-Jacksboro)
- **38 seats** are held by incumbents or primary winners and won't face a major party challenger in November

New Members of the Tennessee House



Jessica Means

R-Sullivan County

District 1 (Rep. John Crawford)



Gary Stidham

R-Sullivan County

District 2 (Rep. Bud Hulsey)



Noah Smith

R-Campbell County

District 36 (Rep. Dennis Powers)



Brett Giannini

R-Tipton County

District 81 (Rep. Debra Moody)



Telisa Franklin

D-Shelby County

District 96 (Rep. Gabby Salinas)

Shifts to the Memphis Delegation

Unusual election circumstances will affect three General Assembly Seats

- Two General Assembly members are vying to represent Memphis in the **9th Congressional District**
 - **Senate District 31:** Currently held by **Senator Brent Taylor** (R)
 - **House District 86:** Currently held by **Rep. Justin Pearson** (D)
 - The winning candidate for Congress will have to vacate his seat in the General Assembly, which will be filled by a special election
- **House District 84:** Currently represented by **Rep. Joe Towns** (D), who was elected Shelby County Criminal Court Clerk on August 6
 - If Rep. Towns withdraws by September 14, the Democratic Party would select a replacement candidate for the November election; there are no Republican challengers for the seat
- **House District 93:** Following **Rep. G.A. Hardaway's** (D) death in April, his son **T.J. Hardaway** was temporarily appointed to fill his seat
 - No candidate in either party qualified to run for this seat. The candidate with the most write-in votes in November will be elected.

More Competitive General Election Races

A few races in the Tennessee House appear to be particularly close

17 **Tennessee Senate** seats are up for election, but 10 are already decided because they don't have two major party candidates.

All 99 House seats are up for election, and 38 of the seats are already decided. There are **several close House races**; the top three by vote difference are:

- **District 97** (Part of Shelby County): Rep. John Gillespie-R and Jesse Huseh-D; 27 votes
- **District 75** (Part of Montgomery County): Rep. Michael Lankford-R and Allie Phillips-D; 291 votes
- **District 49** (Part of Rutherford County): Rep. Mike Sparks-R and Connie Casha-D; 335 votes
- Other close races in House **Districts 67** (part of Montgomery County) and **13** (part of Rutherford County)

Data note: EdTrust-Tennessee analysis of [Unofficial Election Result data](#) from the Tennessee Secretary of State comparing votes cast for major party candidates in the August 6 primary by district.

Partner Opportunities to Engage



Opportunities to Engage with our Partners



Pratik Dash

Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee
Rights Coalition (TIRRC)



Venita Doggett

Memphis Interfaith Coalition
for Action and Hope (MICAH)

Who Decides in Education Policy?



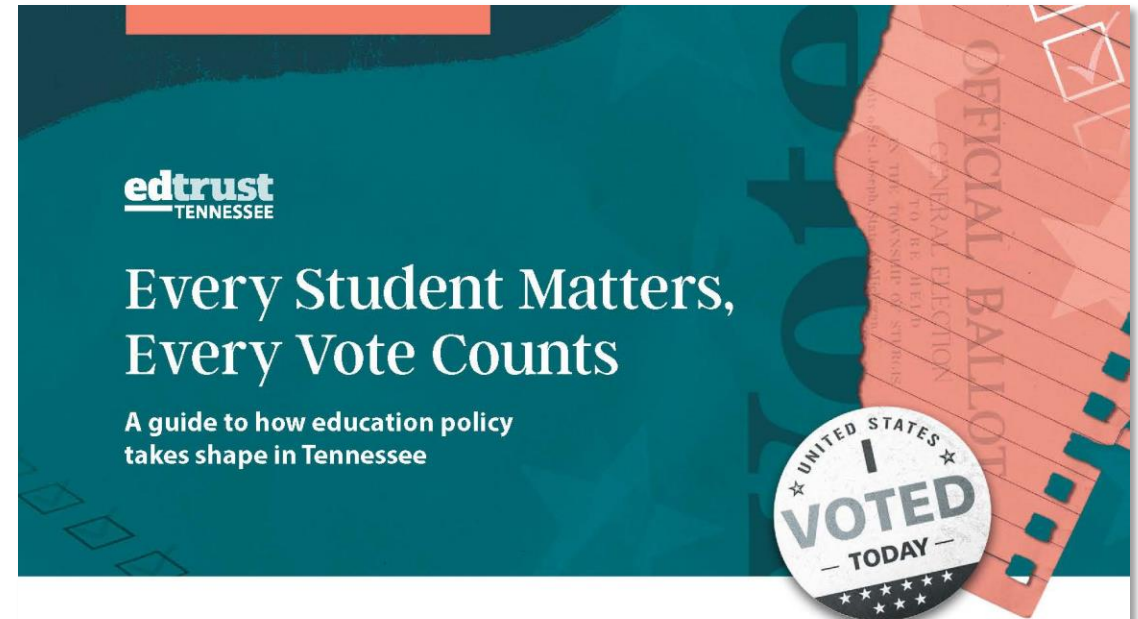
Who decides in education policy?

The provision of a good education is complex,

- The policy decisions that drive a quality education come from **different sources**.
- To maximize our advocacy, it's important our work is **directed at the decision-makers that have the authority** to make the change we want to see.
- The elected policymaking bodies **on the ballot this year** that can impact education include:
 - United States Congress
 - Governor of Tennessee
 - Tennessee General Assembly
 - Local District School Boards
 - Local Municipal Councils/County Commissions

Who decides in education policy?

Check out our newest resource to help navigate how education policy is made in Tennessee:



Every election shapes the future for Tennessee's students. The people elected to office decide how schools are funded, what opportunities students have, how teachers are supported, and who has a voice in education decisions. Understanding what each office controls helps advocates ask better questions, evaluate candidates, and cast an informed vote.

The elected policymaking bodies that can impact education include:

- United States Congress
- Governor of Tennessee
- Tennessee General Assembly
- Local District School Boards
- Local Municipal Councils/County Commissions

Learn more about their education duties and responsibilities below.

Key Education Policy Issues



Federal Education Funding



The issue:

- Federal education funding has been under threat, with calls from the President and action by the House of Representatives to seriously limit federal funding streams like funding for after school programs, Head Start, and other major programs.
- Tennessee is unusually reliant on federal funding for education compared to other states.



The urgency:

- Progress made toward protecting key investments for FY27 – but risks remain this year and moving forward
- We must continue to demonstrate both the need for & impact of federal funding and programs on student outcomes



What advocates should be asking:

- Policymakers should articulate *how* they will both preserve and bolster key federal programs amidst threats of disinvestment

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Resources :

[Federal Focus, Tennessee Lens](#)

[The Great American Heist](#)

Early Childhood Education



The issue:

- Access to high quality, affordable early childhood education continues to be out of reach for many Tennessee families



The urgency:

- The 2026 midterm elections will determine the lawmakers and committee leaders who will be responsible for advancing or blocking early childhood education and child care policies.
- As new committee assignments and leadership roles are determined, decisions about child care funding, workforce supports, and access to early learning opportunities will be on the agenda.



What advocates should be asking:

- How will you expand access to affordable, high-quality child care and early learning opportunities, strengthen and support the early childhood workforce, and address child care shortages across the state



Save the Children
Action Network

Resources:

[Steps for Reps](#)

Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship Shortfall



The issue:

- The Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship program funds most of the state's portfolio of financial aid programs for Tennessee higher education and dual enrollment students.
- The revenue that sustains the fund has dipped in recent years, leading to a [projected \\$344 million shortfall by 2030.](#)



The urgency:

- Cuts are likely.
- What gets cut will decide which student population gets hurt.



What advocates should be asking:

- How do you plan to address the lottery shortfall? What do you plan to cut?



Resources:

[The Aid Gap - EdTrust-TN](#)

[Tennessee Postsecondary Scholarship System at a Crossroads: Understanding the Funding Gap - ThinkTennessee](#)

Book Bans in Tennessee



The issue:

- According to [PEN America](#), Tennessee ranks 3rd in the nation for the number of books that have been removed from libraries for their content.
- The Age-Appropriate Materials Act continues to permit large-scale removals from school libraries, including books such as [Roots](#) and [Maus](#).



The urgency:

- Tennessee students' access to educational materials is becoming increasingly limited, and this trend will continue unless advocates voice their concerns.



What advocates should be asking:

- Take a look at the questions we asked as part of our candidate surveys, linked on our [Election HQ](#)



Resources:

[Know Your Rights Webinar – EdTrust-TN](#)

[ACLU-TN Election HQ](#)

ACLU-TN is a nonpartisan organization, so we cannot endorse candidates or tell you how to vote in elections.

Resources and Next Steps



Resources

[Every Student Matters, Every Vote Counts - EdTrust-Tennessee](#)

[Proud Voter - CivicTN](#)

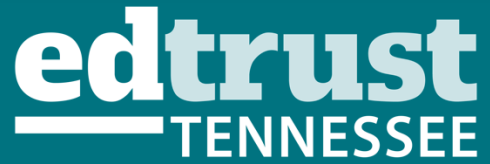
[Campaign Development - LEE](#)

[College Student Guide – Tennessee Disability Coalition](#)

[Vote 411 – League of Women Voters](#)

Webinar Survey





Thank you

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