



BILL HASLAM
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HASLAM UNVEILS LEGISLATIVE AGENDA TO MOVE TENNESSEE FORWARD

Bills highlight governor's focus on jobs, education, efficient government and lower taxes

NASHVILLE – Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam today announced his priorities for the 2012 legislative session during a press conference where he was joined by legislators in the Old Supreme Court Chamber of the Capitol.

His legislative agenda is designed to move Tennessee forward by supporting his goal to make Tennessee the No. 1 location in the Southeast for high quality jobs through economic development efforts, meaningful education reform, a more efficient and effective state government and improved public safety.

“The legislative leadership of the General Assembly is committed to a productive and efficient session, and I’m proud to support their efforts by introducing our legislation today, the first day of session, and presenting them with a budget in the next several weeks,” Haslam said during the press conference. “These bills reflect my priorities in moving Tennessee forward by focusing on issues that make a difference through performance, accountability and efficiency in state government.”

The governor’s legislation:

- Strengthens the Department of Economic and Community Development’s FastTrack program by budgeting more for the grants and giving the department more flexibility in utilizing them to attract and grow Tennessee jobs.
- Gives local school districts more options in how they approach classroom instruction and teacher compensation by:
 - Maintaining maximum class size requirements but eliminating average class size mandates for each school, and
 - Eliminating the outdated requirement of state and local salary schedules based strictly on seniority and training, which will give districts flexibility to make decisions such as how to address hard to staff schools or subjects along with rewarding teacher performance.



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- Outlines Tennessee specific goals for measuring progress to replace the federal measurements as part of the state's No Child Left Behind waiver request and better defines the scope and focus of the Achievement School District in supporting Tennessee's lowest performing schools.
- Restructures 22 state boards and commissions to eliminate duplicative functions and provide more accountability and oversight of the agencies, which is a first step of an ongoing comprehensive review process.
- Updates and reforms the state's antiquated employment system through the TEAM Act (Tennessee Excellence Accountability and Management) by simplifying the hiring process, providing flexibility to retain and reward outstanding employees and streamlining the appeals process for employees.
- Takes a first step in reaching the governor's goal to raise the state inheritance tax exemption from \$1 million to \$5 million by increasing it to \$1.25 million to lower the tax burden on family farmers and family business owners as these businesses span generations.
- Lowers the state portion of the sales tax on food from 5.5 percent to 5.3 percent with the goal of lowering it to 5.0 percent in three years.

Also filed today as part of the governor's legislative package are a series of bills that were announced last week to address public safety issues including prescription drug abuse, tougher sentencing for certain types of gang-related crimes, tougher sentencing for gun possession by those with prior violent felony convictions and mandatory jail time for repeat domestic violence offenders. This legislation is part of a comprehensive, multi-year public safety action plan by the Governor's Public Safety Subcabinet Working Group, which is made up of representatives from 11 state departments and agencies. The plan is a result of months of meetings with more than 300 public safety professionals and stakeholders across the state.

"This legislative agenda is made up of a strategic group of bills aimed at impacting key issues that are crucial to tackle now," Haslam continued. "I look forward to working with the Legislature on these important initiatives."

The Haslam administration filed a total of 55 non-budget related bills today. For more information about the governor's legislative agenda, please visit <http://forward.tn.gov>.

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