



# Weekly Legislative Update

8.18.2023

Dear {{FirstName or 'Supporter'}},

The 2023 regular session of the 113th Tennessee General Assembly proved to be one like no other, with divisive social issues, contentious public policy debates, and fiery expulsion proceedings drawing eyes from around the world to our State Capitol. Though the first stint of the current legislature's two-year meeting adjourned back on April 21, the pervasive issue of public safety following the tragic loss of life at Nashville's The Covenant School left thousands of Tennesseans demanding more legislative remedies to gun violence. In response to widespread advocacy, protesters at legislative plaza, and community engagement from diverse stakeholders across many backgrounds, sectors, and lines of difference, Governor Bill Lee [announced on May 8](#) that he would convene both chambers of the General Assembly for an extraordinary session – commonly referred to as a "special session" – on public safety, slated to begin Monday, August 21. He also opened a [public comment opportunity](#) for state residents to weigh in with their feedback, ideas, and sentiments surrounding the issue, which has garnered [over 20,000 responses to date](#).

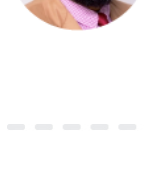
In the months since Governor Lee's original announcement, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle and advocates on both sides of gun control and public safety issues continued widespread debates both publicly and behind closed doors, with Capitol watchers at times questioning if the special session would still occur. Moreover, stakeholders in our state's education policy and advocacy community were informed that if the special session were to occur, Title 49 of our state code – which governs education – would be excluded. However, on August 8, the executive branch released the special session's [official call](#), or the gubernatorial proclamation that details the specific parameters and legislative topics open for bill introduction and debate. Of the 18 topics listed in the call for legislative consideration, several could hold direct implications for public education, including sections (1) mental health resources, providers, commitments, or services, (2) school safety plans or policies, (4) offenses of committing acts of mass violence or threatening to commit acts of mass violence, and several other subjects related to juvenile justice and associated criminal proceedings.

The Ed Trust TN team and many of our partners in the [Tennessee Alliance for Equity in Education](#) are closely monitoring discussions, developments, and legislation being introduced for consideration during the special session. As of the Friday afternoon publication of this newsletter, 65 bills have been introduced in the House, while only seven have been filed in the Senate. Of all [special session legislation](#) filed thus far, eight bills explicitly open the education code, Title 49. These proposals include legislation seeking to [require all Tennessee schools \(public and private\) to develop a fire alarm policy in response to the presence of an active shooter](#), [the expansion of authorization for handgun carry policies to be established at private schools that provide Pre-K services](#), [a mental healthcare professionals student loan repayment program](#), [a troubling bill that would authorize a law enforcement agency to assign a school resource officer \(SRO\) to a school even if the district that has not entered into an MOU with the police](#), and more.

It is anticipated that the specially-called session will only last a few days, spanning no later than Friday, August 25. [Standing legislative committees](#) are expected to remain the same as regular session, with chamber leadership not announcing any ad-hoc chairpersons or special issue committees to date. Schedule-wise, the Senate has released a [proposed schedule](#) to guide their work next week, while the House, as of this publication, has only listed a 4:00pm floor session on Monday to officially kick off the special session. For relevant schedule updates, please use our live committee calendar links below which will coincide with the legislature's website.

To see all of the education-related bills Ed Trust is actively tracking and other important information on movement at the Tennessee General Assembly, please be sure to check out the "On Our Radar" section, our updated [bill tracker with a new "Special Session" tab](#) (which our team will update throughout the week as developments occur), and other helpful links included below. For more information on how to engage at the state level this special session, also review our new [Guide to the August 2023 Special Session](#) and other pertinent resources in our [Tennessee Education Advocacy Hub](#). As always, please don't hesitate to reach out should you have any questions on all things ed policy and advocacy at the Tennessee General Assembly next week.

In partnership,



**Reggie Nash**  
Assistant Director, External Relations for Tennessee



## On Our Radar

### [HB7023](#)

Rep. Cepicky

As introduced, authorizes a law enforcement agency to assign a law enforcement officer to serve as a school resource officer at a school within a local board of education's control that has not entered into a memorandum of understanding with a law enforcement agency to assign a school resource officer to the school.

### [HB7009](#)

Rep. Gillespie

As introduced, establishes a mental healthcare professionals student loan repayment grant program to incentivize certain mental healthcare providers to provide services in this state.

### [HB7043](#)

Rep. Barrett

As introduced, authorizes persons with an enhanced handgun carry permit to carry a handgun on school property unless the person knows that the respective school provides armed security on the school property; removes certain exemptions of a law enforcement officer's authority to possess a firearm on school property; authorizes certain community corrections officers to possess a handgun on school property.

### [HB7038](#)

Rep. Gant

As introduced, requires the department of education to establish a school safety alert grant program to provide grants to LEA's to offset expenses incurred by schools for the installation of school safety alert systems.

[Review Our Bill Tracker](#)



## What's Happening

### Senate Floor Session

Monday, August 21st, 4:00pm CT  
Senate Chamber | [Senate Homepage](#)

### House Floor Session

Monday, August 21st, 4:00pm CT  
House Chamber | [House Homepage](#)

### Senate Floor Session

Tuesday, August 22nd, 8:30am CT  
Senate Chamber | [Senate Homepage](#)

### Senate Judiciary Committee

Tuesday, Aug 22nd, 2:00pm CT  
Senate Hearing Room I | [Committee Homepage](#)

### Senate Education Committee

Wednesday, August 23rd, 8:30am CT  
Senate Hearing Room I | [Committee Homepage](#)

### Senate Health and Welfare Committee

Wednesday, August 23rd, 10:30am CT  
Senate Hearing Room I | [Committee Homepage](#)

### Senate Finance, Ways, and Means Committee

Wednesday, August 23rd, 2:00pm CT  
Senate Hearing Room I | [Committee Homepage](#)

### Senate Floor Session

Wednesday, April 19th, 1:30pm CT  
Senate Chamber | [Senate Homepage](#)

[House Committee Calendars](#)

[Senate Committee Calendars](#)



## Noteworthy

### [Resource: Guide to August 2023 Special Session](#)

Check out [this resource guide](#) from Ed Trust TN that provides insights into the Tennessee legislature's special sessions, what's required to convene them, and detailed context around the imminent session on public safety.

### [Article: The Tennessean: TN's Special Legislative Session on Public Safety: What To Know](#)

Check out [this article](#) from The Tennessean highlighting key items and what to watch for during next week's legislative proceedings at the State Capitol and Cordell Hull legislative complex. [Read more](#).

### [Event: AWAKE TN Special Session Day on the Hill](#)

Our partners at [AWAKE TN](#) are hosting an advocacy and lobby day next Wednesday morning from 9:00am - 12:00pm CT to ensure local advocates' voices are heard during the special session on public safety. Learn more and register [here](#).

### [Podcast: WPLN: What's So Special About Next Week's Special Legislative Session?](#)

On the newest installment of the station's acclaimed This Is Nashville segment, WPLN's Paige Pfleger and Blaise Gainey are joined by Reps. Bob Freeman (D-Nashville) and Mark Cochran (R-Englewood) to learn more about what to expect next week and the implications of such a major public policy debate. [Listen here](#).

[Upcoming Events](#)

[Check Out Our Policy Agenda](#)



The Education Trust

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