

# TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION PUBLIC SCHOOL ADVOCATE



Early voting:  
July 13-28  
Primary:  
Aug. 2

LEGISLATIVE REPORT | July 13, 2018 | VOLUME 4, ISSUE 8



## SO MUCH AT STAKE IN THE PRIMARY ELECTIONS

LOW TURNOUT PRIMARIES MEANS EDUCATOR VOTES CAN ELECT PRO-EDUCATION CANDIDATES IN BOTH PARTIES



TEA endorsed GOP gubernatorial candidate Speaker Beth Harwell.

### WE CAN ELECT THE NEXT GOVERNOR

#### K-12 BUDGETS, ED COMMISSIONER, STATE BOARD ALL IN THE BALANCE

The Tennessee governor holds tremendous power over public education.

The chief executive appoints the state commissioner of education and state school board, vested with the power to set policy and rules that affect every classroom, student and teacher.

The governor sets state budgets, with the ability to allocate money to keep class sizes small, ensure all classrooms have the necessary resources and prioritize teachers being paid as professionals.

Read more about the governor's race on page 5.



TEA endorsed Democratic gubernatorial candidate Leader Craig Fitzhugh.

### COMPETITIVE HOUSE AND SENATE RACES GENERAL ASSEMBLY HOLDS THE KEYS

As TNReady faltered this spring, there was a question whether test scores should be used. The Haslam administration was adamant to keep test scores as part of teacher evaluation, student grades and school penalties.

TEA knew scores were invalid because of the major

irregularities and must not be used.

The General Assembly decided enough was enough and passed a hold-harmless law in the waning hours of the session to eliminate all adverse actions using TNReady test scores.

It was a clear example of the General Assembly's powers.

General Assembly  
cont. page 6



### SPECIAL INTERESTS TARGET OUR ELECTIONS



They are at it again—national anti-public education groups are spending heavily in Tennessee General Assembly primaries. In 2016, these national groups, backed by billionaires like Betsy DeVos, spent millions in our state trying to defeat pro-public school Republicans and Democrats, only to see teachers and voters reject their slate of candidates. It was a huge victory for Tennessee public schools, and now we will need a similar effort in this primary season.

“We see the privatization groups spend in districts across the state, backing primary

Shadow groups  
cont. page 6

### An 'open primary' means every educator may vote any primary

In Tennessee, primaries are the deciding race in most General Assembly elections. Partisan leaning, whether Republican or Democrat, is strong in legislative districts.

The good news is Tennessee is an “open primary” state, where all voters can participate in the primary of their choosing—there is no party registration or voting history requirement. Primary voter turnout is often very low, meaning every pro-public education vote has tremendous impact. If you've not voted in a party primary before, this is the year to do it!

Primary voting is simple. Go to your assigned polling place August 2 (or early vote July 13 - 28) and ask to vote in the primary with the most local impact. Then vote for the pro-public education candidate endorsed by TEA. Go to pages 4 and 5 to learn more about voting in the upcoming party primary.



TESTING. PAY. RETIREMENT. RESPECT. ITS ALL IN WHO WE ELECT!

# Education is political: All elections matter

By TEA President Beth Brown



Responding to an article that I shared on social media, one of my high school classmates recently expressed his desire to play a more active role in his daughters' education. He said, "I want what is best for my girls and everyone else's kids as well... The problem is we can't just care. We have to care AND act. Too many people say they care, but they want someone else to put in the effort... I hope to continue to do my part."

I thanked my old friend and told him that one of the best ways he could support his girls and their teachers is to vote for pro-public education candidates, for every educational decision is

political. Every. Single. One.

Educational decisions are made by elected officials at the local, state and national levels. Regardless of the level of decision making, though, every major decision regarding public education is made by people that we, the voters, elect.

*Voting for pro-public education candidates is as important as any of the other actions we take in our classrooms and in our schools.*

Elected officials determine what resources are available to students; what textbooks are used in classrooms; the availability of technology within schools; what calendar students, educators, and their families follow; the policies that guide student

and employee conduct; whether an educator is granted due process; the standards that are taught; how educators are compensated; how educators are evaluated; and how much state standardized testing is required.

As a high school English teacher, I would never try to tell my doctor how to do her job; I lack her medical expertise. I would never tell my stylist how to do his job, for I lack his expertise. I would never tell my mechanic how to do her job. Why? I lack her expertise. Yet over the course of my seventeen-year career as an educator, I have repeatedly witnessed elected officials with no educational experience make decisions that dictate every aspect of my job without consulting the experts: public school educators.

I understand why so many educators want to avoid politics. We entered this great profession because we were inspired by our own teachers, because we love our subject, because we enjoy the challenge and variety, and, most of all, because we want to make a difference in the lives of our students. We did not enter education because we wanted to be lawmakers or policymakers. However, voting for pro-public education candidates is as important as any of the other actions we take in our classrooms and in our schools. We would never refuse to write lesson plans, to grade papers, or to attend departmental or grade-level meetings. Unfortunately, too many educators fail to vote—or they vote for candidates who do not support public education.

Kerry Washington, star of the ABC hit political thriller *Scandal*, said "You may not be thinking about politics, but politics is thinking about you." Though we might like to, educators cannot afford to "get out of politics." So, when I go to the ballot box on August 2nd, I will cast my vote for candidates who have demonstrated that they are committed to public education and to consulting the experts—educators—when making decisions about what is best for Tennessee's public schools.

Education is political. Educators cannot afford not to be political. However, education must be a bipartisan issue. As we here at TEA like to say, "It's not about R. It's not about D. It's about E!"

I give you the same advice that I gave my old classmate: vote. Vote for education-friendly candidates. Encourage your family, your friends, and your acquaintances to vote for education-friendly candidates. Our students' futures and the fate of public education depend on it.

# Early voting is the Amazon Prime of Election Day

By TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder

When the calendar page turns to August, there really isn't much time for anything besides those last-minute preparations for the start of your new school year - yet here we are asking you to "Go vote!" on August 2. This is why the early voting period in Tennessee is a life-saver!

Think of early voting, which runs July 13-28 for the primary election, as the Amazon Prime of Election Day.

First, it's convenient. While maybe not quite as convenient as just opening your Amazon app, most election commissions schedule early voting at a variety of different locations around the county. Without the Election Day restrictions of being assigned a voting location, you can pick the early voting site that is closest to you or along your route as you are running Saturday morning errands.

Next, it's fast. Just like Amazon Prime helps you avoid the back-to-school rush on school supplies, early voting lets you skip the unpredictable Election Day lines. You can get in and out quickly to cast your vote for candidates who will work hard for our students and public schools.

Just like with Amazon, your order is quickly processed. Instead of a brown box with that Amazon smile on it, you get a new elected official in a few days - or front-runner candidate in the general election in November. If we do our part as public education advocates, the election winners announced on August 2 will be supporters of public education. This means not only taking the time to vote, but making an effort to get friends, family and coworkers who believe in great public schools to vote, too.

Last, if you are unsatisfied with the results, there is a solid return policy in place. It is on us to hold our elected officials accountable and ensure the best interests of our students, our schools and our profession remain a top priority for them. This is not a one-and-done project. Voting for friends of education is just the first step, and what comes next is equally important.

Our elected leaders at all levels of government need to hear from educators back home - the real experts on what our children need to succeed. Your feedback and guidance are critical to building and sustaining great public schools for all children. Politicians need to know you are paying attention and that you are willing to use that return policy - voting them out of office in the next election - if they do not do right by our students.

*If we do our part as public education advocates, the election winners announced on August 2 will be supporters of public education.*

I know so much is asked of you, not just at the start of a school year, but throughout the year. I know political advocacy can feel like just one more thing to add to your already too long to-do list. I also know that it is critically important for our students, our local neighborhood schools and this profession that we love.

Elected officials hold the power to vote on new education policy, but we hold the power to vote them into those positions. We need to own that power and wield it in a way that lifts all students and empowers all teachers to do their very best.

So what are you waiting for? Look up your local election commission now and make plans for an Amazon Prime-like early voting stop.



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MANAGING EDITOR: Amanda Chaney  
achaney@teaa.org  
ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Jim Wrye  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & PUBLISHER:  
Carolyn Crowder

## Tennessee Education Association

801 Second Avenue North  
Nashville, TN 37201-1099  
Telephone: (615) 242-8392  
Toll Free: (800) 342-8367, (800) 342-8262  
Fax: (615) 259-4581  
Website: www.teateachers.org

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT: Beth Brown\* (800) 342-8367  
VICE PRESIDENT: Tanya Coats\* (865) 308-2787  
SECRETARY-TREASURER: Carolyn Crowder (615) 242-8392  
DISTRICT 1 LaDawn Hudgins\* (423) 384-3585  
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DISTRICT 3 Robert Holder (865) 617-1179  
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ADMINISTRATOR EAST Carrie Clabo (865) 603-3791  
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UniServ Staff contact information  
can be found on page 6.

## For our students and our profession, make the choice to be politically active

By Loranzo Andrews, United EA of Shelby County member



The purpose of political advocacy is to influence political decisions. Given the attacks on our public education system by numerous forces and

the challenges faced by government regulations like teacher evaluations dependent on standardized testing and charter schools, it is imperative that educators involve themselves in the political process and political advocacy.

I have always been involved in the political process. That was an easy decision. At 18-years-old, I registered to vote, and no matter where I have lived, I made it a point to vote in primary and general elections--local, state, and federal. A few years back, however, I realized the need to do more than merely casting a vote.

Political advocacy was a choice I made because of the political attacks on the public school system in which I worked and the dedicated individuals who choose to educate our children on a daily basis. As an African-American male educator and the product of an underfunded Mississippi school system, the importance of public education ranks high on my list of social commodities. Quality public education is dear to my heart. My ancestors sacrificed life and security for my right to a public education, although there are still

unsettled issues of equity and social justice.

In addition to voting for them, as educators we should support political candidates who are advocates of public education. This is crucial to our children. What does this support look like? While financial support is always welcome, political advocacy can manifest itself in the form of campaign work such as phone banks, neighborhood canvassing, listening parties and candidate forums, and social media blitzes to family and friends.

The effect of pro-education candidates can be felt in the classroom as well as outside the classroom. It is imperative that we support those pro-education candidates not just in general elections, but in the primary elections.

Primaries are where you first identify public education-friendly candidates. Primaries are where they often struggle to make the cut. Thus, it is here where your advocacy and support are critical for their continued presence on the ballot. This is where educators need to show up in full force.

If educators do not make their presence known on the political front, then we and our children will continue to lose out to special interest groups that want to privatize education by turning it into a profit-making machine. This was not the intent of those who put the public education system in place. Educators are the backbone of this country, but are not treated that way.

Educators must show up at the primaries and remind politicians who gave them the education to be asking for a vote!

# ASK TEA

## ANSWERS FROM THE EXPERTS AT THE TEA HOTLINE

**Q:** I am a tenured teacher and have received a letter that I will not have a job next year due to my position being eliminated. Needless to say, I'm very upset about this! Does the law require that non-tenured teachers are laid off first? Do I have any rights as a tenured teacher to continued employment in this school system?

**A:** Under Tennessee law, a local board of education can dismiss teachers, both tenured and non-tenured, if the school system suffers a decrease in enrollment or has a similar valid reason. This type of dismissal is commonly known as an abolition of position dismissal and has nothing to do with any sort of teacher misconduct. Abolition of position dismissals do not require that non-tenured teachers be dismissed first. Instead, the dismissal is based upon the needs of the school system. For example, if enrollment drops in the school system that currently employs two health teachers such that only one health teacher is needed to serve the existing students, the local board can dismiss the health teacher with the lowest overall evaluation unless there is another open position within the school system that the health teacher is certified to fill. A school system is prohibited from using an abolition of position dismissal as a method of avoiding dismissal charges against a teacher and the accompanying due process rights afforded to the teacher. The abolition of position law specifically provides as follows: *When it becomes necessary to reduce the number of teaching positions ... in the system because of a decrease in enrollment or for other good reasons, the board shall be empowered to dismiss such teachers ... based on their level of effectiveness determined by the evaluation pursuant to § 49-1-302.*

TEA has been involved in significant litigation regarding the interpretation of this particular statute and has been successful in establishing two important things. First, the dismissal must be a reduction in positions system-wide (not just in a particular school). Thus, if there are other open positions within the system that a teacher is certified to fill, the local board must place that teacher in the open position. Second, the dismissal must be based on a teacher's overall level of effectiveness, not just on teacher observations or some other singular evaluation measure.

TEA can assist its members who receive notice that their position is being abolished to ensure the law is being followed. You should contact your TEA UniServ Coordinator for more support and information.

**Q:** My teaching license will expire on Aug 31, 2018 and a district coordinator has informed me of the need to have it renewed. What are the renewal requirements?

**A:** You are fortunate that the school district brought it to your attention, since the responsibility for maintaining a valid teaching license lies exclusively with the licensed teacher. That said, you may want to visit <http://www.teateachers.org/License> and click the link at the bottom of the page for more information.

Essentially, a teacher must accumulate 60 Professional Development Points (PDPs) during the effective dates of the license (6 years) to meet the requirements for renewal. PDPs can be accrued in a variety of ways, including your level of effectiveness scores as well as time spent in in-service training or college coursework. If you have additional questions about licensure requirements please contact your TEA UniServ Coordinator.



The TEA Advocacy Hotline supports local leaders and building representatives in answering member questions. If you have an employment-related question, please contact your building rep or UniServ coordinator.

## Remembering loyal supporter of public schools, Rep. Ron Lollar

1948 ~ 2018



Shelby County legislator and long-time advocate for public education Rep. Ron Lollar passed away Friday, July 6.

Rep. Lollar was first elected to the Tennessee General Assembly in 2006. Since that time, he has worked tirelessly for students and educators. Prior to serving in the state legislature, Rep. Lollar was a member of the Shelby County School Board.

*“When it came to Tennessee students and educators, Ron was a force to be reckoned with,” said TEA Chief Lobbyist Jim Wrye. “He was deeply committed to voting in the best interest of our public schools and was a fierce advocate for our kids.”*





  
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**Elect Katrina Robinson**
  
 Tennessee State Senate, District 33

Katrina will always vote to protect our public schools, saying **NO to vouchers**. She'll fight ASD expansion and work to return local control to Memphis schools taken over by the state. Katrina is an educator, securing \$1.6 million in federal nursing scholarship funds for Memphis youth.

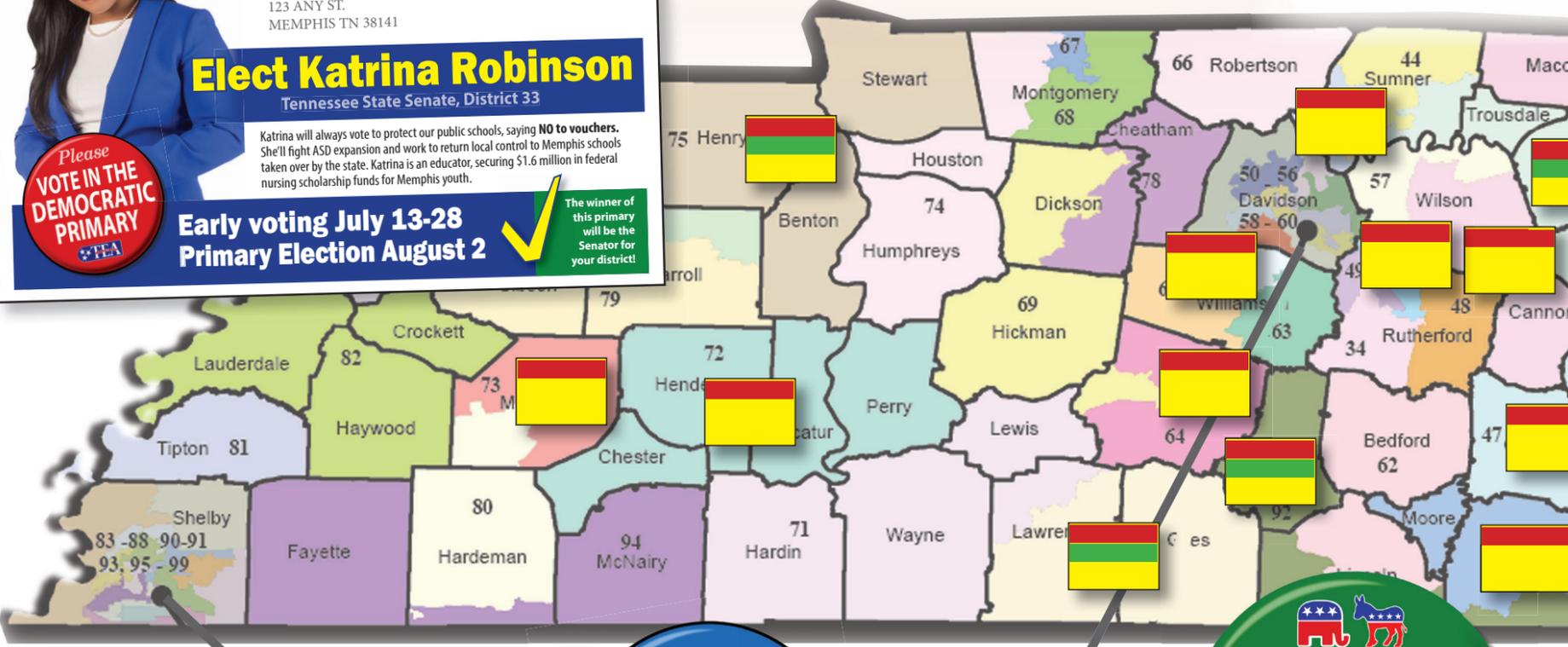
Please
   
**VOTE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY**
  


**Early voting July 13-28**
  
**Primary Election August 2**

The winner of this primary will be the Senator for your district!

**Member mail where we are working to elect a challenger** - Senate candidate Katrina Robinson (left) is running against an incumbent who voted for vouchers and attacks on TEA.

**HOU**



Shelby Co. House

Please
   
**VOTE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY**
  



  
**TENNESSEE HAS OPEN PRIMARIES**
  
 ALL EDUCATORS SHOULD PARTICIPATE

Davidson Co. House

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRIMARY STRATEGY

## Primary participation focuses on highly partisan districts:

In Tennessee, primaries are the deciding race in the vast majority of elections for the General Assembly. Partisan identification is strong in most Republican and Democratic legislative districts. TEA-GR determines partisan district ID by:

- Use of our voter file which has a reliable partisan ID score for all voters;
- Election history, including candidate party outcome in federal and state elections;
- Local officeholder party identification (courthouse offices, county commissioners)

From these factors, TEA-GR assigns a partisan identification number to indicate the leaning of the district (example: Republican +25, Democratic +32). The number is an estimate

on an average polling advantage of a candidate running as a nominee of the party. A double-digit partisan number is highly unlikely to change.

## There are three types of General Assembly primary efforts:

### Incumbent Ally Primary:

An incumbent ally is a legislator with a strong voting record and commitment to key TEA issues. These legislators need to be defended from challengers and anti-public education groups that may back challengers. These recommendations of incumbent allies are the first priority of the TEA-FCPE. TEA-GR then works on member GOTV, technical assistance, and financial assistance for these candidates.

### Incumbent Opponent Primary:

An incumbent opponent is a legislator with a strong voting record against key

TEA issues, is anti-public education, and opposes the association itself. TEA uses polling to determine the strength of incumbents and challengers, along with candidate discussions on key issues. TEA then works with locals and local PACs, if available, to determine whether to back a challenger with technical assistance, financial assistance, and member GOTV.

### Open Seat Primary:

An open seat primary is where a sitting legislator is not seeking re-election. Using polling to determine the strength of candidates, along with discussions on key issues, TEA then works with locals and local PACs, if available, to determine which candidate to back, and works with other friendly groups to coordinate. Chosen candidates receive technical assistance, financial assistance, and member GOTV.

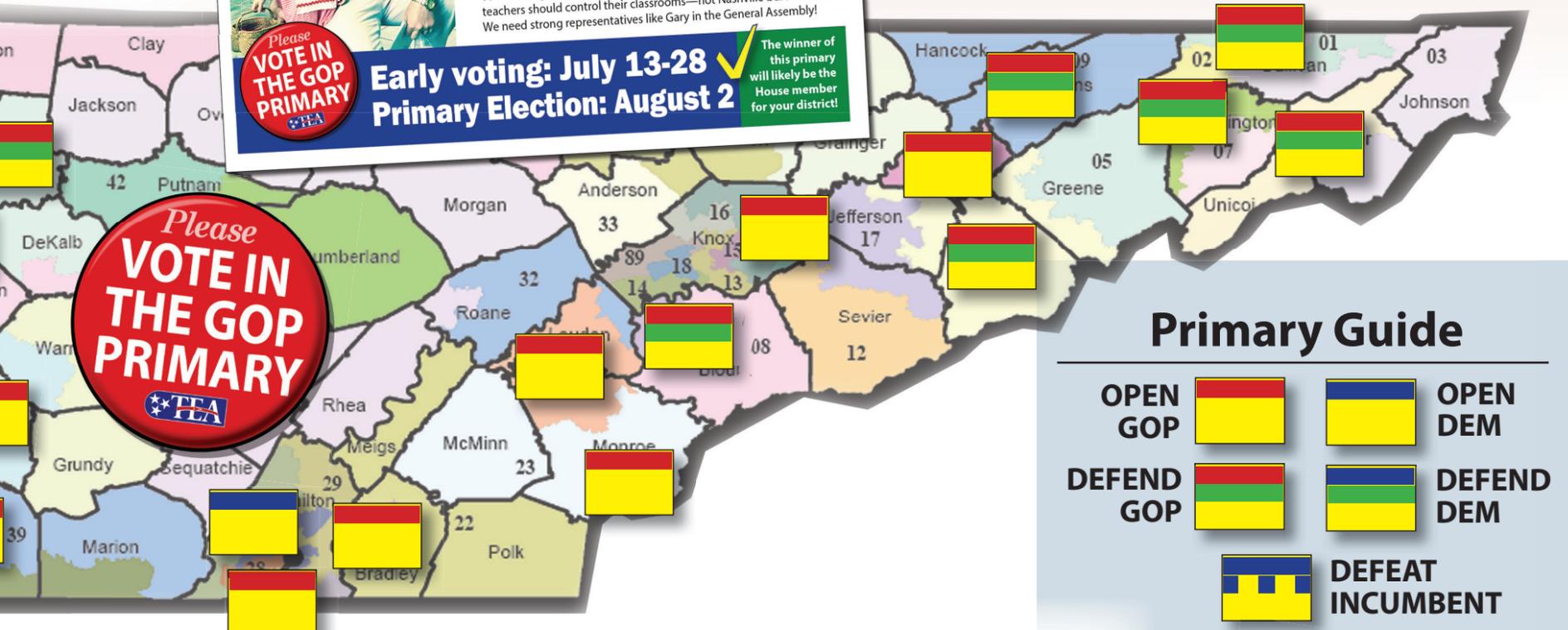


**IT'S NOT ABOUT "R", IT'S NOT ABOUT "D", IT'S**

# HOUSE



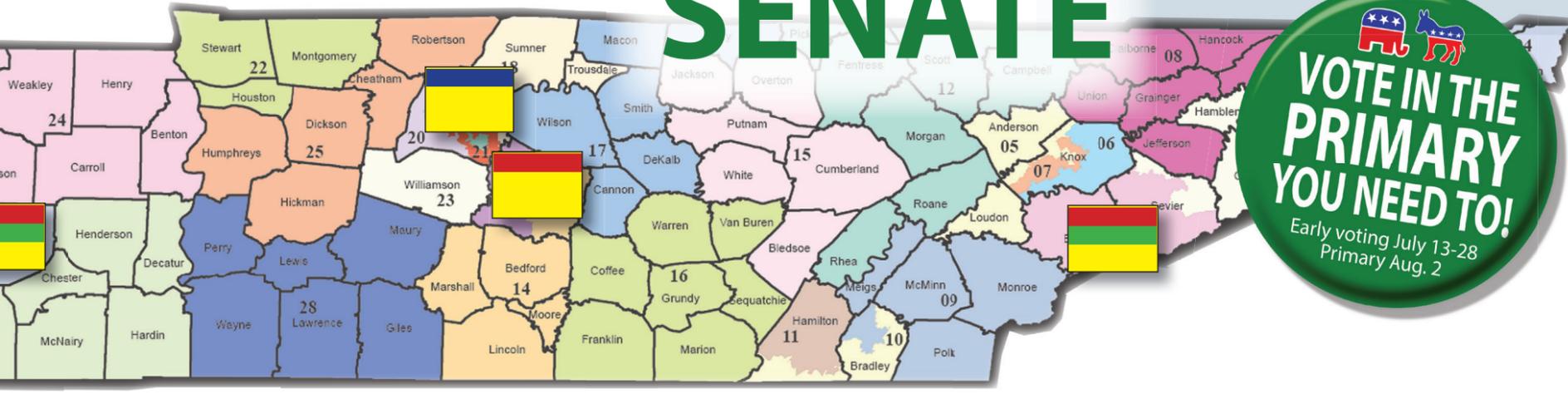
**Member mail where we are defending an incumbent ally** - Rep. Gary Hicks (left) works for Rogersville schools and is a staunch friend of public education. Members in targeted districts get mail like this.



## Primary Guide

OPEN GOP		OPEN DEM	
DEFEND GOP		DEFEND DEM	
		DEFEAT INCUMBENT	

# SENATE



## GOVERNOR PRIMARY STRATEGY



Winner of the GOP primary will be the favorite to be next governor. TEA endorses **Speaker Beth Harwell** in the Republican primary.

Polling shows Tennessee voters believe state government is on the right track, which favors a Republican gubernatorial nominee in November. Speaker Beth Harwell is the only GOP candidate who is an educator, anti-privatization, and will listen to teachers. **TEA strongly encourages members to vote in the GOP primary, and vote Harwell for governor.**

Recognizing we have competitive legislative Democratic primaries in Davidson and Shelby Counties and members with a history of primary participation, **TEA recommends House Minority Leader Craig Fitzhugh for governor in the Democratic primary.** If members in targeted Democratic primaries vote, it may make the difference in the statewide primary!

**Craig Fitzhugh** is the TEA choice for governor in the Democratic primary



House Minority Leader Craig Fitzhugh

- NO PRIVATIZATION**  
*Both candidates oppose vouchers and charter expansion.*
- RESPECT TEACHERS**  
*Both support teacher autonomy and rethinking testing use.*
- IMPROVE SALARIES**  
*Both back increased state funds targeted to teacher paychecks.*

**ABOUT "E"! VOTE IN THE PRIMARY THAT MATTERS MOST!**



# GENERAL ASSEMBLY HOLDS THE KEYS

## General Assembly from page 1

Every aspect of teaching practice in Tennessee is governed by state law. Every law can be amended, repealed, or rewritten as the Tennessee House and Senate decides. As we look to regain professional autonomy, push for increased salaries, and rethink how and why we test, every member needs to concentrate on who is elected to the General Assembly.

Most General Assembly districts have a strong partisan lean, making the primary election the most important in deciding who will serve in the state House and Senate. Over the past two election cycles, TEA members have participated in relevant legislative primaries to elect pro-public education legislators. Tennessee is an open primary state—there is no prior requirement to voting in a Republican or Democratic primary, and members are encouraged to vote in the primary of the political lean of the district.

Member primary participation has been critical to defeating vouchers, increasing K-12 funding, reducing liabilities of failed testing and many other issues.

With a record number of open seats, the 2018 General Assembly primary elections are even more important than in the past. The only organization that is working to elect pro-public school candidates

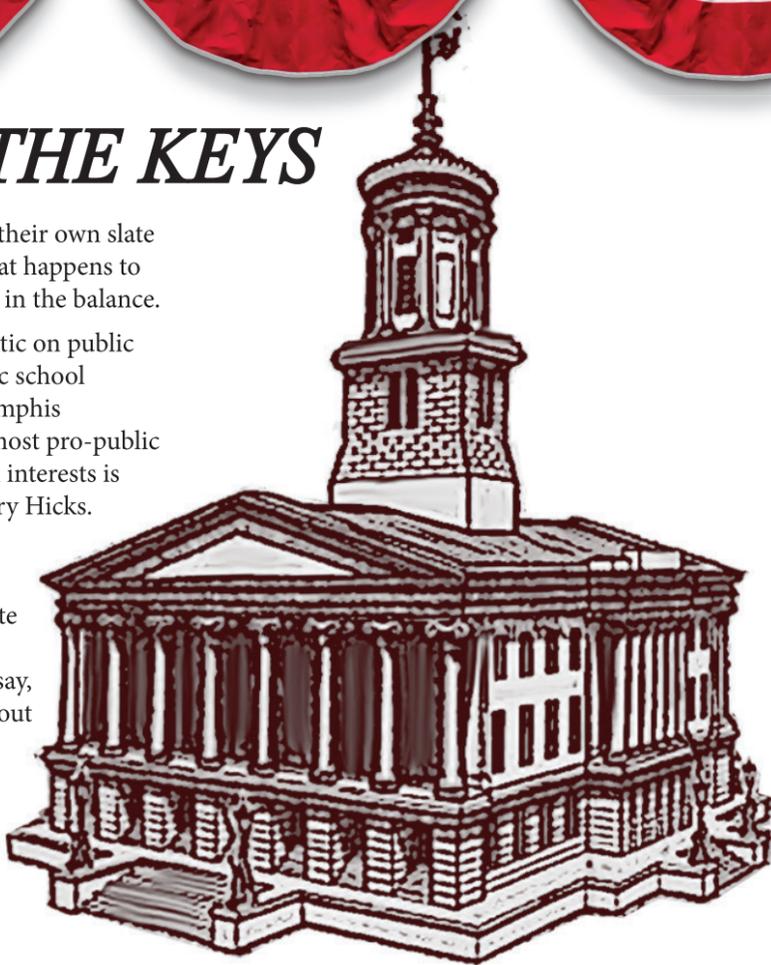
is TEA. Special interests are backing their own slate of anti-public school candidates. What happens to our classrooms and profession hangs in the balance.

Political parties themselves are not static on public education. One of the most anti-public school incumbents challenged by TEA is Memphis Democrat Reginald Tate. One of the most pro-public school incumbents targeted by special interests is a rural East Tennessee Republican Gary Hicks. Hicks is backed by members of TEA.

“We need to always look at the candidate on our issues, and participate in the primary accordingly,” said TEA President Beth Brown. “As we always say, it’s not about R, it’s not about D, its about E.”

On page 4 of this issue is an explanation of the TEA General Assembly primary strategy. Using polling, questions to candidates, and networking with local leaders, a slate of primary candidates have been approved by the TEA-FCPE state council. If you live in a targeted legislative district, you have received or will be getting mail identifying which candidate is the pro-public school candidate.

If you are not in a competitive General Assembly primary, all members are encouraged to participate in the Tennessee Republican primary to vote Beth



Harwell for governor.

“Every member needs to take advantage of the power of their vote, and to encourage everyone they know to vote for pro-public education candidates as well,” Brown said.

## Shadow groups spend to defeat pro-public school Republicans and Democrats. We can stop them when we vote in primaries.

### Shadow groups from page 1

candidates who fit their agenda. The good news is while we may not have their money, we have something more important—actual voter-members in every district,” said TEA Government Relations Director Jim Wrye. “It is time to battle for the future of public education in Tennessee. Every member needs to vote and tell others who will defend and support public schools.”

Tennesseans for Student Success, StudentsFirst, the Federation for Children and other shadow groups have begun spending heavily in Republican and Democratic General Assembly primaries.

These groups have a new tactic this year: telling all candidates they better not take support from TEA or else.

“There are no secrets or surprises in

politics for TEA. We are dedicated to making every primary where shadow groups are weighing in a referendum on public schools and whether they should be defended and supported, or undermined

**The good news is TEA has polled issues like vouchers promoted by shadow groups. Tennesseans of all political stripes reject vouchers two-to-one**

and weakened,” Wrye said. “United teachers are a threat to these shadow groups. Let’s make good on that threat by voting in record numbers in the primaries.”

The good news is TEA has been polling on issues promoted by these

shadow groups like vouchers for years. Tennesseans of all political stripes, in every grand division, including rural, urban and suburban voters, reject vouchers by a two-to-one margin.

Polling in these districts also shows when TEA-FCPE makes the choice between primary candidates, our candidates win with the support and turnout of members.

“I am proud of our membership and organization standing up to these shadow groups in Republican and Democratic primaries,” Wrye said. “When it comes to their privatization agenda, these groups will try and buy their way to victory. We will use our resources to open the eyes of primary voters and expose these groups.”



**VOUCHER QUEEN**

### Contact TEA

Tennessee Education Association  
801 Second Avenue N., Nashville, TN 37201-1099  
(615) 242-8392, (800) 342-8367  
FAX (615) 259-4581

### UniServ Coordinators

**District 1 — Harry Farthing**, P.O. Box 298, Elizabethton, TN 37644; phone: (423)262-8035, fax: (866)379-0949; Assns: Bristol, Carter Co., Elizabethton, Johnson Co., Hancock Co., Hawkins Co., Kingsport, Northeast State Community College, Rogersville, Sullivan Co. **District 2 — Jennifer Gaby**, P.O. Box 70, Afton, TN 37616; (423)234-0700, fax: (855)299-0723; Assns: Cocke Co., Greene Co., East Tennessee State University, Greeneville, Hamblen Co., Johnson City, Newport, Unicoi Co., Washington Co. **District 3 — Tina Parlier**, P.O. Box 70288, Knoxville, TN 37938-0288, (865)688-1175, fax: (866)518-3104; Assns: Campbell Co., Claiborne Co., Grainger Co., Jefferson Co., Sevier Co., Union Co., Walters

State Community College. **District 4 — Jason White**, KCEA, 2411 Magnolia Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37917; (865)522-9793, fax: (865)522-9866; Assns: Knox, Pellissippi State Comm. College, UT-Knoxville, TSD. **District 5 — Tom Hopkins**, P.O. Box 5502, Oak Ridge, TN 37831; (423)416-7330, fax: (855)301-8366; Assns: Alcoa, Anderson Co., Blount Co., Clinton, Etowah, Maryville, McMinn Co. (except Athens City - see District 7), Monroe Co., Oak Ridge, Polk Co., Sweetwater. **District 6 — Shannon Bain**, P.O. Box 3452, Lebanon, TN 37088, phone: (615)547-7769, fax: (844)274-0765; Assns: Cannon Co., Cumberland Co., Cumberland University, DeKalb Co., Lebanon, Putnam Co., Van Buren Co., Warren Co., Wilson Co., White Co., TTU. **District 7 — Theresa Turner**, HCEA 4655 Shallowford Road, Chattanooga, TN 37411; (423)485-9535, fax: (423)485-9512; Assns: Athens City, Bradley Co., Chattanooga State Community College, Cleveland, Hamilton Co., UT-Chattanooga. **District 8 — Josh Trent**, P.O. Box 451, Livingston, TN 38570, (931)279-9530, fax: (855)299-5674; Assns: Fentress Co., Lenior

City, Loudon Co., Meigs Co., Morgan Co., Oneida, Overton Co., Rhea-Dayton Co., Roane Co., Scott Co., York Institute. **District 9 — Jackie Pope**, 2326 Valley Grove Dr., Murfreesboro, TN 37128; phone: (615)898-1060, fax: (855) 301-8214, Assns: Bedford Co., Bledsoe Co., Coffee Co., Franklin Co., Grundy Co., Manchester, Marion Co., Moore Co., Motlow State Community College, Sequatchie Co., Tullahoma. **District 10 — Jeff Garrett**, P.O. Box 1326, Lebanon, TN 37088-1326; (615)630-2605, fax (855)320-8755; Assns: Clay Co., Jackson Co., Macon Co., Pickett Co., Robertson Co., Smith Co., Sumner Co., Trousdale Co. **District 11/13 — Antoinette Lee**, P.O. Box 1412, Antioch, TN 37013; (615)308-5293, fax: (888)519-7331; Assns: FSSD, Williamson, TN Dept. of Ed. **District 12 — Sue Ogg**, P.O. Box 210486, Nashville, TN 37211-0486; (615)856-0503, fax: (855)427-6660 — Assns: Fayetteville City, Giles Co., Lawrence Co., Lincoln Co., Marshall Co., Maury Co., Wayne Co. **District 11/13 — Mary Campbell, Rhonda Jett**, Metro Nashville, 531 Fairground Court, Nashville, TN 37211; (615)347-6578 (Campbell), (615)476-

3161 (Jett), fax: (855)299-4968 (Campbell), (855)299-5837 (Jett); Assns: Dept. of Higher Ed., Metropolitan Nashville, TN School For The Blind, MTSU, Murfreesboro City, NSCC, Rutherford, TSU. **District 14 — Maria Uffelman**, P.O. Box 99, Cumberland City, TN 37050; phone: (931)827-3333, fax: (855)299-4925; Assns: Austin Peay State University, Clarksville-Montgomery Co., Henry Co., Houston Co., Paris, Stewart Co., Weakley Co., UT-Martin. **District 15 — Tim Greene**, P.O. Box 354, Goodlettsville, TN 37070; phone: (615)864-1984, fax: (888)519-4879; Assns: Benton Co., Central, Cheatham Co., Clarksburg, Decatur Co., Dickson Co., Hickman Co., Humphreys Co., Huntingdon, Lewis Co., McKenzie, Perry Co., West Carroll. **District 16 — Lorrie Butler**, P.O. Box 387, Henderson, TN 38340; (731)989-4860, fax: (855)299-4591; Assns: Chester Co., Jackson-Madison Co., Jackson State Community College, Hardin Co., Henderson Co., Lexington, McNairy Co., West Tennessee School for the Deaf. **District 17 — Terri Jones**, P.O. Box 2140, Cordova, TN 38088; (901)258-3902, fax: (844)270-8083; Assns:

Bradford, Crockett Co., Dyer Co., Dyersburg, Dyersburg State Community College, Gibson Co., Hardeman Co., Haywood Co., Humboldt, Lake Co., Lauderdale Co., Milan, Obion Co., Tipton Co., Trenton, Union City. **District 18/19 — Keyth Harrison**, Memphis, TN; (901)305-2467, fax: (855)320-8737;—Assns: Bartlett, Collierville, Fayette Co., Germantown-Arlington-Lakeland, Millington, Southwest State Community College, University of Memphis. **District 18/19 — Karla Carpenter, UniServ Field Manager; UniServ Directors: Reginald Fentress, Tom Marchand**, 6520 Stage Road, Bartlett, TN 38134; phone/fax (901)379-6939; United Education Association of Shelby County, www.unitedshelby.org.

[www.teateachers.org](http://www.teateachers.org)  
[www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

# EDUCATOR TO-DO LIST FOR THIS PRIMARY

## Vote in the primary that matters most to education

VOTE for TEA candidates in the **GOP** PRIMARY of contested General Assembly seats. 

There are more competitive GOP primaries statewide. TEA-backed candidates are best on our issues with the best chance to win.



VOTE for **Beth Harwell** in the Republican primary for governor.

The winner of the GOP gubernatorial primary will be favored to win in November. **It is a competitive four-person race.** A large vote from educators could be the factor in getting Harwell across the finish line.



In **Democratic** PRIMARIES in Nashville, Memphis and Chattanooga, vote for the TEA candidate and then VOTE  **Craig Fitzhugh** for governor.

The Democratic primary will have very low turnout. Educator voters in urban Democratic competitive legislative primaries could put Fitzhugh over the top.



## Encourage others to vote for education candidates

Teachers are the most trusted professionals in our state. Let people know who you are voting for and encourage family and friends to vote for the pro-public education candidates who stand with our association. Social media is also a great way to get the word out on who is best for our schools! Remember, the special-interest out-of-state groups are already backing their candidates, let's not be shy about backing our own!



## Volunteer your time with a campaign

Before school starts and it's time to set up for the coming school year, spend some hours volunteering for a campaign. Phone banking, door knocking, text messaging, and social media work are just a few of the campaign activities for volunteers. It's often fun and fulfilling to volunteer on a campaign. Just give the candidate a call!

**Campaign contacts can be found on candidate's websites!** Still having trouble after a search? Email [mpoindexter@tnea.org](mailto:mpoindexter@tnea.org) for candidate contact information.



## Come to a local TEA campaign event

In several key districts, TEA will be hosting events like "back-to-school" dinners at local restaurants to bring members together with our endorsed candidates attending. This will be a great opportunity for fellowship and good food, helping all of us to focus on getting our pro-public education candidates across the finish line. Look for your invitation to these great events, and please come and bring the kids!



**Early voting: July 13-28 Primary Election: August 2**

# Report confirms pay-for-test score schemes do not improve teacher performance or student achievement

Almost 10 years ago, the Gates Foundation funded an experiment to improve teacher quality in three large urban school districts, including Shelby County Schools, through incentives like pay-for-test scores and unreliable value-added methods of evaluation.

An in-depth study recently released by the RAND Corporation definitively shows that these schemes have no effect on teacher performance or student achievement.

“If the Gates Foundation had listened to teachers, we could have saved them a lot of money!” said TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder. “Teachers are motivated by their passion to help students succeed and develop a true love of learning, not unreliable scores from a high-stakes state assessment.”

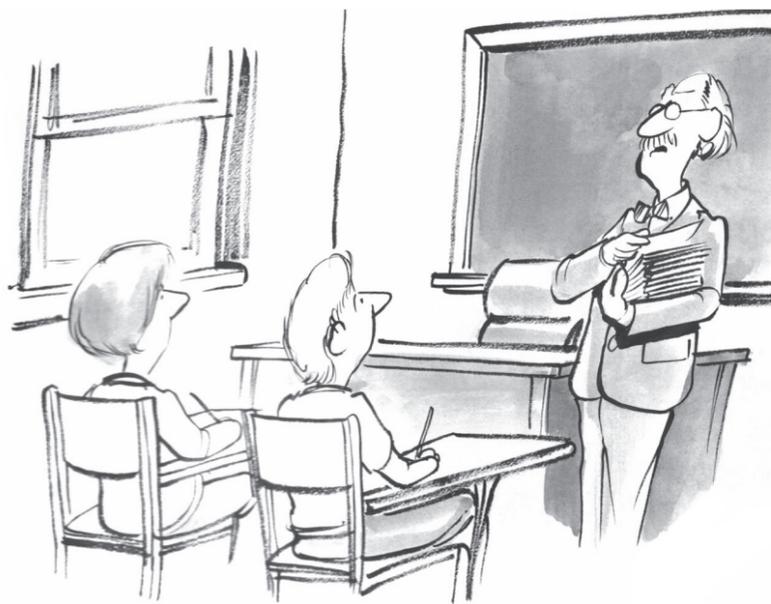
According to RAND’s report, “the initiative did not achieve its goals for student achievement or graduation, particularly for lower income minority students. With minor exceptions, by 2014–2015, student achievement, access to effective teaching, and dropout rates were not dramatically better than they were for similar sites that did not participate in

the initiative.”

The report confirmed what educators have long known – high-stakes tests and pay-for-performance systems do not benefit teachers or their students.

“TEA has been working for years to reduce the role of state standardized tests in high-stakes decisions for teachers, students and schools,” Crowder said. “Following another year of state testing problems, there is fast-growing support to put an end to the inappropriate and punitive ways the state uses student test scores.”

The RAND report went on to recommend a path forward, stating “A near-exclusive focus on teacher evaluation might be insufficient to dramatically improve student outcomes. Many other factors might need to be addressed, ranging from early childhood education, to students’ social and emotional competencies, to the school learning environment, to family support. Dramatic improvement in outcomes, particularly for lower income minority students, will likely require attention to many of these factors as well.”



**“Now remember, this test and my bonus are one and the same.”**

## Achievement School District continues to fail Tennessee’s most vulnerable students

Five years and tens of millions of dollars have come and gone, but the Tennessee Achievement School District has nothing to show for it, according to a new study.

“When comparing results across four to five years of implementation, ASD schools do not appear to improve,” concluded a report led by Vanderbilt University’s Tennessee Education Research Alliance (TERA).

The study has found “ASD schools did not gain more or less than comparison schools in any of the five years of turnaround intervention.” At the same time, locally run Innovation Zone districts in Memphis, Nashville and Chattanooga have demonstrated and sustained improvements over the years.

“We have been sounding the alarm on the ASD for years, questioning the \$50 million it received in additional funding in spite of doing absolutely nothing to improve schools,” said TEA President Beth Brown. “It’s unfortunate taxpayer dollars were spent on a failed concept. We hope these lessons are learned going forward.”

The in-depth research is the first of its kind nationwide and comes at a significant milestone for the state’s so-called turnaround program as experts have said it can take up to five years to see any change in school improvement efforts.

While Tennessee Education Commissioner Candice McQueen said in a statement “we have not seen the success in the ASD that we want,” the

department picked Sharon Griffin, who ran iZone schools in Memphis, to make changes to ASD instead of abolishing it altogether.

The TERA study has found that ASD schools demonstrated dismal results in reading, math and science across both three- and five-year analyses. For instance, in reading, the difference in average test scores for ASD schools before and after the ASD takeover is no different from the difference during the same period for comparison schools that received no extra funding.

Vanderbilt researchers concluded the effects on average test scores in ASD schools are not statistically significant in any of the five years, suggesting no differences in average scores from the baseline between ASD schools and comparison schools. In the meantime, the study found that effects on iZone schools are positive across all five years but are not statistically significant in the fourth or fifth years, suggesting that iZone schools were mostly able to sustain positive effects through five years of implementation.

“The ASD doesn’t work – plain and simple,” Brown said. “Let’s stop throwing good money after bad and change course. We have seen great success in community schools across the state that are led by local teachers, parents and community members. Our students and schools deserve much better and the state has the tools to make it happen. It just needs the willpower to walk away from failed initiatives like the ASD.”

## TNReady hearing reveals no hackings, just more state testing failures

After the third consecutive year of major issues with the state assessment, lawmakers grilled department officials for more than two hours at a June 20th hearing of the Joint Government Operations Committee. Legislators relayed the frustration felt by parents, teachers, and students back home, and expressed real concerns about the state’s accountability and the loss of public confidence in its ability to deliver a reliable assessment.

Officials from the Comptroller’s Office presented their initial findings after being asked by Speaker Beth Harwell and Chairman Jeremy Faison to conduct an independent review after this year’s testing failures. They reported that there had been no hack of the vendor’s testing platform, as had been claimed after the first two days of testing experienced widespread problems, leading to numerous districts canceling testing for the day.

The state’s testing vendor, Questar, was not present to respond to questions at the hearing. However, Tennessee Education Commissioner Candice McQueen announced that Questar had conducted its own analysis and also concluded that there was no hack. At the time the tests weren’t functioning, they had said publicly that a hack was suspected because of suspicious traffic patterns on their servers. Additionally, eight other states with whom they contracted were also having problems. Some members of the committee wondered if citing concerns about a hack wasn’t a convenient way to deflect criticism and possible action from the legislature in the waning days of the session.

Commissioner McQueen announced that the state would be withholding \$2.5 million from their nearly \$31 million contract with Questar as a result of the problems this year. She also announced the state would be reopening bids for the state’s testing contract this fall, though Questar will still administer TNReady for the 19-20 school year as it was deemed too late to change vendors for this fall.

If another vendor is selected, the next testing provider will be the fourth vendor in the last five years to provide the state’s mandatory assessment.

“At some point, it’s time to ask why we keep trying the same thing expecting a different result,” said TEA chief lobbyist Jim Wrye. “The disruption to our students’ learning environment after years of testing failures has been tremendous. It’s time to rethink using a single high-stakes test as the basis for how we measure student success.”

The department also announced they will be scaling back the mandatory online testing for next year. Only the science portion, which has no accountability due to new standards, will be online for middle schools. High schools will continue to test online next year.

Additional information provided in a November meeting, when the committee plans to conduct a regular performance review of the department. The Comptroller’s Office plans to share the results of their testing survey sent to teachers in the spring. The department has also committed to share with the committee additional data on the number of reports of irregularity, as well as analysis of the amount of time students took to complete assessments and how many were completed over multiple days.

“We look forward to the results of the survey to hear first-hand accounts of how these continued problems impact classrooms,” Wrye said. “Too often, education issues are discussed from a thirty-thousand foot view, so it’s important to see in detail how this has affected our kids.”