



School Voucher Plan | [SB0795/HB0939](#) | *Senator Gresham / Representative Dunn*

In March, Governor Lee approved a \$41 million budget to FULLY FUND the Education Savings Account (ESA) Pilot Program in Shelby and Davidson Counties for the 2020-2021 school year. The Voucher Plan was high on the Governor's and our priority list.

There was a small problem. Local governing bodies in Shelby and Davidson Counties, the ACLU, along with a host of others, called the program unconstitutional. The Court agreed. Why? The citizens of the two counties didn't get a say. The State ignored the local government's desire not to participate.

The State plans to appeal. But, even if they win, it will be too late for the 2020-2021 school year. AND there's this: the ESA budget was cut from \$41 million to \$250,000.

Appropriations Bill | [TennCare](#)

Recently the TN Senate passed the Appropriations Bill which **SLASHED \$6.6 million per year of Postpartum Care**—a decision that disproportionately impacts African American Women and their newborns. The kicker is that this bill will also STASH \$400 million in TennCare RESERVE.

TN Department of Health requested that the State use that \$6.6 million to create a three-year pilot program to extend the postnatal care coverage for women on TennCare from 2 to 12 months. It was estimated 4,000 to 6,500 new mothers would benefit from the pilot.

The slash should irk PRO-LIFERS into action: WHY cut a service that saves lives and money? TN's track record on mother/infant health ain't so good. In 2017 alone, 52 women died within a year of giving birth. And there's this: Tennessee is

- 41st in low birth weight,
- 41st in maternal mortality,
- 43rd in infant mortality, and
- 44th in access to quality health care and preventive services.

Insure TN | [SB2526/HB2529](#) | *Senator Briggs / Representative Travis*

This proposal supports *Insure Tennessee* (a type of Medicaid expansion). Affordable health insurance is critically essential for the care and well being of Tennesseans—now more than ever, with the unemployment rate so high. The House did not vote on it, due to the COVID 19 break. The bill will be back; the advocates for Medicaid Expansion will see to it.

Allows Governor to expand Medicaid | [SB0378/HB0378](#) |

Senator Yarbro / Representative Miller

This proposal allows the Governor to expand Medicaid without permission from the General Assembly. Many states already have this law in place. The measure failed to pass in the Senate Committee.

Death Penalty and Mental illness | [HB1455/SB1124](#) |

Representative Ramsey / Senator Briggs

This proposal prohibits a court from sentencing a defendant convicted of first-degree murder to death—IF THE DEFENDANT CAN PROVE, at the time of the offense, they had a severe mental illness. The bill was going to the House floor before the COVID break. We will recheck its status next year.

TN Pregnant Workers Fairness Act | [SB2520/HB2708](#) | *Senator*

Massey / Representative Hurt

Victory! This is a pro-life bill! Thank you, legislators. There wasn't a NO vote in the House or Senate!

Abortion / Heart Beat Bill | [HB2263/SB2196](#) | *Representative*

Lamberth / Senator Johnson

This bill mandates that an ultrasound be taken as early as six weeks of pregnancy; if a heartbeat is detected, the abortion can not be performed. The measure is based on the 9th amendment of the US constitution. It has been tried in the courts and failed several times. The sponsors believe, this time, it will get through the court system. This proposal was also one of Governor Lee's top priorities.

The Heart Beat Bill passed both houses with a wide majority and will be one of the most comprehensive pro-life bills in the country.

Schizophrenic

Every legislative session has its personality. The 112th General Assembly's is a SPLIT-PERSONALITY. After the COVID-19 break, neither the House or Senate could agree on how to meet. The House threw open their doors and had no limits on agenda topics. The Senate, on the other hand, said no citizens allowed and their calendars were sparse.

After lengthy discussion and many cuts, the two houses DID come together to pass a \$39.45 billion budget. COVID-19 left a massive crater in the TN coffers. Unexpected revenue shortfalls and record unemployment have also taken a toll; budget cuts were inescapable.

Next Legislative Session | Begins January 12, 2021

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"A good Catholic meddles in politics, offering the best of himself, so that those who govern can govern." - Pope Francis