



Capitol Update: Week of January 19, 2026

Legislature Settles in for the Second Year of the 114th Session

After the fundraisers, hoopla, fanfare, and protests last week, this week was a little quieter in Nashville as committees organized, legislation was filed, and everyone kept an eye on the weather forecast for the upcoming weekend. Workloads for committee meetings and floor sessions remained light this week, as it takes time for legislators to put bills on notice for committees, move them through subcommittees, and bring them to floor votes. A lot of the action this week involved bills that were punted to this year towards the end of last year's session.

Bill Filing Continues at an Expedited and Compressed Pace

The House and Senate had set filing deadlines for new legislation near the end of January. In most years, that generally results in a rush of bills filed in the last 48 hours before the deadline as legislators craft last-minute proposals, lobbyists scramble to find sponsors for initiatives their clients want, and the General Assembly's lawyers work around the clock to get everything drafted and in order. Things feel a little different this year. By the middle of this week, there were already rumors and conversations about whether filing deadlines would change in the light of a forecasted catastrophic winter storm expected to hit much of the nation this weekend.

Thursday morning, during the Senate's floor session, Leader Johnson announced that the Senate leadership had decided to cancel all committee and floor sessions scheduled for next week and will instead bring the upper chamber back on February 2nd. That's the day the Governor is currently slated to give his state of the state address and unveil his proposed budget for the last year of his term. Johnson presented one modification to the Senate bill-filing deadline. He offered a proposal that legislators could continue working remotely with the

General Assembly's legal staff to develop their proposals throughout next week, file them by noon on January 29th, then have additional time on Monday, February 2nd, to officially sign and turn in the finished product.

When the House session gaveled in a little later on Thursday, that chamber took a different tactic. The House did cancel its usual Monday night session next week, but it left open the possibility of committee meetings as early as Tuesday, weather permitting. For now, Speaker Sexton stated that the January 30th filing deadline in that chamber hasn't changed, but there is a good chance that it could be modified. With frigid temperatures expected all next week and the threat of icy roads, many House members decided to file all their bills before leaving town this week. Signs started showing up on legislators' office doors saying that they had "reached their bill limit."

Several years ago, in an attempt to reduce what had turned into a huge volume of bills being filed "in case they were needed," former House Speaker Beth Harwell encouraged that chamber to adopt a rule to limit each member to 15 bills per year. Last year, the rules adopted by the chamber for this two-year session dropped that number to 12, with the number reducing further to 10 this year. Committee chairs and certain leadership positions are granted authority to file additional pieces of legislation. Interestingly, even though there is no procedural limit on the number of bills a state senator can file in Tennessee, a number of them had also posted signs on their doors this week that they too had "reached their limit."

When the legislature adjourned for the year last Spring, the House and Senate had each filed a little over 1400 total bills. As of press time for this newsletter, that number has grown to a little over 2000 in the House and 2100 in the Senate. County associations continue to monitor and review the rush of bills and will share information with their memberships about those that can impact county government.

Bills on the Calendar This Week

As mentioned previously, the calendars were light this week, but there were a handful of proposals of interest to counties on the docket. One bill ([SB593/HB224](#)) that would authorize the creation of school district capital improvement trusts was slated to be heard in the Education Committees of both the House and Senate this week. This bill from last year had been referred to the first meetings of 2026 after county associations raised objections. The bill was not discussed in either committee this week as the sponsors requested that it be deferred again.

Another proposal ([SB795/HB1173](#)) that would allow local governments to purchase directly off of General Service Administration contracts was heard and approved by the Senate State and Local Government Committee on Tuesday.

Last year, the bill had made it all the way to the House floor, but stalled because it had not moved out of committee in the Senate. After the committee approved it this week, the bill goes to the Senate calendar committee to be scheduled for a floor vote. Lastly, an election law

proposal ([HB458/SB367](#)) moved in a House subcommittee this week after an amendment gutted the bill and rewrote it to only make a change to how vacancies in certain judicial offices are filled. County associations had been monitoring this bill last year because some of the more sweeping proposals in the original version of the bill were projected to cost local governments **over \$29 million statewide.**

Looking Ahead

Depending on what the weather does this weekend, there may be new developments to report next week or we may be looking at a quiet few days (at least from a legislative standpoint). Once the calendar turns the page to February, expect the pace of news to quicken significantly. There will be many more new bills, the Governor's state of the state address, the state's proposed budget for FY 2026-2027, and much more committee activity to follow.

[County Government Day](#) is shaping up nicely for February 23rd and 24th, with the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House all currently scheduled to speak. More details about that event will continue to roll out over the coming weeks. Stay safe and warm this weekend!