



Capitol Update: Week of February 20, 2026

House Takes Unusual Step of Canceling Standing Committees to Focus on Budget Hearings

Next week will look very different for the Tennessee House of Representatives. Normally, late February into early March are key weeks for the 34 committees and subcommittees of the House to load up their calendars with bills for consideration. Next week, however, the only House committee scheduled to meet is Finance. It meets both before and after the House floor session on Monday, then all day Tuesday and Wednesday, then again on Thursday after the floor session. With all other committee and subcommittee meetings canceled, Finance Committee members can be present for every minute of the budget hearings for twenty-one different state departments and agencies which are scheduled for next week. Since they have no other required business, representatives who do not serve on the Finance Committee were encouraged to sit in on these meetings as well.

Normally, these budget hearings are scattered throughout the session. The unusual step of packing them all into one week is something Capitol Hill insiders say they have never seen before. It has led to a great deal of speculation as to what it means. There are open conversations in the Cordell Hull building of an intent to adjourn as early as possible. That is not unusual for an election year.

The expedited budget hearings would certainly assist in getting the state budget passed - the one duty the General Assembly is constitutionally required to accomplish each year - as quickly as possible. Others have wondered if getting these hearings done early is an indication that legislators plan to spend the remaining weeks of session making more significant changes than they usually do to Governor Lee's final budget. A more cynical perspective is that holding these

budget hearings is a way the House can be productive while avoiding hot-button issues and controversial bills in the days leading up to the deadline for filing petitions to run for legislative seats. Candidates have until March 10th to qualify to run for the General Assembly. After that date, incumbents will know who will and won't have opposition this fall.

At the other end of the building, the Senate is continuing business as usual, with its committees following a normal schedule. For county officials coming to Nashville next week for County Government Day, this will mean there are fewer options for watching House committees debate legislation, but it may also mean that House members who do not sit on the Finance committee have much more availability to visit with folks from back home.

We encourage you to reach out to schedule a time to meet with your legislators in their office and invite them to attend the County Government Day breakfast Tuesday morning at the DoubleTree Hotel in downtown Nashville. A conflict has arisen for Lt. Governor McNally, but we still expect to hear from Governor Bill Lee, House Speaker Cameron Sexton, and Comptroller Jason Mumpower at the breakfast. Tuesday morning following the breakfast, attendees could sit in on the Senate State and Local Government Committee or watch the House budget hearings.

On Tuesday, House Finance is scheduled to hear from the Departments of Environment and Conservation, Finance and Administration, Economic and Community Development and Education. All of these departments have funding and programs that impact county operations.

Bills of Interest to Counties

Several proposals of note to counties were heard this week. They include the following:

- After substantial debate, the Agriculture Committee approved [HB1846](#) on a 9-6 vote. The bill would eliminate rollback taxes when greenbelt property is transferred to a new owner who does not intend to keep the property in a qualifying use. County associations argued that this would impact local revenues and a number of state Representatives raised concerns and voted against moving the bill forward to the Finance Committee. It is not yet scheduled to be heard by that committee and the bill is not currently on notice in the Senate.
- [HB1849/SB1719](#), which would allow communities to vote to return to electing school superintendents, narrowly passed out of the House Education Administration Subcommittee last week. It was scheduled to be heard by the full House Education Committee this week, but the sponsor took the bill off notice for now.
- [HB1837/SB1908](#), which requires city and county governments to compensate landowners if any local land use regulation reduces the value of their land, was scheduled to be heard next week in the Civil Justice Subcommittee. With that meeting canceled it will have to be rescheduled. It is set to be heard in Senate Judiciary next week. Under the bill, the landowner or their heir would have up to three years to make a claim for compensation after the county enacted some resolution or regulation that they believe impacts the market value of their property.

- [HB1488/SB1617](#) requiring county commissions to adopt rules of procedure was approved by the full House on a consent calendar this week. The bill makes any existing county commission rules “temporary” for the first 90 days following an election. The newly constituted commission has that time to ratify those rules, amend them or adopt new rules by a majority vote. After that period, the rules would require a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote to change. The bill is scheduled for consideration in the Senate State and Local Government Committee next week.
- [HB1720/SB1771](#), which allows a county commission to prohibit extraterritorial zoning by cities within that county, was approved by the House State and Local Committee. It now moves to the Finance Committee next week. The proposed language does not apply in counties with a metropolitan form of government or with a population in excess of 341,500 according to the 2020 census. For it to take effect, the county commission would have to pass a resolution by a majority vote. This would then have the effect of voiding any existing municipal zoning provisions in the unincorporated area and prohibit cities from enacting zoning rules outside of city limits in the future. The bill is not yet scheduled to be heard in the Senate.
- [SB1589/HB1502](#), which creates a certification process for correctional officers and spells out more detail on what needs to go into a plan of action to correct deficiencies in local jails, was approved by both the Senate and House State and Local Government Committees this week. The bill is now referred to the Judiciary Committee in the House and is headed to the Senate floor for final approval.
- [SB1778/HB1467](#), which expedites the process for FEMA to distribute funds to local governments following disasters, was approved by the House State and Local Committee and will go to Calendar and Rules to be scheduled for a floor vote. After encountering some questions in the Senate Committee, the bill was deferred to next week.
- [SB1944/HB1858](#), which allows for local officials to conduct community meetings electronically, is headed to the Senate floor for a vote. The bill was deferred to the first week of March in the House committee.
- [SB1865/HB2531](#), which creates a new grant program for equipment rescue squads, is progressing. It is headed to the Senate floor for a final vote and has progressed to the House State and Local Government Committee.
- [HB1675/SB1715](#), which requires school nurses to be paid in the same way as other certified school personnel, has been referred to the full House Education Committee and sent to the Finance Committee in the Senate. While the fiscal note anticipates an increase in local costs as a result of the legislation, it states that the exact amount cannot be determined. County associations are following the bill as it is being considered by the Finance Committees.
- [SB2257/HB1451](#), which mandates counties to create a county ethics commission, was approved by the Senate Government Operations Committee and referred to the State and Local Government Committee. The bill is not yet scheduled for consideration in the House.
- [HB1813/SB1480](#), which requires the state to pay for autopsies ordered by the District Attorney instead of counties, was recommended by the Public Service Subcommittee

and sent to the full House State and Local Committee. The bill is projected to save counties over \$1 million each year.

- [HB1061/SB1376](#), which establishes allowable billable costs for ambulance services that are out-of-network, was deferred two weeks. This legislation is expected to be amended to stabilize and protect ambulance service insurance reimbursement.

County Government Day Next Week

We look forward to seeing many of you in Nashville next week for County Government Day. This event is a great opportunity to be briefed about the many pieces of legislation and aspects of the state budget that affect counties, attend committee and floor sessions of the legislature, and meet face to face with your legislators. For more information about the event, go [HERE](#).