

THE
 *Senator* SOURCE
NEWSLETTER OF STATE SENATOR CHARLANE OLIVER
TENNESSEE'S 19TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

Aug / Sept/ Oct / Nov 2023



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FROM THE DESK OF SENATOR OLIVER

November 8th marked one year since the voters of Senate District 19 elected me as your state senator in the Tennessee General Assembly. My heart is filled with gratitude every day because you recognized my successful track record and capabilities to lead in this moment. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to take our district to new heights. I wanted to take some time to reflect on the journey, milestones, lessons learned and accomplishments.

The question I often get asked the most is, *“Is being the Senator and working in the legislature everything you thought it would be?”*

My answer is *Yes!* Prior to getting elected, I was no stranger to the legislature and the shenanigans that can occur on any given day. As a community organizer, I organized protests, sat in on committee hearings, built relationships with several Democratic members, and even testified about the unfair redistricting maps. I was fully aware of the authoritarian playbook used to preempt local control, suppress voters, and dehumanize marginalized groups.

From the Tyre Nichols murder and the Nashville hostile takeover to the Covenant School mass shooting and the Tennessee Three expulsions, I don't think anything prepares you for the tumultuous year we've seen in Tennessee. But I'm no stranger to adversity, so I believe I handled every curve ball at the legislature with courage, grace, thoughtfulness and tenacity.

If there's one thing that has left me perplexed over this past year, it is the depths of moral depravity by which my Republican colleagues will go to sink our state deeper into despair. I mean, seriously, why are we even debating the question of whether to reject nearly \$2 billion of much-needed federal education aid for disabled and disadvantaged students??

One conclusion I've arrived at since being elected is that Tennesseans are not better off under Bill Lee's nor Cameron Sexton's Tennessee.

"What parts of the job do you enjoy the most?"

I aim to be a bright spot during dark times. Anytime I can be an inspiration or example to others, that brings me so much joy. I remember having lunch with my 9-year-old constituent, Imani, at her elementary school; she was beaming with pride the entire time and we talked about all her favorite things. There's a photo in the *Washington Post* of me sharing a tearful embrace with Maryam Abolfazli, an organizer of the first protest after the Covenant Shooting, and I'll never forget that moment. As moms, we needed that release and to know we had each other's back in this fight for gun safety. I also remember visiting a dying patient from Antioch in the hospital; I was honored that my presence was welcomed and brought a semblance of care and concern to the family. It is in these moments that I really find the reward in my work.

As freshman senator, I jumped right into leadership roles when asked and took on new learning opportunities that would make me a better leader. Here are the ways I served in leadership:

- As **Minority Vice Chair**, I made history as the trio of Black women elected to lead the Senate Democratic Caucus for the first time in Tennessee
- Accepted into the 2023 cohort of **Fair Fight's National Fellowship Program**, a highly-selective program for state legislators to foster and cultivate the next generation of pro-democracy elected officials.
- Nominated by Lt. Governor McNally to participate in the State Legislative Leaders Foundation's (SLLF) **Emerging Legislative Leaders Program** in Charlottesville, Virginia at the Darden School of Business.
- Accepted into Class X of **Leadership Tennessee**, a cohort of 48 proven leaders from business, government, and civic sectors and every region of the state to participate in a ten month study of critical issues occurring statewide.
- Serve as Chair of **Youth Congress Day** at NBCSL Annual Legislative Conference, Nov. 28

Overall I'm proud to have hit the ground running and being a strong voice for District 19 in the Senate. I've hosted and participated in six district town halls this year. I've strengthened communication with constituents through District 19's first newsletter, *The Senator Source*, and robust social media activity. I passed two pieces of legislation into law and had three bills pass out of committee and/or the Senate. I stood in solidarity with the Tennessee Three during their expulsion hearings and led the charge to get Rep. Justin Jones reinstated to his seat. I stood up for my constituents against anti-democratic extremism by challenging the rules during the August special session. I advocated for Tennessee State University to maintain its governance authority and leadership. And I passed and co-sponsored countless resolutions and proclamations honoring esteemed individuals and institutions in our community and across the state.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

■ AUGUST SPECIAL SESSION

Even though the legislature didn't pass preventative, common-sense solutions to address the proliferation of guns in our communities like I'd hoped, the August Special Session on Public Safety was a win for Democrats (believe it or not!).

Dems played offense, challenging the rules and pushing back against the anti-democratic rules imposed by Speaker Sexton. Dems held our composure, maneuvered within the rules and showed the People that we showed up to work for them, filing common-sense gun bills.

Chairman Clemmons launched a [bus tour](#) to spread awareness for gun reform, where I joined stops in Jackson and Dickson.

My colleagues and I introduced meaningful bills that were denied because they didn't fit within the governor's very limited proclamation call (which didn't mention "guns"). Therefore, anything passed out of the special session would've been more band-aid solutions, criminality, and bureaucracy.



I sponsored bills that addressed youth mental health, hate crimes, threats of mass violence, and red flag laws – all of which were “tabled” in committee, virtually killing all the bills introduced by all senate members.

Peaceful demonstrations occurred everyday at the TN Capitol, and I was proud to march with The Equity Alliance Fund and stand in solidarity with physicians and advocates who were all calling for red flag laws and common-sense safe storage laws.





The special session further exposed the facism/racism that reigns inside the legislature. It exposed the fractures and fragile egos amongst the GOP leadership. Protestors were kicked out of committee hearing rooms, leading to a federal lawsuit on Sexton’s sign-ban-rule. State troopers flooded the building, restricting movements of my constituents who were trying to make their voices heard. An encounter with a state trooper led me to [write this letter](#) to the Attorney General’s office seeking legal opinion on the constitutionality of the new rules for special session.





Though our legislative agenda didn't pass, neither did the House Republicans' agenda. We could've done a great deal of harm to juveniles and weakened constitutional protections but I'm glad these proposals from House members didn't pass. Millions of dollars were spent to silence members, restrict free speech, pass redundant bills, and do nothing to protect kids from guns.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

When the Speakers announced they were launching a [legislative panel](#) to study how to reject \$1.89 billion in federal education aid (i.e. our tax dollars), I had this to say:

“Our children are the future drivers of TN's economy. Divesting from \$1.8B federal education funds leads to state-sanctioned discrimination of low-income and disabled students. It's short-sighted, irresponsible, dumb, and doesn't make good business sense.”

With Metro Nashville Public Schools serving 80,000+ students, comprising at least 78% students of color, I was disappointed to see that there were no Davidson County legislators appointed to the working group and the chairs refused to hear testimony from directly-impacted parents and students.

To be clear: Divesting from \$1.89B federal education funds is a far-right agenda to funnel our tax dollars to religious right charter schools so they can reject low-income, disabled, ESL students and not be held accountable for it. It's school segregation by another name.

Public meetings for the Joint Working Group can be watched beginning [HERE](#) and they [essentially did](#) what I predicted on [Twitter](#): *Can we just skip to the end of the meeting where we all conclude that TN can't afford to reject federal education funds - politically, fiscally, educationally or otherwise.*

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

- Districts with more students from low-income backgrounds, with disabilities, in rural areas, with lower test scores, and with lower capacity to raise their own funds rely more on federal funding.
- In FY 2019, federal funds made up 11% or \$1.1 billion of Tennessee School Districts' revenues.
- Districts would lose on average \$1,228 per student.
- Approximately 75% of TDOE employees are funded through federal dollars.
- MNPS: About 15% students have an individualized education program (IEP)
- These are our tax dollars that we won't benefit from. We would be sending our tax dollars to other states. Rejecting federal funding will likely lead to a decrease in per-student spending without new revenue like increasing taxes. Our rainy day fund is insufficient to offset the costs entirely.



TRANSPORTATION

I recently attended a TDOT meeting to receive an update on the Transportation Modernization Act where Commissioner Butch Eley rolled out their investment strategy for road projects. **Download the powerpoint presentation [HERE](#).**

During this meeting, I asked for an update on the Clarksville Highway widening project. The Assistant Commissioner stated that the utility poles that were sitting in the middle of the pave streets have since been removed by Comcast, which is good news because they were stalling the project moving forward. They anticipate completion of the project by May 2024.

TDOT released its quarterly status report listing highway projects under development/construction by the Department of Transportation in District 19. **View the status report [HERE](#).**

NBCSL YOUTH CONGRESS DAY - NOV. 28

The promotional banner for the NBCSL 47th Annual Legislative Conference features a vibrant cityscape of Nashville, Tennessee, with a bridge over a river. A central graphic shows a raised fist icon with the text "NATIONAL BLACK COUNCIL OF STATE LEGISLATORS" written vertically. To the right, the text reads "THE FUTURE IS NOW!" in large blue letters, followed by "Meeting Challenges and Creating Opportunities" and "NBCSL 47th Annual Legislative Conference". At the bottom, the dates "NOV. 27 - DEC. 1, 2023" and location "GRAND HYATT NASHVILLE • TENNESSEE" are displayed in white and blue text on a black background.

TUE. NOV. 28

YOUTH CONGRESS LUNCHEON



EDDIE GEORGE, MBA
Pro Football Legend,
Philanthropist and
Tennessee State University,
Head Football Coach



SLIM + HUSKY'S
Founders - Clint Gray, EJ Reed and
Derrick Moore, Entrepreneurs,
Philanthropists and Mentors

I am pleased to serve as Chair of Youth Congress Day as part of the 47th Annual Legislative Conference of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL), taking place Nov. 27 - Dec. 1 in Nashville, Tennessee. The Tennessee Black Caucus of State Legislators (TBCSL) is the host state for a slew of activities happening next week. More than 150 local high school seniors will descend upon the State Capitol to engage in a mock legislative session and debate issues of importance to them. These scholars will have special interests in public policy, government relations, running for office, or civic engagement. Students will be participating from the following MNPS high schools:

- Martin Luther King Jr. Academy Magnet High School
- Pearl-Cohn Entertainment Magnet High School
- Whites Creek High School
- Antioch High school
- East Nashville Magnet High School
- Early College High School

We will conclude our day with a luncheon at the Grand Hyatt where students will hear from keynote speakers TSU Head Football Coach Eddie George and the founders of Slim & Husky's Pizza.

2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The General Assembly will reconvene at 12:00 noon on Tuesday, January 9, 2024.

I'm tackling our state's childcare crisis as part of my legislative agenda to move Tennessee out of 49th in resources for working families. I've [been vocal](#) about Tennessee's child care cliff recently in Government Operations Committee. Nearly 1,200 Tennessee child care centers could close their doors due to loss of federal pandemic relief funding that ended Sept. 30, according to a [national nonpartisan report](#).



For the past year, I've been the only woman legislator in the entire General Assembly with a child in daycare. What's even worse is Tennessee's childcare crisis that's affecting working families' ability to plan, raise and support their families. The problem isn't that "people don't want to work." It's that people lack the structural supports and resources *to go to work* and provide for their families. (i.e. "Who's gonna watch my kids while I'm at work?!")

Child care is not solely a mother's issue or family issue. We need to shift from a patriarchal mindset to viewing child care as a workforce development issue. The state must address affordability, accessibility, availability and worker shortage for our TN working families.

Of course, this issue is personal to me. The solution begins with quality, affordable, and available childcare! Tackling childcare includes making parents, providers, employers and legislators part of the solution.

What help do you need with childcare? What would you like to see addressed?

Do you have a bill idea you'd like to become law? [Send me](#) your ideas!

OUT & ABOUT

Check out where Senator Oliver has been out and about in District 19 and beyond.

Senator Thelma Harper U.S. Post Office Naming Ceremony
I was delighted to wear one of Sen. Harper's signature hats in her honor



Unveiling of the Akilah DaSilva Memorial Highway in Antioch



Tennessee Democratic Party Three Star Dinner



Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference in Washington, DC



TSU \$2 Billion Rally with Attorney Ben Crump



TSU Homecoming Fish Fry and Parade



Nashville Public Schools Hall of Fame Luncheon



Sen. Oliver Receives the Sen. Thelma Harper Award at MogulCon Gala



Sen. Oliver Delivers Keynote Address at NAACP 104th Freedom Fund Banquet

Sen. Oliver Introduces the 'Tennessee Contraception Freedom Act' with Rep. Johnson





William Edmondson Cultural Fest in Edgehill

Tanger Outlets Grand Opening in Antioch



EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

SENATOR OLIVER'S MOVIE NIGHT OUT

CHARLANE OLIVER
STATE SENATE • DISTRICT 19

Senator Oliver's
MOVIE NIGHT OUT

FRIDAY, JANUARY 12, 2024

REGAL CINEMAS OPRY MILLS, 570 OPRY MILLS DR, NASHVILLE, TN 37214

DOORS OPEN: 5:30PM | MOVIE BEGINS: 6:30 PM

I'm excited to host my first community event called "Senator Oliver's Movie Night Out," a fun, educational community event on Friday, January 12, 2024, 6:00 PM at Regal Cinemas Opry Mills. I'm taking 60 middle and high school students - who are currently enrolled in a theater, music, film or dance program - to the movies to see the musical-film *The Color Purple* so they can *see themselves on the big screen*.

Sponsorships are available! If you would like to sponsor a family to attend, [donate here](#).

Thank you to our current sponsors:
Tennessee Titans Foundation ONE Community
MOJO Mktg + PR
Schmidt Government Relations
Nashville North Collaborative

IMAGINE NASHVILLE



Imagine Nashville is a citywide initiative with the goal of creating a new shared vision for the city of Nashville that includes the experiences, dreams, concerns and ideas of all Nashvillians. The new shared vision will provide the foundation for an action plan for reimagining Music City.

Please take a few minutes to share your hopes and dreams for our future. What's working and what's not about Nashville today? What would make you still want to be here 10 years from now? As the city grows, what needs to be preserved, improved, or made better? Today you have the opportunity to help decide!

[Take the Survey.](#)

ADOPT-A-FAMILY WITH NURTURE THE NEXT



I currently serve on the Board of Directors for Nurture The Next, whose mission has been to support parents and children ages 0-5 where they live in creating loving homes that make children feel nurtured. As we approach the holiday season, many of the families in our programs are not in a position to purchase holiday presents and sometimes need help purchasing basic items for their children. To help these families in need, join me in adopting a family this holiday season and provide a gift for each member of the family.

[Sign up here!](#) Final gift drop-off date is Friday, December 1st.

On December 2nd from 11-2pm, NTN will have a gift-wrapping party with tunes and hot chocolate. To help, sign up using [this form](#).

TITANS STADIUM MINORITY CONTRACTING OPPORTUNITIES

Attention minority small business owners! Nashvillians could see construction on a new, enclosed Tennessee Titans stadium begin as early as Spring 2024. The team and their construction management partner Tennessee Builders Alliance [kicked off](#) the 3-year construction phase of the \$2.1 billion project on Oct. 19 with presentations to around 1,000 tradespeople, builders, and contractors at the team's current home, Nissan Stadium.

Tennessee Builders Alliance invites you to share more information about your interest in the Titans Stadium Project! Most contracting opportunities for the stadium project fall under the Tennessee Builders Alliance Construction Management Agreement. The request for proposal solicitation (RFP) dates for these trade packages can be found at tnbuildersalliance.com/workwithus. Complete the TBA interest form, and email info@tnbuildersalliance.com to finish the prequalification process. Procurement dates are also listed online. Additional contractor readiness programs for small/minority businesses can be found on the [Tennessee Titans ONE Community website](#).

GRANT OPPORTUNITY

The TN Department of Economic & Community Development has rolled out a new grant program within the State Broadband Program. The **Digital Skills, Education, and Workforce Development Grant (DSEW)** will distribute \$17 million to fund evidence-based digital skills training programs and workforce development programs that will develop a digitally enabled workforce with market-relevant skills across a wide variety of industries.

Eligible Applicants: educational institutions, non-profits, public housing authorities, small businesses, and other organizations

Match: 10% required

DSEW Informational Webinar: Tuesday, October 3, 2023 at 11am CDT ([Registration Link](#))

Applications Open: Monday, October 16, 2023

Applications Close: Wednesday, December 6, 2023

For additional information about the upcoming grants, please [visit our website](#).

For questions regarding any of these programs, please reach out to our Broadband Team at ECD.Broadband@tn.gov.

MEDIA ROUNDUP

[Why Tennessee parents could have even fewer child care options](#) (The Tennessean)

[‘It seems like a game’: Tennessee gun reform push ends in whimper](#) (The Guardian)

[Sen. Harper Has Post Office Dedicated in Her Name](#) (Tennessee Tribune)

[Proposed Tennessee Contraception Freedom Act to be announced by lawmakers](#) (News Channel 5)

[IUD prevented unwanted pregnancy, rape victim says as democrats announce bill to protect contraception](#) (WSMV Channel 4)

[Nashville NAACP 104th Anniversary Freedom Fund Banquet November 18](#) (Pride Publishing Group)

[Dr. Phillips Presents MogulCon to Nashville](#) (Tennessee Tribune)

[Tennessee Democrats seek elimination of 4% grocery sales tax](#) (The Tennessean)

CONTACT MY OFFICE

Contact my office if you have constituent needs, to schedule a meeting, or invite me to your next community event.

To receive my newsletter, please [subscribe here](#).

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#ThePeoplesSenator

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