



THE

# Senator SOURCE

NEWSLETTER OF STATE SENATOR CHARLANE OLIVER  
TENNESSEE'S 19<sup>TH</sup> SENATORIAL DISTRICT

March / April 2023




FROM THE DESK OF SENATOR OLIVER

**ADJOURNED**







The Tennessee General Assembly is officially adjourned. *Whew!* I survived my freshman year and have experienced all there is to see in four long months, except sensible gun legislation passed.

While the days were long, the session was short. After the Covenant School mass shooting, the Republican-led speakers of both chambers made the conscious decision to expedite our calendar, finishing business in just 32 legislative days. Quite frankly, sending us home sooner may have been for the best because we were doing more harm than good to Tennesseans, the longer we stayed to pass legislation driven by conspiracy theories, culture wars, and racial and religious biases.

In the final days of the legislature, the Republican supermajority managed to protect gun manufacturers from civil liability lawsuits, put armed guards at every school, ban implicit bias training, strip Nashville of its governing autonomy, giveaway millions of dollars to big corporations in business tax cuts, stow away money to build more prisons, make it easier to intimidate voters at the polls, make it harder to remove confederate memorials, and honor a group aligned with a far-right authoritarian Hungarian leader. All of these bills were passed without any true debate or respect for Democratic opposition.

I've witnessed many legislative sessions in my career as a community organizer and advocate, but this year takes the cake! If you were to ask me to sum up my experience as a first-year legislator, "trial by fire" comes to mind. From internet scandals, embarrassing gaffes, ethics violations and resignations to peaceful protests, expulsions, and reinstatements, I've seen it all. Even when it comes to parliamentary procedures, I've witnessed bills being recalled to the Senate floor, learned how to "divide the question," had my first conference committee on a bill, and saw how a delayed bills committee works (...or doesn't work, rather.). All in all, it was an unprecedented year. The attacks on our democracy have breached inside the walls of our Tennessee Capitol. As I bore witness to the expulsion of the Tennessee Three, I was alarmed by a new strategy: No longer are extremists singularly suppressing our votes; they are now coming after our representation. With a track record of fighting for a better democracy in Tennessee, my purpose for representing the "Fighting District 19" in the state Senate became ever clear.

The work is not over. We will fight on!

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

**PASSED!**





Getting a bill passed is no easy feat, especially as a legislator who is in the super minority (in more ways than one!) working under the most extreme hostile conditions where any slight misstep can get your bill killed. But occasionally, we pass good bipartisan legislation, and I'm pleased to share that I passed two pieces of legislation and a few that passed out of committees and the full Senate.

#### **HB0988 - The Norma Jean Upshaw Act**

- Starting July 1, this law grants displaced seniors in assisted living facilities more time to vacate if the property is purchased by real estate developers, by requiring landlords to give at least 60 days notice. The law is named in honor of my constituent, Norma Jean Upshaw, who was displaced [after her senior living community in Madison was sold and all the residents forced to move away](#).

#### **SB0944 - Board of Judicial Conduct**

- Starting July 1, this law enhances the transparency, integrity and fairness of the Board of Judicial Conduct's hearing process by requiring a mailed copy of the hearing panel's findings and judgment, the board's formal findings of fact and opinion, and any sanction imposed to the complainant. Additionally, it grants the complainant the right to appeal the board's decision to the Tennessee Supreme Court, mirroring the process available to aggrieved judges.

Passed full Senate:

#### **SB0234 - Homebuyer Harassment**

- This bill has gained a lot of momentum and support! I'll be presenting this bill in the House in 2024 and need your support. If you would like to share your "homebuyer harassment" story with the media or in committee testimony, please contact my office.

Co-sponsored legislation:

#### **SB0269 - Juneteenth Holiday (Sen. Johnson)**

- Recognizes June 19th (Juneteenth) as a paid holiday in Tennessee

#### **SB0543 - Child Care Improvements (Sen. Jackson)**

- Creates the Child Care Improvement Pilot Program to be administered and establishes the Child Care Improvement Fund to provide grants to nonprofit organizations to establish new, or to make improvements to existing, child care agencies.

### SB394 - Doulas (Sen. Lamar)

- Creates the Doula Services Advisory Committee to advise the Department of Health by establishing core competencies and standards for the provision of doula services and recommending reimbursement rates and fee schedules for the Division of TennCare doula services.

### SB0856 - James 'Dustin' Samples Act (Sen. Bailey)

- Allows firefighters who are clinically diagnosed with PTSD to receive worker's compensation

## WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH



In March, the Senate Democratic Caucus hosted a Women's History Month luncheon and tea, spearheaded by Senator London Lamar, to honor the contributions of 30 trailblazing women in our state. We gave each of them their own resolution passed by the Senate. My guest honorees were: **Clarice Phelps**, the first Black woman to discover an element on the periodic table (Tennessee); **Megan Barry**, first female mayor of Nashville; **Charlotte Miller**, owner of Yay Yay's on Jefferson; **Dr. Dasha Lundy**, county commissioner of Knoxville, and **Phyllis Nichols**, my mentor and retired CEO of the Knoxville Area Urban League.

## DAYS ON THE HILL

I enjoyed meeting with the people of Tennessee for their lobby days on the Hill during March and April. I visited with many local and state organizations, non-profits, companies, and constituents about their various concerns on issues and legislation.

- Disability Day on the Hill
- The Equity Alliance
- Coalition of 100 Black Women
- Muslim Day on the Hill (American Muslim Advisory Council)
- Immigrants Day on the Hill (Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition)
- Divine Nine Day on the Hill
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
- Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.
- The Links, Inc.
- Jack and Jill of America



## TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

After much debate and scurry this legislative season, Tennessee State University's board of trustees and leadership dodged a major blow. On Feb. 27, the Joint Education, Health and General Welfare Subcommittee of the Government Operations, on which I serve, met to review the Comptroller's report and decide on the fate of TSU's future. Thankfully, at the time, the Committee voted to make a positive recommendation and extend TSU's board for one year.

Weeks later, [SB 1427](#) was introduced as a caption bill by Sen. Roberts in the Senate Education Committee. He filed an amendment that would fire every board of trustee member by June 30, 2023 and reduce the size of TSU's governing board from 10 members to 5 members. The amendment passed in Senate Education and Senate Government Operations committees, where I voted NO.

A different amendment was introduced in the House by Chairman Reagan, which extended the board's term for two years until June 30, 2025. That amendment passed in the House.

As it stands, neither of these amendments made it through the full legislative process and stalled in their respective chambers. There was no final punitive action taken against Tennessee State University this year.

With the remaining \$250M in land grant funds at stake, we know that we must remain vigilant to protect our beloved TSU from these attacks that jeopardize the stability and success of the institution.

## NASHVILLE HOSTILE TAKEOVER BILLS

As you know, Tennessee Republicans proposed a slate of bills that would encroach on Nashville's ability to govern itself and have local control of its resources, decision-making power and elected representation. In the end, some bills failed but many of them, after much debate and staunch opposition from Democrats, were signed into law. Here's a recap of how these bills panned out:

- HB 48 / SB 87 - Metro Council **SIGNED INTO LAW**
- HB 1176 / SB 1326 - Metropolitan Airport Authority **PASSED**
- HB 1197 / SB 1335 - Metropolitan Sports Authority **SIGNED INTO LAW**
- HB1279 / SB 648 - Music City Center **SIGNED INTO LAW**
- HB 764 / SB 591 - Community Oversight Boards **PASSED**
- HB 1372 / SB 1407 - Rep. John Lewis Way **WITHDRAWN**
- HB1399 / SB1527 - Bans Runoff Elections **DEFERRED TO 2024**
- HB 594 / SB 1327 - Beer Board / Lower Broadway **TAKEN OFF NOTICE**

The Metro Nashville Legal Department is expected to file several lawsuits against the state to stop the implementation of several of these laws, as it did over the Metro Council reduction law. Metro won an injunction on this lawsuit by a 3-judge panel in April. Read a full recap of these bills in the *Tennessee Lookout* [here](#).

Speaking of airports....Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg toured Nashville's airport during an event to celebrate a \$7 million Airport Terminal Grant awarded to BNA on Friday, March 3, 2023. I joined a group of local and state officials to welcome him to our city.



## COVENANT SCHOOL SHOOTING / GUN CONTROL

On the morning of Monday, March 27, 2023 in Nashville, six innocent lives, including three 9-year olds, were tragically cut short by a mass shooter who entered the Covenant School with an AR-15 assault rifle and other firearms. It would be the third mass shooting that Nashville has endured since 2017. My deepest condolences go out to the families, friends, and community that are directly impacted by this heartbreaking tragedy. We honor the those six victims: **Evelyn Dieckhaus, 9; Hallie Scruggs, 9; William Kinney, 9; Cynthia Peak, 61; Katherine Koonce, 60; and Mike Hill, 61.**



Conversations swiftly turned to demands for gun legislation. After the Senate failed to have a moment of silence for the victims, Senate Democrats immediately held a press conference to remember the victims and call for common-sense solutions to gun violence. Senate Judiciary Chairman Todd Gardenhire halted all gun-related bills until the 2024 calendar. Bipartisan calls for gun reform from Tennesseans - parents and students alike - were growing. Here's a snippet of my remarks on the Covenant School shooting:

*“I’m out of words to describe how saddened I am by another tragic, senseless shooting. Kids are dead. Again. My heart goes out to the three babies and three adults who woke up not knowing today would be their last. I’m sick and tired of innocent people being murdered.”*

First Lady Dr. Jill Biden came to Nashville to pay her respects to the victims at a citywide vigil, where I attended in solidarity.





Three days after the shooting, protests erupted at the Tennessee Capitol. It would be the first of many demonstrations. Moms, children, and concerned citizens gathered for the largest protest our state has ever seen. I greeted them, stood in solidarity and thanked them for showing up and making their voices heard. Protest organizer Maryam Abolfazli and I were overtaken by emotions and shared an embrace.



These protests would soon lead to the expulsions of Reps. Gloria Johnson, Justin Jones and Justin Pearson, now known as the famous Tennessee Three. Rep. Jones and Pearson were expelled, while Rep. Johnson was spared by one vote. This was an egregious act that didn't warrant expulsion. House Republicans attempted to silence dissenting voices and assault our democratic principles and right to free speech and fair representation by these duly elected members. No elected member should be stripped of their title for speaking up for their constituents and do the morally right thing for the people we serve.



National outrage and worldwide media coverage ensued. Vice President Kamala Harris visited Nashville to champion democracy and the fight for sensible gun legislation. She praised the Tennessee Three for their heroic and brave actions. I went live on the campus of Fisk University to give an update to my constituents. Watch my livestream video [here](#).



Both Reps. Jones and Pearson were immediately reinstated by their respective local municipal bodies and the fight for meaningful gun legislation continued. Rumors were spreading that we would end legislative session sooner than expected. Democrats called on Republicans to pass a bill before session ended.



Meanwhile, Senate Democrats introduced additional bills that would strengthen and reform Tennessee's gun safety laws:

- SB1564: *Gun Violence Restraining Order* Sponsored by Senator Campbell
- SB1565: *Ban on Large Capacity Magazines* Sponsored by Senator Kyle

SB1566: **Ban on Bump Stocks** Sponsored by Senator Oliver

SB1567: **Universal Background Checks** Sponsored by Senator Akbari

SB1568: **Reinstates Gun Permits** Sponsored by Senator Lamar

SB1569: **Bans assault weapons** Sponsored by Senator Campbell

Later, Rep. Justin Jones and I introduced the **Protect Kids, Not Guns Act** (SB1570). Senator Jeff Yarbrow recalled his **Safe Storage** bill (SB1029) back to the Senate floor for a vote.

Every bill that Democrats proposed was either voted down or not even considered by Republican leadership in the Delayed Bills committee. Gov. Lee proposed a watered-down version of an extreme risk protection order (ERPO) that was immediately rejected by House and Senate Republicans. We adjourned the legislative session without any action taken on gun reform, except passing legal protections for gun manufacturers.

*Watch Senator Oliver's message to Tennesseans on the last day of regular session:*



## SPECIAL SESSION

Tennesseans may soon have a pathway to pursue meaningful gun legislation. Fingers crossed, though.. Governor Lee has called for a special session on public safety on August 21, 2023. In his news release, he noted four broad purposes for the special legislative session: “pursue thoughtful, practical measures that strengthen the safety of Tennesseans, preserve Second Amendment rights, prioritize due process protections, support law enforcement and address mental health.” Nowhere did he mention the word *guns*.

We owe it to the families and victims of the Covenant shooting to pass legislation with teeth. Watered-down legislation that panders and covers to the NRA and the Tennessee Firearms Association is not the will of the People. I'll be working with my Senate colleagues to push for legislation that keeps assault rifles out of the hands of people seeking to do harm to themselves or others and will put preventative measures in place to ensure safe, responsible gun ownership. In the meantime, I'll be speaking with my constituents and stakeholder groups and urging Tennesseans to show up and make their voices heard at the special session hearings.

🚩 **ACTION ALERT:** Gov. Lee is inviting the public to submit comments ahead of Aug. 21 [here](#). As always, you can [email](#) me your comments and thoughts or [schedule a meeting](#) with me.

## OUT & ABOUT

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

**MDHA's Cayce Place Groundbreaking with HUD Deputy Secretary Adrienne Todman**



**MLK High School Receives the Anne Dallas Dudley Award for 100% Voter Registration**



**Southeast Easter Egg Hunt**



**Honoring Woodcuts Gallery with a Senate Resolution and Historical Marker**



**Street Naming for Gold Star Families w/ Rep. Love**



**Human Rights Campaign Nashville Gala**



**School Tour at Jones Paideia Elementary**

**Sen. Oliver honored at Women Who Rock Nashville**



**Tennessee Moral Monday March with Rev. Dr. William Barber, II**





Jack and Jill Day on the Hill

AKA Day on the Hill



## MEDIA ROUNDUP



From left: Delishia Porterfield, Charlane Oliver, Tequila Johnson and Zulfat Suara pose for portraits on the steps of the Tennessee State Capitol. (DIANA KING FOR THE 19TH)

## [This is the Tennessee Four](#) (The 19th)

[Consumer Protection bill that places limit on solicitors passes TN senate](#) (WSMV)

[Groundbreaking Held on Newest Residential Development](#) (Tennessee Tribune)

[Proposed East Nashville emergency room will not uproot Shugga Hi, execs say](#) (Nashville Post)

[Emotions, tempers flare at Tennessee Capitol hours after Nashville school shooting](#) (The Tennessean)

[After School Shooting, Nashville Grieves and Ponders Its Divisions](#) (The New York Times)

[Thousands of Nashville students walk out and rally a week after school shooting](#) (New York Post)

[Narrow exceptions to Tennessee's abortion ban are heading to the governor's desk](#) (WPLN)

[Inside the Tennessee legislature, where a GOP supermajority reigns](#) (The Washington Post)

## EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. **Small Business Town Hall**, hosted by State Senator Charlane Oliver in partnership with the Urban League of Middle Tennessee, The Nashville Black Market, the Nashville Business Incubation Center, and TSU's Business Incubation Center. **Tuesday, June 6, 2023, 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM** at The Cal Turner Family Center at Meharry Medical College, 1011 21st Ave N, Nashville, TN 37208. Come learn about an exciting new state funding opportunity for entrepreneurs and small business owners. The Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development has launched **Fund Tennessee** to provide small business owners and entrepreneurs, particularly minorities, women and economically disadvantaged owners, equitable access to the capital they need. As your State Senator, I am committed to strengthening the resiliency of minority small businesses through equitable capital investments, supplier diversity, procurement, and technical assistance. My aim is to ensure you are prepared to take advantage of \$116.9 million in funding. [Register here.](#)
2. **SAVE THE DATE: District 19 Town Halls**, hosted by State Senator Charlane Oliver. **June 12-14** at 6 pm. Locations TBD. Details forthcoming.

3. **MNPS End of the Year Jam!** Hosted by North Nashville Collaborative. Saturday, May 27, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Skating from 10-12pm) at Hartman Park Regional Center. All kids are invited for an end of the year celebration to enjoy bounce houses, balloon animals, face painting, and much more.

## 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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