

## May 6, 2011 - The "Loop"

### House Passes Resolution Calling on Congress to Follow Tennessee's Balanced Budget Plan

As the free-spending ways of Washington sink our nation further into debt, a resolution was passed that calls on Congress to follow Tennessee's model.

The measure simply encourages the U.S. Congress to return to the founding principles of limited government and fiscal responsibility to rein in spending. Additionally, the resolution advises Congress to follow the example set by Tennessee of balanced budgets and responsible spending cuts to provide a stable environment for the State.

This legislation is a direct reflection of the will of Tennesseans. Our citizens are tired of seeing their hard-earned tax dollars being wasted in Washington on bailouts, giveaways, and out-of-control entitlement programs. We are simply sending a message to Washington to get its fiscal house in order. If they need a model of how to do that, all they need to do is look to Tennessee. We have navigated these rough economic times by maintaining a balanced budget, keeping taxes low, and reining in burdensome government regulations.

In addition I am proud of the efforts of the Republican leadership in Congress and support them and want them to continue fighting for more reductions so our country can flourish."

### Constitutional Amendment Regarding Abortion Advances in House

On Wednesday, the House Majority moved the legislation that will amend the State's Constitution. SJR 127 is a constitutional amendment that, when passed, will bring the Constitution of the State of Tennessee back to a position of neutrality regarding abortion. Once again, SJR 127 enjoys bi-partisan support.

The amendment is intended to restore to the people of Tennessee, acting through their elected state representatives and state senators, their rightful authority to regulate abortion, all within federal constitutional limits. "This amendment restores protections for citizens through common sense measures regarding a very personal matter in the lives of many women. It is important to note this amendment does not outlaw or criminalize abortion. SJR127 simply restores the authority of the people acting through their elected officials, to legislate abortion. Our State has a strong record of protecting life and this amendment will forever enshrine that principle in our Constitution."

Many Members fought for the passage of the constitutional amendment for several years, but their efforts were blocked in subcommittees. The process for amending the State's Constitution is a long one. Joint resolutions must pass one General Assembly by a majority, which was accomplished last year for this bill. In the subsequent General Assembly, it must be passed by two-thirds, before finally being put to the voters in the next gubernatorial election.

### House Protects Teacher Pay

On Wednesday, the Majority passed legislation that protects teacher pay from reductions in Tennessee. While local school boards and municipalities face tight budgets along with other government agencies, Members of the Majority are committed to making sure our valuable teachers are protected from budget cuts.

The legislation, House Bill 367, simply prohibits any local education agency from lowering teacher salaries, without a corresponding change in the teacher's duties, or lowering the amount spent for teacher benefits from one school year to the next.

Teachers need to know we support their hard work in the classroom and this bill shows that. I am committed to giving a voice to all teachers and this legislation ensures our educators can rest assured we will fight to make sure their salaries are never reduced."

### House Closes Criminal Code Loophole

The General Assembly has been vigilant when it comes to protecting the rights and security of victims. Recent news reports have shown an alarming trend with violent criminals taking advantage of a loophole in Tennessee's legal code.

HB 401 creates a "good faith exception" to the Exclusionary Rule so courts will have a legitimate alternative to allow evidence to be heard in a case and sets out a clear definition so there will be clarity on the issue.

Criminals and defense attorneys have taken advantage of this loophole for years causing violent offenders, including murderers, to be released because of small clerical errors. In an effort to protect society and honor victims, I am proud to say we have closed this loophole.

#### New Legislation Slams the Door on Looters

HB 1946, known as the “retail theft” bill, provides a new offense whereby courts may require a criminal to perform public service as designated by the court. The offender would be required to perform at least the number of hours of public service necessary to satisfy the fine assessed by the court at minimum wage.

Simply put, this bill was crafted to crack down on looters. These are some of the most despicable criminals who hurt families in their time of most need. Instead of just throwing them behind bars, this legislation ensures they are put to work rebuilding our communities and doing hard work to make up for their unacceptable crimes. Let us continue to keep those families in our prayers who have been affected by last month’s horrible tornadoes.

#### Major Protection for Tennessee Workers Passes House

During the mid-week, the House enacted HB 1747, a major protection for Tennessee’s workforce. In basic terms, the legislation ensures the Volunteer State’s workforce will never face intimidation or coercive tactics by unions who are forcibly trying to unionize factories or workshops.

The bill ensures all employees, who want to select a bargaining representative for their workplace, may utilize a secret ballot – a core principle of American voting tradition.

Secret ballot voting is a basic American value that we must protect. No citizen should be forced to join a union or pay dues to a union just to have the opportunity to work and provide for their family. For the last five years, unions have spent millions of dollars across the country to pass bills that effectively eliminate employees’ rights. With this legislation, we are forever ensuring those horrid tactics will never be a reality in Tennessee.

In closing...

Ag Day on the hill is always a fun day even though weather prevented the annual milking contest. The legislative Hallways were full of bright young FFA members who gave this grandmother hope in our leaders of tomorrow. The Agriculture and Transportation committee’s are now closed as are many other committees allowing for more scheduled time to bring the legislation to the House Floor. We are approaching a wind down for this portion of the 107th General Assembly. I am thrilled and so thankful to announce that all three of my districts major infrastructure projects have been included in the Governors budget for 2011-1012 and no borrowing either! Faith is the substance of things hoped for, even when we can not see it yet!!! Keep believing and never, never quit!!! It is such an honor to serve you!!!!