



## See full list of national TV games for Grizzlies

SPORTS, 1B

# THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

MONDAY, AUGUST 18, 2025 | COMMERCIALAPPEAL.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## Ghana pays part of debt to U of M

**Brooke Muckerman**  
Memphis Commercial Appeal  
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

The Republic of Ghana has paid up some of the outstanding debt to the University of Memphis for the country’s Ghana Scholarship Secretariat, the university confirmed in a statement. The \$1 million payment, the univer-

sity said, will allow students to “continue to live on campus.” “We remain hopeful that the Republic of Ghana will meet its debt obligations to ensure the students will be able to continue their education through the fall semester,” the university said. In early July, the U of M said that Ghana had not paid the university for the Ghana Scholarship Secretariat,

which gave international students from Ghana a full-ride scholarship to study at the university. The GSS was a part of a memorandum of understanding with the Republic of Ghana for the scholarship program in 2023. According to reports from Modern Ghana, a news outlet in Ghana, the country had only paid \$400,000 of the total \$3.2 million it owes to the univer-

sity for the scholarship program as of July. The university did not confirm the balance Ghana owes. The payment is a welcome surprise from the country to the university, which recently had to bar students on the scholarship from fall enrollment due to non-payment. **See GHANA, Page 3A**



Teacher Maya Manns answers a question from Dan'te Smart Jr., 9, at Thomas A. Edison Elementary School in Antioch on June 21, 2024. The school is one of many sites for the Metro Nashville Public Schools summer program known as Promising Scholars. STEPHANIE AMADOR/THE TENNESSEAN

## ACLU demands Mason halt ICE detention center project

**Jack Armstrong**  
Memphis Commercial Appeal  
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

The American Civil Liberties Union of Tennessee demanded the Town of Mason halt all actions related to a planned ICE detention center at a former state prison in an Aug. 15 press release. The ACLU sent a letter to Mason officials alleging the project did not receive the necessary amount of votes to pass, the organization announced in the release. “This is a simple matter of following the rules: those in favor of the ICE contract needed a majority of votes to win — and they didn’t have it,” said Stella Yarbrough, legal director for the ACLU of Tennessee in the release. “Officials cannot ignore their own laws to push through a harmful contract that will generate \$30 million in corporate profits for a for-profit prison company. An abstention is not a ‘yes’ vote. We are demanding that Mayor Noeman and the Board acknowledge this vote failed and immediately halt this illegal arrangement.” The project would allow the West Tennessee Detention Center in Mason to be converted into an ICE detention center, run by private prison company CoreCivic. The Mason Board of Aldermen voted on the project in an Aug. 12 meeting. The board was set to vote on two separate contracts — one between the town of Mason and private prison company CoreCivic, and a second contract between Mason and ICE. Mason’s town recorder originally said the second contract failed to pass, but the town’s attorney said the votes of those who abstained were mistakenly counted. “According to the Town of Mason’s own charter, passing any action requires a “majority of the members present,” the release read. “With seven members present, a majority requires four votes. The contract only received three.” The first contract passed 4-1, with two abstentions, the second vote was 3-2, with two abstentions. A representative from CoreCivic said they believed both votes passed with a majority. Mason Mayor Eddie Noeman initially said he did not know the final decisions, but later confirmed both of the contracts passed. Noeman did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Aug. 15. *Jack Armstrong covers breaking news and the environment for The Commercial Appeal. He can be reached at jack.armstrong@commercialappeal.com and followed on X @jca2902.*

## Taxes, pay dates

### What to know about teacher bonuses tied to voucher plan

**Rachel Wegner** USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Teacher bonuses tied to Tennessee's controversial voucher program expansion have begun to roll out statewide. However, some teachers have seen roughly 35% in taxes and deductions taken out of their bonuses. Lawmakers included one-time bonuses of \$2,000 for teachers as part of the Education Freedom Act passed during a special legislative session in January. Local school boards were required to adopt a resolution affirming their participation in the program to ensure teachers would receive the bonuses. For years, Gov. Bill Lee pushed to expand taxpayer-funded school vouchers to help families pay for private K-12 school tuition. Public school boards statewide have been among the most vocal opponents of vouchers, citing concerns about hampering funding, enrollment and other resources for public schools. State Sen. Heidi Campbell of Nashville is among state Democrats who have staunchly opposed vouchers. In an Aug. 6 Facebook post, she shared a note from a Nashville teacher who expressed shock over only receiving a \$1,329 bonus after taxes and deductions applied. "Tennessee just voluntarily gave a \$1.6B kick-back to corporations, but failed to make whole this comparatively (meager) bonus for our over-worked and under-paid teachers," Campbell wrote. "They used our teachers to get what they wanted and then failed to deliver."

Here's what we know about the bonuses.

#### Who qualifies for Tennessee teacher bonuses?

Licensed teachers employed full-time by a K-12 public school district in Tennessee during the 2024-25 school year qualify for the bonuses, according to the new state law. State lawmakers who are K-12 school teachers do not qualify for the bonuses. However, spouses of state lawmakers who are teachers do.

#### When will the bonuses be paid?

Several districts, including Memphis-Shelby County Schools, Metro Nashville Public Schools and Williamson County Schools, reported they had already paid out the bonuses as of Aug. 14. Other districts said they are still finalizing details and expect the bonuses to go out later this month or in September.

#### How high are taxes and deductions on the bonuses?

The Tennessean reached out to a dozen school districts across Tennessee to ask about taxes and deductions applied to the bonuses. Among the

**See BONUSSES, Page 3A**

#### Subscriber-only eNewspaper

The eNewspaper is an electronic copy of your print newspaper. Enjoy every page by going to commercialappeal.com/enewspaper or scan this code on your mobile device. You will also find late news and sports in the bonus sections. Check it out today!



Volume 184 | No. 194  
Subscribe 844-900-7099  
©2025 \$3.00



7 49377 10040 0