



## Week 7 predictions for area high schools

SPORTS, 1B



The Daily News Journal



## Sewanee sued after mold found in dorm

NEWS, 3A

# City mayor criticizes MTSU heads

## McFarland stands by suggesting university needs new leadership

Scott Broden  
Murfreesboro Daily News Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Murfreesboro Mayor Shane McFarland told the DNJ Sept. 29 he stands by his recent Facebook comments suggesting MTSU needs new leadership.

Middle Tennessee State University is led by 25th-year President Sidney McPhee, who reports to an MTSU Board of Trustees led by Chairman Stephen Miller.

McFarland made the comments in question about MTSU on a Facebook chat Sept. 22 to respond to residents. He attended the university starting in 1992, earned a bachelor’s degree in 1997 and served as student body president in 1995-96, according to an MTSU webpage.

“I really don’t have much to add to what I already

said,” McFarland said in a text to The Daily News Journal.

“I will say this: my number one desire for MTSU and the City with a capital ‘C’ is that the university becomes the hub, the heartbeat, the lifeline and the gathering place for our community. This is not the case right now. I hope that that can change in the near future, and I am making it my personal mission to help this become a reality!”

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Senate Democrats on the night of Sept. 30 again blocked a Republican proposal to keep the government at existing funding levels through Nov. 21. AL DRAGO/GETTY IMAGES

# Trump, Dems trade blame for shutdown

## 750K federal workers could be furloughed

Joey Garrison, Bart Jansen, Zac Anderson and Erin Mansfield  
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump and congressional Democrats traded blame after the federal government shut down at 12:01 a.m. ET on Oct. 1.

The White House website featured a clock counting the amount of time “Democrats have shut down the government,” while the Democratic National Committee wrote on social media, “Republicans own this shutdown.”

It marked the 15th government shutdown since 1981.

There was no immediate end in sight to the bitter standoff over funding the government: Congressional Democrats demanded health care policy changes – including the reversal of Medicaid cuts – that Trump and Republicans refused to entertain.

Senate Democrats on the night of Sept. 30 again blocked a Republican proposal to keep the government at existing funding levels through Nov. 21. The bill received 55 yeas, short of the 60-vote threshold to defeat a Democratic filibuster. Sens. John Fetterman, D-Pennsylvania, Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nevada, and Angus King, a Maine independent who caucuses with Democrats, joined Republicans in backing the GOP bill.

### Get the latest

Find updates on the federal government shutdown at [usatoday.com](https://www.usatoday.com) and in Nation & World Extra, a subscriber-only feature in your eNewspaper.

Congressional Democratic leaders – Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York and Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York – issued a joint statement at 12:01 a.m. on Oct. 1 saying Trump and Republicans shut down the government “because they do not want to protect the healthcare of the American people.”

The Senate was scheduled to reconvene Oct. 1, and was expected to vote on the funding legislation again. However, House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-Louisiana, planned to keep House lawmakers in recess in order to pressure Democrats.

About 750,000 federal employees ranging from workers at national parks to financial regulators could be furloughed each day, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, withholding about \$400 million in daily compensation. Employees in government services that are considered “essential,” such as the military and law enforcement, will continue to work but won’t be paid until a deal is reached.

The threat of mass layoffs loomed. A pair of unions representing federal workers filed a lawsuit Sept. 30 over the threat.

“We can do things during the shutdown that are irreversible, that are bad for them and irreversible by them – cutting vast numbers of people out, cutting things they like, cutting programs that they

See SHUTDOWN, Page 7A

### ANALYSIS

## School vouchers mostly went to religious schools in big counties

Rachel Wegner  
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USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

The schools benefiting from Tennessee’s taxpayer-funded vouchers this year are largely religious and concentrated in the state’s most populous counties, a Tennessean analysis of state data revealed.

Additionally, the \$7,295 vouchers, known as Education Freedom Scholarships, would only cover the lowest base annual tuition at around 20% of the schools with scholarship students enrolled for the 2025-26 school year.

The scholarships are part of Tennessee’s controversial school voucher program. After years of protests, debates and setbacks, the Republican supermajority in the state legislature pushed the program through in a rapid-fire special session in January. Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee hails the program as a way to empower families to choose the best education for their children. Opponents say it diverts valuable funding away from public schools and only leaves choice up to the private schools. Unlike public schools, private schools are not required to accept students regardless of gender, race, disability or other factors.

The program includes 20,000 scholarships, with the first 10,000 earmarked for families who meet income restrictions. The remaining 10,000 had no income cap. Nearly 43,000 applications flowed in after the state opened applications in May.

The Tennessee Department of Education provided a list of 220 schools with Education Freedom Scholarship students enrolled for the 2025-26 school year. However, the state has not provided the number of students enrolled in each school, nor detailed demographic information of the students, despite a records request from The Tennessean. An education department spokesperson said the state is not tracking whether the students were previously enrolled in private or public schools.

Here’s what a Tennessean analysis of the limited state data released so far revealed.

### A look at counties, religious affiliation and costs

State data showed that 86 of 95 counties had scholarship students enrolled. However, a Tennessean analysis showed only 35 of those counties had brick-and-mortar schools that received them.

Three virtual schools also enrolled scholarship students. It was not immediately clear if students from the remaining 51 counties crossed county lines to attend school or enrolled in virtual schools. A spokesperson for the education department did not respond when asked to clarify on Sept. 26.

Just over 70% of the schools with scholarship students are spread across some of the largest counties in the state. Here’s a look at how those break down:

- Shelby County: 44 schools
- Davidson County: 33 schools

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