

PRESENTED BY BJ'S WHOLESALE CLUB

KNOXVILLE HOME & REMODELING SHOW

OCT 24-26

CHILHOWEE PARK EXPOSITION CENTER

3301 E Magnolia Ave, Knoxville, TN 37914

FRI: 12PM - 6PM, SAT: 10AM - 5PM, & SUN: 11AM - 4PM

FREE ADMISSION!

KnoxvilleHomeRemodelingShow.com

Knoxville

NEWS SENTINEL

MONDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2025 | KNOXNEWS.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

TENNESSEE FOOTBALL

Tennessee coach Josh Heupel talks with an official during Oct. 18's game at Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. BRIANNA PACIORKA/NEWS SENTINEL

Why Heupel is to blame for worst mistake in loss

Decision to pass at end of half ends with interception

Adam Sparks
Knoxville News Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

TUSCALOOSA, AL – It may have been Josh Heupel's worst play call of his Tennessee football coaching tenure. And though he tried, he didn't have a clear explanation for it after the Vols (5-2, 2-2 SEC) lost 37-20 to Alabama (6-1, 4-0) on Oct. 18.

"When you're playing a good team, the details are going to matter," Heupel said. "We lost in the details tonight. And that's my responsibility, our responsibility – players and coaches together."

Every UT fan who suffered through this game knows the play in question. It's the mo-

"End of the first half, nine seconds, no timeouts. You're left with a decision. Do you want two opportunities or one?"

Josh Heupel
Tennessee head coach

ment when anyone wearing orange in Bryant-Denny Stadium shouted their saltiest words to the sky, long before the cigar smoke filled the air.

It was the final play of the first half, a 99-yard interception return for a touchdown by Alabama's Zabien Brown that served as a 14-point swing.

Why play call didn't fool Alabama

There were numerous errors on Tennessee's part, including Joey Aguilar's decision to throw the ball. But it started with Heupel's predictable decision to call a pass play from a power-running package in hopes of trick-

See COMMENTARY, Page 8A

COUNTY COMMISSION

Ex-county GOP chair challenges District 7 incumbent

Burkhardt, Lee to face off in 2026 primary

Allie Feinberg
Knoxville News Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Former Knox County Republican Party Chair Buddy Burkhardt will challenge Knox County Commissioner Rhonda Lee in the 2026 GOP primary to represent northwest Knox County.

"I will be available, prepared and present for the duties of a county commissioner," Burkhardt told Knox News in a text.

Burkhardt appointed a campaign treasurer Oct. 10, which is the first step in running. Lee appointed hers Aug. 22.

Lee was elected in 2022 to represent District 7, which includes the communities of Heiskell and Powell and shares a border with Anderson County.

Inside

Early voting in Knoxville election is happening now. **3A**

Lee did not respond to a Knox News request for comment.

Burkhardt's candidacy is the first time a Republican incumbent will face a primary challenger in the reliably conservative district since the commission was restructured after the 2007 Black Wednesday scandal.

Lee has never sponsored a county ordinance in her time in office, according to the Knox County Clerk's office. She has sponsored or cosponsored 11 resolutions, and nine of those passed. All were routine appointments or honorary measures with the exception of a move to purchase land for a county maintenance facility.

Burkhardt served as county GOP chair 2015-17 and 2023-25. In March, he was defeated by Martin Daniel, a former state representative who positioned himself as a more conservative alternative to Burkhardt.

Lee and Commissioner Gina Oster are the only two incumbent commis-

See DISTRICT 7, Page 3A

Ambassador has faith in U.S. 'reactive mobilization'

Brzezinski recounts his career ahead of UT talk

Joel Christopher
Knoxville News Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Mark Brzezinski has lived moments he never could have imagined. As a young Fulbright Scholar, he studied in Poland as the country shook off the shackles of the Soviet Union,

then returned decades later as American ambassador as the U.S. increased the number of its troops stationed there to more than 13,000.

Brzezinski was ambassador to Poland in 2022 when Russian troops poured unprovoked into Ukraine, trying to reestablish the dominance of Eastern Europe Vladimir Putin craves, and witnessed the Polish people welcoming into their nation and their very homes nearly 10 million Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war.

Brzezinski

Brzezinski's connection to East Tennessee is similarly special and lengthy. He served on U.S. Sen. Howard Baker's staff when the legendary Tennessee lawmaker became the Senate majority leader, and on Oct. 21, Brzezinski returns to the Howard H. Baker Jr. School of Public Policy and Public Affairs to talk about his perspectives on today's challenges and opportunities for America.

Knox News Executive Editor Joel Christopher spoke Oct. 14 with Brzezinski in advance of his appearance at the University of Tennessee Student Union, touching on Brzezinski's faith in America's innate and remarkable capacity for "reactive mobilization" in response to challenging times.

This interview has been condensed and lightly edited for clarity.

Joel Christopher: If you're speaking

See BRZEZINSKI, Page 9A

Subscriber-only eNewspaper

The eNewspaper is an electronic copy of your print newspaper. Enjoy every page by going to knoxnews.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 99 | No. 328
Subscribe 844-900-7097
©2025 \$3.49