



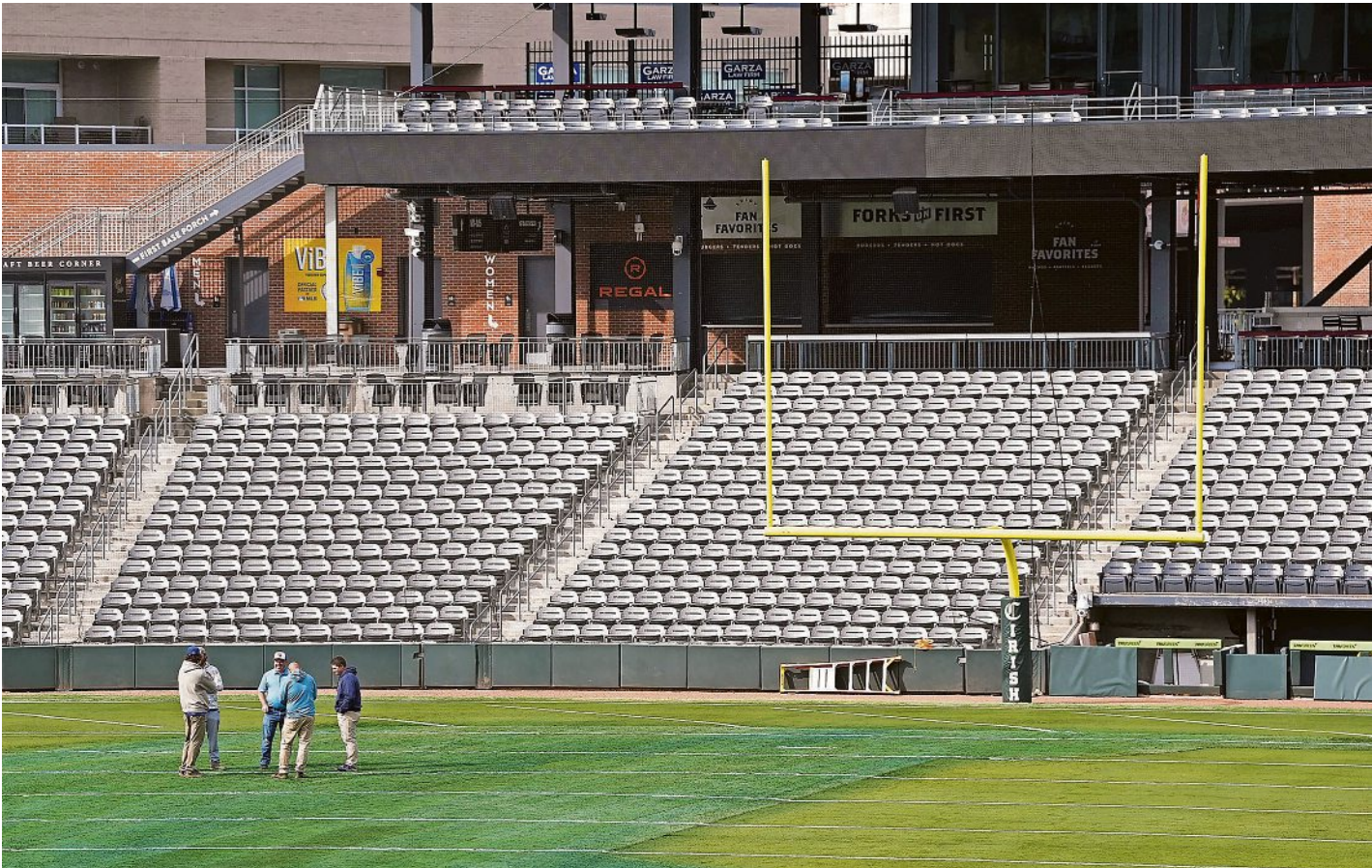
Heupel uses bye week to look at roster decisions for 2027

SPORTS, 1B

Knoxville NEWS SENTINEL

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Covenant Health Park's groundskeepers check the lines on the football field where Knoxville Catholic will play Baylor School on Oct. 30. Four weeks of planning went into converting the field, typically used for baseball and soccer, for the first football game at the stadium. PHOTOS BY CAITIE MCMEKIN/NEWS SENTINEL

‘We’ve had a blast doing this’

Crew sets up Covenant Health Park to host its first high school football game

Wynton Jackson

Knoxville News Sentinel | USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Eric Taylor stood under a glistening, highlighter-yellow goalpost on the west end of Covenant Health Park, facing left field.

The groundskeeper and director of agronomy for the Knoxville Smokies’ stadium admired his work through shadow-tinted sunglasses on Oct. 27. In four days, four weeks of planning would result in the first football game played on the baseball field.

It all started with a simple “yes.” Taylor blurted it out without a second thought.

“A few months ago, Chris Allen (Boyd Sports president and CEO) tells me to come to the office,” Taylor told Knoxville News. “He says, ‘Can we play a football game out there on the field?’ I said, ‘Yes, we can.’”

“He’s like, ‘Are you sure?’ I’m like, ‘Yeah, we can do it man. It’s not a problem.’”

Game features Tennessee commitment
David Gabriel Georges

Shortly after, Taylor got to work preparing the field for the inaugural Covenant Health Classic on Oct. 30 (7 p.m. WKNX, WBIR+, WATE6+), featuring Knoxville Catholic and Baylor, two of the top high school football



Jackson Abel watches as Joe Knight and Jacob Minor prevent dirt from getting into the goalpost mount at Covenant Health Park.

teams in the state. Baylor (9-0) has a slew of elite college football prospects, headlined by five-star running back and Tennessee football commit David Gabriel Georges.

Marshall Manning, the freshman son of Tennessee football legend Peyton Manning, is also on the Red

See FOOTBALL, Page 7A

ELECTION 2026

Burchett plans run for Senate in 2028

If Blackburn wins Nov. 3, congressman is all in

Allie Feinberg

Knoxville News Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

U.S. Rep. Tim Burchett will run for Senate in 2028 if U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn is elected governor, the congressman’s campaign manager, Thomas McAfee, confirmed to Knoxville News.

“He’s worked hard and is prepared to hit the ground running on a state-wide campaign. People in every corner of Tennessee are enthusiastically supportive of a Burchett Senate bid,” McAfee said.

While the congressman had been clear about his desire to serve in the Senate, he’s “focused on continuing to serve the folks of TN02 and getting reelected on Nov. 3,” McAfee added.

Punchbowl News wrote Oct. 29 that Burchett said he “is ‘absolutely’ going to start campaigning” for the seat regardless of whether Blackburn chooses him as her replacement.

Burchett spent the 2026 campaign cycle laying the groundwork for a statewide bid, Knoxville News reported this week.

Blackburn’s Senate seat is up for re-election in 2030. If she wins the governor’s race, she will appoint someone to serve until 2028, when there would be a special election to finish out her term.

Whoever fills the seat in that scenario would face an expensive state-wide campaign, and Burchett has an advantage not every prospect has: He can use the same money he has raised to run for the House for a Senate run. Candidates who run for state house office, in contrast, cannot use money raised for those races for a federal campaign.

Burchett has nearly tripled his spending on his House campaign

See BURCHETT, Page 7A



Burchett



Blackburn



Barnett

KCS weighs changing class times, cutting buses

District trying to get ahead of big financial challenges

Caitlyn Meisner

Knoxville News Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Knox County Schools leaders are thinking about eliminating some bus routes and changing the start and end times at some schools to reduce millions of dollars in operating costs.

The changes, if approved, could save millions because the district would trim bus routes but serve the same number

of kids. It’s one of several options the district is considering, including closing four elementary schools, eliminating central office jobs and cutting technology spending.

District leaders presented preliminary ideas to school board members last week. They emphasized these were only flexible starting points “rather than a blueprint to doggedly follow.”

All 51 elementary schools start at 7:45 a.m. and end at 2:45 p.m. Most of the 16 middle schools and 14 traditional high schools start at 8:30 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m. There are some exceptions, such as three nontraditional high

schools that start between 9 and 9:30 a.m.

Transporting all elementary students requires 220 buses, according to KCS documents. Middle and traditional high school routes require 202 buses.

Exploring bus options
and savings potential

OPTION 1: Reduce routes by about 27 to save more than \$950,000 each year. Five elementary schools would

See KCS, Page 7A

Fall back

Daylight saving time ends at 2 a.m. Sunday. Remember to set your clocks back one hour.



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