



THE TENNESSEAN

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2026 | TENNESSEAN.COM



PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Special session starts with rancor, accusations



Chelsea Madden of Nashville yells at representatives as they leave a May 5 House committee meeting on the first day of a special session concerning redistricting and held at the Cordell Hull State Office Building in Nashville.

Anti-redistricting protesters plentiful

Vivian Jones and Angele Latham
Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Hundreds of protesters converged on Tennessee’s Capitol as Republican lawmakers adopted rules permanently banning disruptive observers for a special session to redraw the state’s congressional map and divide Memphis in a move that will dilute the voting power of the state’s only majority Black district.

Gov. Bill Lee called lawmakers back to Nashville in response to a call from President Donald Trump, who is seeking to strengthen Republicans’ majority in the U.S. House ahead of the 2026 midterms.

A wave of protests poured out over Capitol Hill throughout the day as House Republicans adopted rules that allow observers deemed “detrimental to the orderly business” of the House to be permanently removed from House galleries.



Rep. Ryan Williams, R-Cookeville, speaks to Rep. Clark Boyd, R-Lebanon, during a May 5 committee meeting at the Cordell Hull State Office Building in Nashville. PHOTOS BY NICOLE HESTER/THE TENNESSEAN

Opening session meetings lasted a matter of minutes. House members gavelled in just after 2 p.m. for a minutes-long session meeting, during which Republicans adopted rules and House Speaker Cameron Sexton

appointed three working committees for the special session. The House gavelled out at 2:11 p.m. Senators concluded their meeting by 2:30 p.m.

See **SESSION**, Page 12A

Fear of Williamson hospital sale has some observers on guard

Lack of transparency irks commissioner

Gabrielle Chenault
Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

As a bill that would allow for the sale of a Williamson County-owned hospital nears completion, many residents and the County Commission are beginning to worry about what they say is a

lack of transparency surrounding the matter.

In 2025, county officials proposed selling Williamson Health in hopes of alleviating some of the county’s \$1.1 billion debt. The issue with the sale has to do with state law, which currently says that all proceeds from selling a government-owned or public-benefit hospital are required to go into a trust.

“It’s a sad thing to see happen to the best hospital in Middle Tennessee,” said Williamson County resident An-

gela Gill.

A Senate bill, sponsored by Sen. Jack Johnson, R-Franklin, would create a special exemption to the trust rule for hospitals worth more than \$500 million. If passed, the legislation would allow for counties to divert proceeds away from the trust toward the political priorities of local government. The bill was still pending as legislators adjourned in April.

See **HOSPITAL SALE**, Page 11A

O’Connell launches reelection campaign

Nashville mayor says he’ll seek second term in 2027

Austin Hornbostel
Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

There’s been plenty of chatter behind the scenes among city insiders, but now it’s official: Nashville Mayor Freddie O’Connell has entered the running for reelection.

O’Connell made his reelection bid public May 4, cresting on a big past week that featured his third State of Metro address and filing a proposed flat \$3.8 billion fiscal year 2027 budget featuring a half-cent cut to Nashville’s local grocery tax rate.

His campaign’s run by political consultant Emily Cupples, who founded Nashville public affairs and government relations firm Delta Public Affairs. Cupples has managed several political campaigns, including two races the last time O’Connell was on the ballot in 2023: one for another Nashville mayor candidate, businessman Jim Gingrich, and another for first-term at-large Metro Nashville Council member Delishia Porterfield.

The timing was right to announce his bid, O’Connell said May 4, considering “a lot of people were asking the question” and he’d had a chance to talk through the decision with his family.

See **O’CONNELL**, Page 12A



Tennessee men’s basketball coach Rick Barnes speaks April 29 during the annual Big Orange Caravan event at Marathon Music Works in Nashville. ANDREW NELLES/THE TENNESSEAN

UT MEN’S BASKETBALL

No messing around

Estes: Barnes and the Vols are loading up in transfer portal

SPORTS, 1B

Subscriber-only eNewspaper

The eNewspaper is an electronic copy of your print newspaper. Enjoy every page by going to tennessean.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 122 | No. 107
Subscribe 800-342-8237
©2026 \$3.49 Metro
State pricing varies



0 40901 05606 5