

# Office of the Governor

State Capitol  
Nashville, TN 37243-0001  
(615) 741-2001  
TN.gov/governor

## Bill Haslam (R)

Governor of Tennessee

Bill Haslam, 49th Governor of Tennessee, was born August 23, 1958. He was elected with the largest margin of victory in any open governor's race in our state's history.

His administration's priorities are:

- To make Tennessee the number one location in the Southeast for high quality jobs by fostering a business-friendly environment for recruitment and expansion;
- To continue our state's momentum in education reform with the focus on doing what's best for Tennessee children in the classroom;
- And to ensure the state budget is managed conservatively and state government is run as efficiently and effectively as possible while delivering quality service to the citizens of Tennessee.

Prior to serving as Governor, he was the Mayor of Knoxville for eight years. During his time as Mayor, property tax rates dropped to their lowest levels in more than 50 years. He balanced seven consecutive city budgets, reduced city debt by 28 percent, tripled the Rainy Day Fund, created key education initiatives, and recruited and retained thousands of Knoxville jobs. Before entering public service, he managed his family's business, driving all over the country to find good locations for new truck stops and helping it expand to a nationwide business. Born and raised in Knoxville, he earned a degree in history from Emory University. He and his wife of 32 years, Crissy, have three grown children, two sons-in-law, a daughter-in-law, and a grandson.

## Duties of the Governor

“The supreme executive power of this state shall be vested in a governor.”

This sentence in the Tennessee Constitution best describes the awesome responsibility of the governor, who, more than any other individual, is responsible for the operation of state government. The governor's duties, responsibilities, and authority are defined in the Tennessee Constitution. It governs issues ranging from the governor's qualifications to the right to convene the General Assembly in extraordinary session.

The governor is responsible for the enforcement of the laws, the collection of taxes, and the general well-being of citizens. These responsibilities are entrusted to a Cabinet that includes the commissioners of the various departments and the governor's staff.

Intangible qualities which the governor should possess include: the ability to lead and create an atmosphere of unity among the state's citizens; the energy to participate in various functions, both in Nashville and around the state; the compassion to understand problems and to assist in their solutions; the enthusiasm necessary to motivate others; and the ability to communicate with all segments of society.

The constitution clearly defines tangible responsibilities. For example, "He shall be commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy of the state, and of the Militia, except when they shall be called into the service of the United States."

In the Constitution, the General Assembly has the sole authority to pass laws, and the courts of the state have the sole authority to try cases. However, the governor has considerable influence in both areas. The governor is expected to recommend legislation and has the authority to veto bills which have been passed and which, in his judgment, are not in the best interest of all citizens. The governor also has the authority to appoint judges and chancellors to fill vacancies in the courts, the right to grant executive clemency, and the power to grant post-conviction reprieves and pardons, except in cases of impeachment.

The governor is the people's spokesman in national matters and their representative when a single voice is needed in matters of concern outside the state's boundaries, including labor and management, industry, agriculture, and business.

The governor appoints commissioners to head the various departments and assist in the operation of government. They report directly to the governor or an executive staff member. The governor and the executive staff occupy offices in the Capitol. The executive offices are on the first floor and the legislative chambers are on the second floor of the Capitol. Commissioners' offices are located generally near Capitol Hill.

The governor also appoints members to boards and commissions to assist in governmental operations. Many boards and commissions regulate personal services performed in the state. Some boards and commissions are official agencies of the state, and others are semiofficial.

The boards and commissions on which the governor serves include: State Funding Board, State Building Commission, Board of Equalization, Tennessee Local Development Authority, School Bond Authority, and Tennessee Industrial and Agricultural Development Commission. He also chairs the Board of Regents and the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees.

The constitution provides that the governor "shall be at least 30 years of age, shall be a citizen of the United States, and shall have been a resident of this state seven years next before his election."

Candidates for governor must first obtain their party's nomination in a primary election in August, and then must run against the nominees of other parties in a general election in November. The governor is limited to two four-year terms. The governor may receive an annual salary of more than \$178,000, as well as an official residence and funding for its operation.

The Tennessee Constitution provides that, in the event of a vacancy in the office of governor, the speaker of the Senate assumes the office. Next in the line of succession are the speaker of the House of Representatives, the secretary of state, and the comptroller.