

# 2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



TENNESSEE CHAMBER  
of Commerce & Industry

TENNESSEE MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION

# EXPECTED 2026 LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

## **January 13**

- Legislative session begins
- Tennessee Chamber's Legislative Kick-off Reception

## **Late January-Early February**

- Filing deadline for new bills

## **Early February**

- Governor's State of the State Address to announce his legislative agenda

## **March 10**

- Candidate filing deadline for 2026 elections

## **Mid-March**

- Committees begin closing

## **Early April**

- Budget is passed

## **Late April**

- Session is adjourned

## FROM THE CHAMBER

The Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry is excited to announce our 2026 legislative and policy agenda. The Chamber serves as the primary advocate for and voice of diverse business and manufacturing trade interests on major employment and economic issues.

Each year, our agenda is shaped through extensive grassroots engagement — informed by input from businesses of all sizes, local chambers of commerce, economic development partners, and policy experts. This process ensures that our priorities truly reflect the needs and challenges of the statewide business community. The Chamber's advocacy is guided by your insights and experiences, which are critical to advancing a strong and prosperous Tennessee economy.

As we head into 2026, we are hoping to advance policies that ensure Tennessee remains one of the best places in the nation to live, work, and invest. As our state continues to experience record economic and population growth, we must make forward-looking investments in infrastructure, pursue legal reforms that set a fair playing field for businesses, and continue to enact pro-growth tax policy to sustain our momentum.

Throughout our 2026 agenda, the Tennessee Chamber reaffirms its commitment to the principles of free enterprise, economic opportunity, and collaboration between the private sector and policymakers. Together, we will continue to strengthen the foundation of Tennessee's economy and ensure prosperity for all Tennesseans.

Our agenda is built from the ground up — reflecting the input of employers statewide through member meetings, regional forums, the Chamber Board of Directors, national partners, and our annual policy survey. We are grateful for your continued engagement and partnership as we advocate for policies that keep Tennessee growing strong.

Sincerely,



**Josh Brown**  
President & CEO



**RJ Gibson**  
Director, Government  
Affairs & Advocacy



**Matthew Grove**  
Manager, Government  
Affairs & Advocacy





## EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A strong workforce is a necessity for a healthy business environment, and we continue to hear about businesses struggling to find skilled and productive workers. As businesses and the economy continue to evolve, so do the workforce needs of the business community. The Chamber is grateful for the significant investments Governor Lee and the General Assembly have directed towards education and workforce initiatives in past years. The increase in Tennessee's labor force participation rate shows the success of these investments, but there is still more work to be done.

It has become increasingly important for K-12 and higher education to work collaboratively with businesses to understand what skills are needed. Educational institutions should seek to prepare students for success in jobs that are in demand by equipping them with the skills necessary to do those jobs. We will continue to support policies that advance students' ability to obtain the skills, knowledge, and credentials required for prosperity without lowering the level or rigor or accountability for students and schools.

As we strengthen Tennessee's talent pipeline and ensure students and workers have the skills needed to succeed, it is equally important to recognize the practical barriers that prevent many Tennesseans from fully participating in the workforce. We have heard from many employers across the state that lack of access to affordable childcare keeps workers on the sidelines and shrinks the labor pool. In 2026, the Chamber will work with partner organizations to advance policies that make childcare more accessible and affordable for Tennessee's workforce. Improving access to reliable childcare supports working families, strengthens labor force participation, and ensures employers can attract and retain talent.



- **We urge intentional collaboration between industry, government, and educational institutions on all workforce initiatives. This will first require alignment between all state partners so they can best serve the needs of businesses.**
- **New and existing workforce programs should be aligned to in-demand jobs with high-wage potential.**
- **Wage, job openings, credential attainment, and job placement data should be publicly available for all partners for informed decision making.**
- **State government should support the expansion of non-degree credential programs and allow the use of scholarship funds for new and existing programs.**
- **The K-12 system should better seek to prepare students for success in the modern and emerging workforce. This includes expanding opportunities for work-based learning and dual enrollment students in high-demand industries.**





## Chamber Addresses Workforce Crisis Head On

Entering its fourth year, Be Pro Be Proud is an industry-led, cutting-edge technical career initiative connecting students, parents, and educators to Tennessee's in-demand professions. The Be Pro Be Proud Mobile Workshop, a custom-manufactured semi-truck, uses VR and AR technical career simulators to attract students to technical jobs and raise awareness and education about rewarding career and training opportunities in skilled professions. Its deployment would not have been possible without enthusiastic support from the state, and we look forward to working with legislators on continuing that support.



## Impact by the numbers...



**121** cities visited



**86** tour stops



**33,240** foot traffic

# TAX

Through years of persistent advocacy and collaboration with policymakers, Tennessee's tax environment has become one of the most competitive in the nation. In 2023 and 2024, the Tennessee Chamber led successful efforts to advance major tax reforms that deliver billions of dollars in savings to businesses across the state. These achievements reflect our commitment to creating a pro-growth, business-friendly tax structure that encourages investment, job creation, and long-term economic success.

In the year ahead, the Chamber will continue to partner with state leaders to modernize Tennessee's tax code and further strengthen our competitive position.



**A top priority for 2026 will be to align Tennessee's bonus depreciation policy with the federal standard of 100% expensing. This reform would allow businesses to immediately deduct the full cost of qualifying investments—such as machinery, equipment, and technology—rather than depreciating those costs over several years. Conforming to the federal policy would make Tennessee more attractive for capital investment, manufacturing growth, and innovation, while also simplifying compliance for businesses operating across multiple states.**

The Chamber also anticipates the legislature will engage in significant discussions around property tax reform. Property taxes are a critical funding source for local governments, but significant rate increases in recent years have caused concern among state leaders. The Chamber will engage in these discussions where appropriate and advocate for pragmatic, fiscally responsible solutions that reduce complexity, enhance fairness, and ensure that Tennessee communities remain competitive for new and expanding business investment.

### Tax Foundation's 2026 State Business Tax Climate Index



**Tax Competitiveness**



**Corporate  
Tax Competitiveness**

This lower ranking in corporate tax competitiveness stems largely from the combined impact of the Franchise and Excise (F&E) tax, local property taxes on both real and tangible personal property, and the local business tax.



## LEGAL CLIMATE AND BUSINESS MANDATES

The Chamber will continue our efforts to reform Tennessee's civil justice laws to protect taxpayer resources and businesses. While previous efforts have been successful in establishing a fairer legal system for businesses to limit exposure to frivolous lawsuits, opponents to these reforms look to roll back and weaken these changes and introduce novel lawsuits testing long-standing statutes and legal theories.



**We will advance legislation to prevent the misinterpretation of statutes and the targeting of law-abiding businesses, while opposing attempts to raise caps on damages and broaden the scope of business liability in litigation. In support of these efforts, the Chamber intends to take the lead in bringing transparency to third party litigation funding, clarifying the definition of public nuisance, and restraining local suits against businesses.**

**Businesses need the freedom to innovate, create, and operate with limited government interaction. Excessive mandates and cumbersome regulations and bureaucracy work against these aims and hamper the growth of jobs, profits, and prosperity for Tennessee. The Chamber will oppose unnecessary mandates that pose an economic threat to businesses.**





## INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH

Over the past decade, the Tennessee Chamber has worked closely with state leaders to make Tennessee one of the best business environments in the nation. The results speak for themselves—record economic growth, record job creation, and record population gains. Businesses and workers alike continue to choose Tennessee because of the opportunities created by thoughtful policy and a strong commitment to competitiveness.

While this growth is an incredible success story, it also brings new challenges that must be addressed to sustain our momentum. Traffic congestion increasingly affects commutes and the efficient movement of goods. Rapidly rising housing costs are putting pressure on employees and communities. And across the state, local governments are confronting a looming shortage of landfill capacity. These issues, if left unaddressed, could threaten Tennessee's long-term economic trajectory.



**While some may call for slowing economic growth as a solution, the Chamber will oppose such efforts and instead promote a more constructive path—one that invests in infrastructure to address the challenges that accompany our success. Recognizing these challenges, the Chamber launched its Infrastructure Advisory Council in 2025 to convene experts and stakeholders around innovative solutions to the state's most pressing infrastructure needs.**

**In 2026, the Chamber will continue this work by leading efforts to modernize Tennessee's solid waste management system, ensuring it remains cost-effective and regionally coordinated. We will advocate for policies that expand disposal and recycling capacity, promote intergovernmental collaboration, and support long-term sustainability—foundations essential to continued economic development.**





## Securing and Sustaining Tennessee's Transportation Network for Economic Growth

Adequate and reliable funding for surface transportation also remains a top priority. Tennessee's economic competitiveness depends on a strong network of highways, roads, and bridges that safely and efficiently move people, products, and raw materials across towns and across the state. However, current funding mechanisms are increasingly strained as construction costs rise and vehicle fuel efficiency reduces traditional revenue streams.

**The Chamber will work with policymakers to explore modern, sustainable financing solutions that ensure the state can maintain and expand its transportation network without compromising fiscal responsibility. Businesses depend on reliable logistics, and the state's infrastructure must keep pace with the growth it has helped create.**

Infrastructure security remains an emerging concern. In recent years, Memphis has become the epicenter of organized cargo theft, with sophisticated criminal networks stealing millions of dollars in goods from rail cars and trucks. These crimes not only cause significant financial losses but also disrupt supply chains and erode trust between shippers and customers.

**The Chamber will advocate for stronger penalties and enforcement tools to combat organized cargo theft and protect the integrity of Tennessee's logistics system—one of our state's greatest economic assets.**

Tennessee's businesses and communities rely on a transportation system that is safe, efficient, and resilient. By securing sustainable funding and strengthening protections against emerging threats like cargo theft, the state can ensure its infrastructure continues to support economic growth, connect communities, and maintain Tennessee's position as a hub for commerce and industry.



## HEALTHCARE

Tennessee is home to a globally influential healthcare sector, with industry-leading corporate headquarters, research institutions, and innovators shaping the future of care. The Chamber will continue to leverage this leadership by advocating for policies that grow our economy and attract new companies across the healthcare ecosystem.



**As healthcare affordability and accessibility remain top concerns for employers and employees alike, we are committed to ensuring that the voice of the business community is represented in key policy discussions. The Chamber will advocate for approaches that promote sustainability and flexibility in the healthcare marketplace, recognizing the importance of avoiding policies that shift disproportionate costs or administrative burdens onto employers. We will pursue opportunities to manage employer healthcare costs while supporting innovative care models and collaborative public-private partnerships that improve outcomes for patients and businesses across the state.**

**Additionally, we will ensure that business is actively involved in conversations surrounding rural health, particularly as the state advances the Rural Health Transformation program, while working with policymakers, higher education, and workforce partners to strengthen the pipeline of high-skill healthcare talent needed to support Tennessee's growing industry.**





## ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

The Tennessee Chamber and our members believe strongly in the importance of environmental stewardship, compliance, and responsibility. Tennessee's business community has long been a leader in protecting the state's abundant natural resources through innovation, investment, and technology that reduce emissions, improve efficiency, and ensure sustainable growth.

In 2025, the Chamber achieved several key victories that laid the groundwork for smarter, more balanced environmental policy in Tennessee. The passage of wetlands reform legislation brought much-needed clarity and consistency to the regulatory process, protecting landowners, developers, and local governments from unnecessary costs and delays. This reform represented a critical step toward creating a regulatory system that safeguards vital natural resources without stifling responsible growth. The Chamber also championed first-in-the-nation sound science legislation, which will ensure that regulatory actions are based on the best-available science and will serve as a model for other states.



**In 2026, the Chamber will continue to advocate for environmental laws and regulations that are fair, science-based, and economically practical, ensuring that compliance efforts protect both our environment and our competitiveness.**

**We will also continue to advocate for policies that strengthen Tennessee's energy infrastructure, promote investment in generation and transmission capacity, and support the responsible integration of emerging energy technologies. Energy is the lifeblood of manufacturing, logistics, and nearly every sector of the state's economy. As demand grows and the national energy landscape evolves, Tennessee must prioritize a diverse and resilient energy portfolio—one that ensures stable baseload power, embraces innovation, and maintains competitive energy costs for businesses and consumers alike.**

## LABOR, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION LAWS

The Chamber continues to commit to advocating for human resource, employment, and labor law policies that ensure fair treatment of employees without imposing unnecessary burdens on employers. We will continue to affirm our support for Tennessee's employment-at-will doctrine and will oppose attempts to undermine this longstanding principle. The Chamber will seek to protect the constitutional right of employers and workers to discuss the impacts of unionization.



**Tennessee businesses are fortunate to have a strong unemployment trust fund and workers' compensation program. We will continue to support policies that reduce fraud, protect the integrity of the trust fund, keep workers' compensation rates low, and encourage workers to return to the workforce as soon as possible without increasing burdens on employers.**

**Supporting a state-managed TOSHA program with minimal Federal OSHA overreach is imperative. Keeping workers and workplaces safe is invaluable for our members, and a strong relationship with TOSHA helps maintain that safety.**



## TECHNOLOGY AND DATA

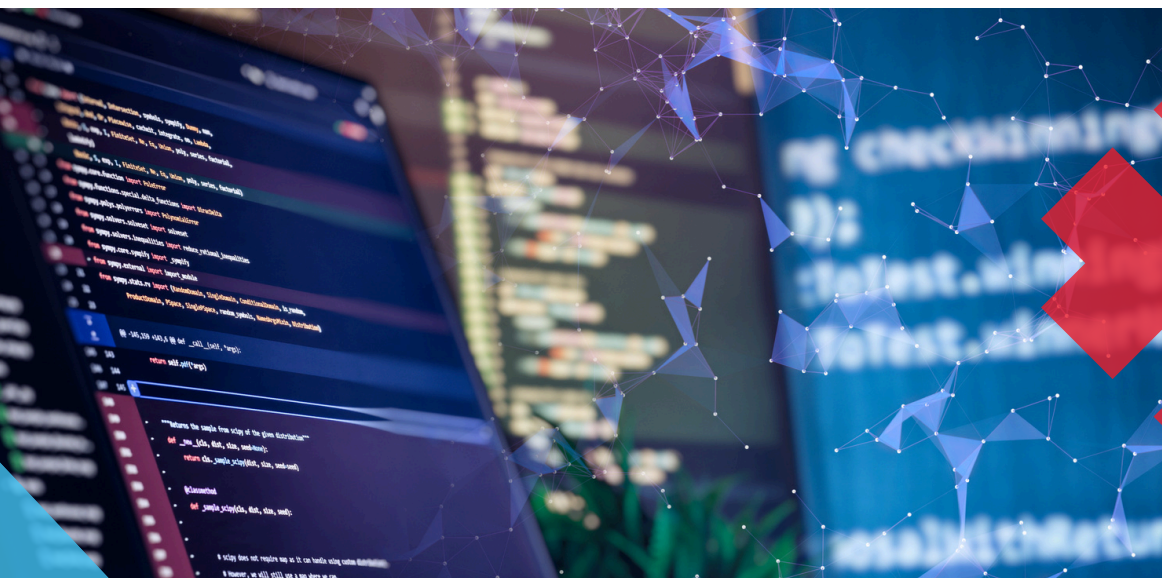
Few areas of policy evolve as rapidly as those surrounding new and emerging technologies. Each legislative session brings fresh challenges and opportunities as innovation continues to outpace regulation. The newest frontier of policymaking is artificial intelligence (AI)—a transformative technology with the potential to reshape industries, enhance productivity, and improve quality of life across Tennessee.

In 2026, the Chamber remains committed to protecting businesses' ability to responsibly innovate with AI without unnecessary government interference or the threat of burdensome litigation. Tennessee's continued economic competitiveness depends on fostering an environment where companies can explore and deploy cutting-edge tools that drive efficiency, creativity, and growth.



**The Chamber will strongly oppose heavy-handed or premature regulation that could make Tennessee less attractive to companies seeking to integrate AI into their operations. Instead, we will advocate for a balanced, innovation-friendly framework that encourages experimentation while targeting truly harmful or illicit uses—such as fraud, data misuse, or the creation of deceptive content.**

**By keeping the state's regulatory approach focused, practical, and forward-looking, Tennessee can position itself as a national leader in responsible AI adoption, attracting high-value investment, talent, and entrepreneurship in this rapidly developing field.**





# Strengthening Tennessee's Future, Together



## Advocacy in Action



We put your voice at the table where decisions are made. From policy discussions to legislative solutions, the PAC works to turn business priorities into real results.

## Strategic Engagement



Through thoughtful planning and targeted initiatives, we build strategies that amplify the influence of Tennessee's business community at the Capitol and beyond.

## Partnership & Insight



The PAC is more than influence, it's a trusted advisor. We provide expertise, resources, and guidance to help businesses navigate challenges and seize opportunities.

## Who We Are

The Tennessee Chamber maintains, like many trade associations, a PAC for making contributions to both incumbents who have supported the Tennessee Chamber and to new candidates who are willing to learn and support business issues.

## What We Do

The Tennessee Chamber PAC works to enhance and strengthen the Chamber's role in promoting business in our state by helping to elect pro-business leaders. Our PAC is non-partisan and gives only to those who demonstrate their support of business.

## CONTACT US

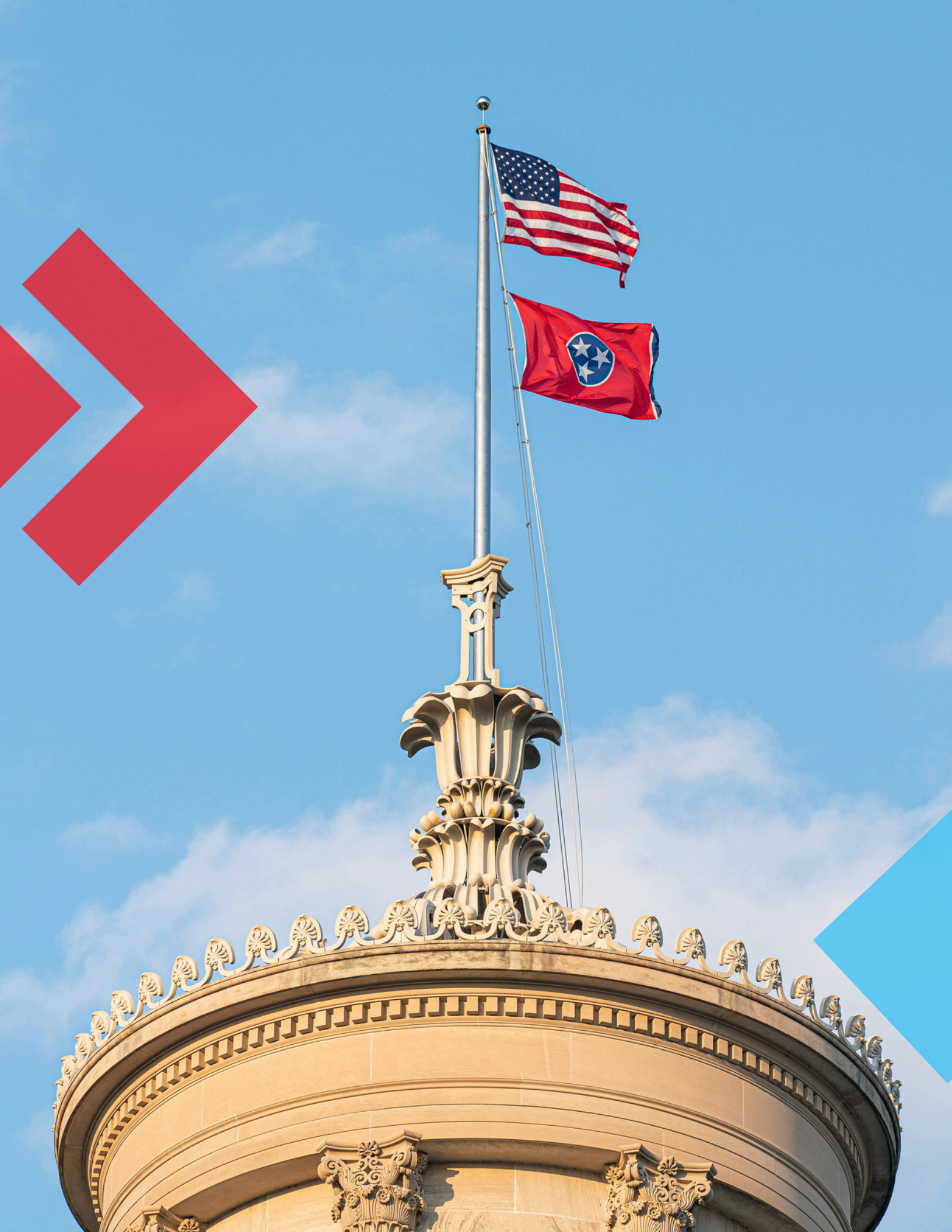
### RJ Gibson

Director of Government Affairs and  
Advocacy  
[RJ.Gibson@tnchamber.org](mailto:RJ.Gibson@tnchamber.org)

### Matthew Grove

Manager of Government Affairs and  
Advocacy  
[Matthew.Grove@tnchamber.org](mailto:Matthew.Grove@tnchamber.org)







## CONNECT



---

## WEBSITE

[www.tnchamber.org](http://www.tnchamber.org)

---

## CONTACT

[info@tnchamber.org](mailto:info@tnchamber.org) OR 615-256-5141