

TENNESSEE GOVERNMENT

Update

NEWS FOR THE CLIENTS AND FRIENDS OF BASS, BERRY & SIMS PLC

This past week, the Tennessee General Assembly continued its deliberate legislative pace; Governor Bredesen kicked off his CoverTN program at a small sandwich shop in downtown Nashville. CoverTN is a state-dollars-only program to provide health insurance for Tennesseans who are not eligible for Tennessee's Medicaid program and who are employed in positions that do not provide health insurance as a benefit.

On Tuesday morning of this week, word circulated in the Legislative Plaza that a compromise had been reached on medical malpractice reform. By Tuesday afternoon, the compromise had failed for lack of support, and the bill was deferred by the sponsor in the Senate Judiciary Committee. As is often the case in the General Assembly with issues in which several parties have an interest, there continues to be difficulty finding a middle ground. In this instance, it appears that the Tennessee Medical Association and other providers did not find enough benefit in the proposed compromise to be able to support it. Other interested parties include hospitals, nursing homes, insurance companies and trial lawyers.

The first skirmish in the battle over what the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce calls "Jobs Killer" bills occurred this week. The proposed state Gender Fairness bill was discussed in the House Government Operations Committee. After three roll call votes, each along party lines, consideration of the bill was postponed until next week.

The pace of legislative activity will increase significantly next week. Many House subcommittees have full calendars. In the Senate, the Judiciary Committee calendar has 37 bills (including several tort reform bills rolled over from this week) listed for consideration; the Commerce Committee has 21.

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Readers are urged to consult legal counsel concerning particular situations and specific legal questions.

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