

The second session of the 107<sup>th</sup> Tennessee General Assembly finished its third week of work yesterday, which was also the Senate deadline for filing bills. The House deadline is next Wednesday, February 1.

The governor has signed two of the three redistricting bills. Only the Senate redistricting plan has not become law. The Senate recalled the bill from the governor's desk so that Tipton County could be included in the plan. The original bill omitted Tipton County, a suburban county adjacent to Memphis that is and will be represented by the Senate majority leader.

The governor and both speakers announced a plan to address perceived constitutional weaknesses in the state's merit selection plan for appellate court judges. The so-called "Tennessee Plan" has been in effect since 1994. Vacancies are filled by the governor upon recommendation of a judicial nominating commission that screens candidates. Appellate court judges then appear on the ballot in a retain/do not retain election. Republicans have recently contended that the Tennessee Plan violates the Tennessee Constitution's requirement that judges be elected by the people. The Tennessee Plan has been found constitutional by two special Supreme Courts. [TN Report](#) and Tom Humphreys in the [Knoxville News Sentinel](#) have details.

The plan promoted by the governor and speakers would approve the Tennessee Plan in an amendment to the Tennessee Constitution. The amendment must be passed by a majority of both houses in this session of the General Assembly. Then, in the next session of the General Assembly, the amendment must be passed by a two-thirds majority in both houses. If passed by the super-majority, the amendment will be put to the people in a referendum on the November 2014 ballot.

The legislature has also taken up a bill to remove the Nashville Occupiers from War Memorial Plaza which is directly above legislative offices and committee rooms. The Nashville Occupiers were twice arrested and twice released last summer. [WPLN in Nashville](#) has that story.

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