

## TENNESSEE GOVERNMENT UPDATE

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

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November 3, 2010

Today marks the dawn of a new day in Tennessee politics. For the first time since Reconstruction, the Republicans will have complete control of state government. In addition to a landslide win for Knoxville mayor and businessman Bill Haslam (R), the GOP picked up a Senate seat and 14 seats in the House – all seats long held by Democrats. Continuing the trend, Republicans gained three seats in the Tennessee Congressional delegation.

In the race for governor, Haslam easily defeated Democrat Mike McWherter with 65 percent of the vote to McWherter's 33 percent. Haslam's 32 percentage point margin of victory is the biggest margin of victory for an open gubernatorial seat in more than 40 years. Andy Sher with the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* (<http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2010/nov/03/haslem-hands-down/?local>) and Tom Humphreys with the *Knoxville News Sentinel* (<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2010/nov/03/haslams-landslide-puts-gop-control-state/>) have the details. Haslam will be sworn in as governor on January 15, 2011 and is expected to favor policies that are supportive of business interests.

In the Senate, the Republican majority will grow from 19-14 to 20-13 with the defeat of incumbent Senator Doug Jackson (D) of Dickson. Despite being heavily favored to win, Jackson lost by more than 900 votes to Jim Summerville (R), a professor at Austin Peay. Tom Humphreys with the *Knoxville News Sentinel* has the details (<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2010/nov/03/with-haslams-election-gop-power-greatest-since-186/>). With this development, very little is expected to change in the Senate. Lieutenant Governor Ron Ramsey (R) will be re-elected and committee leadership will most likely remain unchanged.

Heading into the general election, Republicans held a very slim 50-48-1 majority over Democrats in the State House of Representatives. Although Republican gains were expected statewide, not even the Republican leadership predicted the enormous gain of 14 seats in the House. Prominent and long-serving Democrats were not immune from the Republican tide. House Judiciary Committee Chairman Kent Coleman (D), Agriculture Committee Chairman Stratton Bone (D), and Democratic Whip Mark Maddox (D) suffered unexpected losses. Former House Speaker Jimmy Naifeh (D), House Democratic Caucus Chairman Mike Turner (D), and House Finance, Ways and Means Committee Chairman Craig Fitzhugh (D) narrowly escaped defeat.

Republicans will now hold 64 of 99 House seats, which means that a new Speaker of the House is virtually certain. Leading contenders for the job appear to be Beth Harwell (R) and Glen Casada (R). The Republican Caucus elections will take place on December 8, 2010. Committee appointments by leadership will follow in January. No matter who ultimately prevails in the race for speaker, Republicans will enjoy a free hand in redrawing district lines for Tennessee's U.S. House districts and state legislative seats. Richard Locker at [memphisnewsblog.com](http://memphisnewsblog.com/2010/11/gop-tsunami-washes-over-the-state-capitol.html) has more detail (<http://memphisnewsblog.com/2010/11/gop-tsunami-washes-over-the-state-capitol.html>) on the implications of the House turnover.

With the retirement of John Tanner (D) (8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District) and Bart Gordon (D) (6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District), Democrats feared losing two seats of its 5-4 Democratic majority in Tennessee's Congressional delegation. Those seats were indeed won by Republicans Stephen Fincher and Diane Black, respectively. However, Democratic losses did not stop there. Three-time incumbent Lincoln Davis (D) (4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District) was defeated by Scott DesJarlais (R) after both engaged in one of the nastiest campaigns in the country. Additionally, Chuck Fleishmann (R) won former Congressman Zach Wamp's seat (3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District) after Wamp vacated the seat in a failed attempt to run for governor in the Republican Primary. Only Steve Cohen (D) in Memphis' 9<sup>th</sup> Congressional District and Jim Cooper (D) in Nashville's 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District managed wins for Democrats. Republicans now hold a 7-2 majority in the Tennessee Congressional delegation.

In case you were worried that you might not be able to hunt and fish under the new Republican regime, fear not. Voters have approved a constitutional amendment that guarantees every citizen of the state will have the personal right to hunt and fish – subject to reasonable regulations and restrictions as prescribed by law, of course.

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