

TN State Government

How it works

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The TN State Constitution was formed in 1796 in Knoxville by 55 delegates, then the TN State Constitution was sent to DC, where it was signed by President Washington on June 1, 1796.

Thomas Jefferson was quoted as saying the TN State Constitution, herein after referred to as "the Constitution " as "the least imperfect and most Republican of state Constitutions."

Source: <https://sos.tn.gov/civics/guides/tennessee-state-constitution>

It is the Constitution that establishes the rights of Tennesseans. No law in TN can be passed which contradicts that of the Constitution. The only way to change a law that contradicts the Constitution is to add/modify an amendment to the Constitution.

- To add/modify the Constitution
 - The state Assembly passes the Amendment to be put to the public for a vote
 - Or, a Constitutional convention

TN State Code

- A set of laws passed by the General Assembly dictating various aspects of TN
 - *The Tennessee code commission is hereby authorized and directed to formulate and supervise the execution of plans for the compilation, arrangement, classification, annotation, editing, indexing, printing, binding, publication, sale,*
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distribution and the performance of all other acts necessary for the publication of an official compilation of the statutes, codes and session laws of the state of Tennessee of a public and general nature, now existing and to be enacted in the future, including an electronically searchable database of such code, which official compilation shall be known as "Tennessee Code Annotated."

- This is the "bread & butter" of state law.
- None of the laws passed by the State Assembly can go against the Constitution

How the State Assembly Works

- 2 levels, the House "state Representative" and the Senate "State Senator"
- State Reps have elections every 2 years; Senators have elections every 4 years
- To find who your elected officials are, go here:
 - <https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/Apps/fmlv3/districts.aspx>
- To pass a bill, a bill follows a process.
 - The bill must have at least once Rep and one Senator "sponsor" the bill. The more who agree to sponsor the bill, the better
 - First the bill is submitted the following way:
 - *A legislator may introduce a bill in the body of which he is a member by filing it with the appropriate clerk. Bills must be typewritten on letter size paper (8 1/2" by 11") The bills are jacketed in manuscript covers of different and distinctive colors. The signature, or signatures, of the member, or members, sponsoring the bill must be placed on the cover which also must contain the caption of the bill.*

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- *The bill is then examined by the Chief Clerk of the House or Senate to see that it conforms to legislative rules, is given a number which is placed on all copies, and is then distributed as required under the rules.*
 - *A bill must be filed with the Chief Clerk no later than 4:00 p.m. on the day preceding the date of introduction. Any bills pre-filed in conformance with this House and Senate rule are introduced under the proper order of business, while any bills filed after 4:00 p.m. of the preceding day or during that day's session are held for introduction the next day the house is in session. There being no objection, the bill is passed on first consideration.*
 - *The next legislative day following introduction of a bill, the bill is passed on second reading and is referred by the Speaker to the appropriate standing committee under the proper order of business.*
 - *If the bill is then voted out of committee, it goes back to the floor for a vote. It must be voted by the majority of both the House and the Senate.*
 - *It is then submitted to the Governor for signature*

Ways to engage with your Representative and Senator

- Email
- Phone call
- Public event
- Visit their offices in Nashville

Important issues on the ballot for November 8, 2022 (Source:

https://ballotpedia.org/Tennessee_elections,_2022)

- **“Acting Governor Amendment”** *This amendment would add to article III, section 12 of the Tennessee Constitution a process for the temporary exercise of the powers and duties of the governor by the Speaker of the Senate—or the Speaker of the House if there is no Speaker of the Senate in office—when the governor is unable to discharge the powers and duties of the office of governor. While a Speaker is temporarily discharging the powers and duties of the governor, the Speaker would not be required to resign as Speaker or to resign as a member of the legislature; but the Speaker would not be able to preside as Speaker or vote as a member of the legislature. A Speaker who is temporarily discharging the powers and duties of the governor would not get the governor’s salary but would get the Speaker’s salary. The amendment would also exempt a Speaker who is temporarily discharging the powers and duties of the governor from provisions in the Constitution that would otherwise prohibit the Speaker from exercising the powers of the governor and from simultaneously holding more than one state office.”*
- **Remove Religious Minister Disqualification:** *“This amendment would delete article IX, section 1 of the Tennessee Constitution, which prohibits ministers of the gospel and priests of any denomination from holding a seat in either House of the legislature.”*
- **Remove slavery as punishment for a crime from the Constitution:** *“Constitutional Amendment 3 would remove language from the Tennessee Constitution that allows the use of slavery and involuntary servitude as criminal*

punishments. The ballot measure would replace the language with the statement, "Slavery and involuntary servitude are forever prohibited." The ballot measure would also state that the language does not prohibit an inmate from working when the inmate has been duly convicted of a crime."

- **Right-to-work Amendment:** *"This amendment would add a new section to article XI of the Tennessee Constitution to make it illegal for any person, corporation, association, or the State of Tennessee or its political subdivisions to deny or attempt to deny employment to any person because of the person's membership in, affiliation with, resignation from, or refusal to join or affiliate with any labor union or employee organization."*
- Governor, state Representatives, some state Senators, and some US House & Senate elections are also held on this date

Deadlines for the November 8, 2022 election (Source:

https://ballotpedia.org/Tennessee_elections,_2022)

- What is the voter registration deadline?
- In-person: Oct. 11, 2022
- By mail: Postmarked by Oct. 11, 2022
- Online: Oct. 11, 2022
- Is absentee/mail-in voting available to all voters?
- No
- What is the absentee/mail-in ballot request deadline?
- In-person: Nov. 1, 2022
- By mail: Received by Nov. 1, 2022
- What is the absentee/mail-in ballot return deadline?

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- In-person: Nov. 8, 2022
 - By mail: Received by Nov. 8, 2022
 - Is early voting available to all voters?
 - Yes
 - What are the early voting start and end dates?
 - Oct. 19, 2022 to Nov. 3, 2022

Contact your County Election Commission for more info on how to get registered and where to vote

- Knox Co:
 - <https://www.knoxcounty.org/election/>
 - 865-215-2480
- Anderson Co:
 - <https://www.acelect.com/>
 - 865-457-6238