

TICUA Policy Update
January 12, 2007

105th Session of the Tennessee General Assembly Begins with Historic Leadership Change

For the first time since Reconstruction the Tennessee State Senate has elected a Republican as Speaker of the Senate/Lt. Governor. Senator Ron Ramsey defeated long-time Speaker John Wilder as the leader of the State Senate. Lt. Governor Ramsey's first order of business will be to appoint the Senate Committees which he is expected to do this next week. In the past Sen. Wilder acted in a bipartisan fashion when appointing committee chairs; Ramsey indicated yesterday that he would do the same. It is expected that Republican Senator Jamie Woodson will remain chair of the Senate Education Committee.

Leadership stayed the same in the House of Representatives with Rep. Jimmy Naifeh being elected as the Speaker of the House. Naifeh appointed House committees yesterday with Rep. Les Winningham, once again, appointed as Chair of the House Education Committee.

Both the House and Senate will take a two week break from business and begin committee meetings during the week of February 5, 2007.

TICUA Pushes for Increased Need-based Aid

TICUA will leverage the recently released report on the Tennessee Student Assistance Award (TSAA) to push for increased funding for the state's only need-based aid program. The report calls for incremental steps to be taken to fully fund the aid program in the coming years. One step calls for an annual increase of 15% appropriated funding. Another step calls for using the interest income from the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship programs excess funds to supplement the TSAA program. Third, the report encourages the General Assembly to consider finding a dedicated funding source for the grant. Finally, the report calls for a protection of the grant program from any reversion requests. In the past, any funds not spent by a certain date were required to be sent back to the general fund; this reports calls for an exemption from such a request.

To read the full report go to www.ticua.org/publications

Contract Education: Best Buy for Tennessee

TICUA continues to educate members of the General Assembly to the benefits of the State's Contract Education program. This program expands the academic program offerings of the state by contracting with private colleges and universities. Private institutions often offer unique academic programs that are not offered by state campuses.

By contracting with TICUA members the state avoids program duplication and provides a wider array of academic programs without the larger expense of starting new programs.

The program is currently under-utilized leaving Tennesseans without space in these desired programs. It is a goal of TICUA to help legislators better understand the cost efficiency of expanding the current contracts. Contracting with private colleges and universities to take advantage of unused capacity for state residents is a resourceful way to maximize limited higher education appropriations.

Lottery Scholarship Could See More Changes

Before the session even began there was a buzz about possible changes to the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship programs. Some of the potential changes include increasing the amounts to \$4,000 for four year campuses and \$2,000 for two year campuses and possibly even the technology centers. There is discussion about reducing the burden on students moving from full-time to part-time. This change, however, would not increase the total of five years for which a student could receive the scholarship. Replacing the current 24, 48, 72, 96 and 120 hour GPA renewal benchmarks with a standard check at the end of each academic year along with eliminating the TELS grade point average tracking in favor of the institutional GPA have also been proposed.

The Governor has also suggested using some of the TELS excess funds to fund K-12 capital projects in the near future. Others are suggesting that the excess funds may be needed to extend the current funding model for the scholarship program into the future. These proposals and others will be debated in the halls of the General Assembly in the coming months.

TICUA's 51st Annual Meeting of the Membership

Don't forget to register online for the TICUA Annual Meeting to be held on Tuesday and Wednesday, February 20 – 21, 2007 at the downtown historic Hermitage Hotel in Nashville. This year's theme is *Candid Conversations for Presidential Success*. In addition to the policy updates and the Tuesday evening Gala Event, we will hold three private sessions for member Presidents. On Tuesday the presidents will gather and explore two key topics: tuition discounting and presidential effectiveness. Then, as a closure to the conference, the presidents will gather for their traditional open agenda breakfast meeting on Wednesday.

For more information and to register go to www.ticua.org/annual_meeting