

# Special Report

from  
State Representative

## Phillip Pinion

Weekly Newsletter from Capitol Hill in Nashville  
June 1, 2005

Contact: Matt Kroplin, Press Secretary, (615) 741-6620

## **HOUSE COMMITS TO ETHICS REFORM** *Adjourns as Productive Legislative Session Comes to a Close*

On Saturday, May 28, the Tennessee House of Representatives adjourned, having completed its work for the year. Over 2,400 bills were introduced during this half of the General Assembly and were heard during the 49 legislative days used.

Our priorities for the 2005 session, from the opening gavel in January, were clear. Putting the people of Tennessee first, we set as our goal to pass **real ethics reform** now rather than posturing ourselves politically through rhetoric and propaganda. We achieved this by:

- Fighting opposition attempts to delay passage of HB 1, a bill that prohibits members of the General Assembly from taking money to influence legislation. We listened to the voters and fought to provide an environment in which legislators can act ethically and still do their jobs;
- Sponsoring and passing HB 1090 and HB 1098 which close gaping loopholes in campaign finance regulations;
- Appointing a select committee to examine over the break appropriate ways for the House to police itself in regard to ethic-violation charges. Among the ideas to be discussed by this committee are establishing a permanent and independent Ethics Commission, examining the role of the Registry of Election Finance and ways to review ethic-violation complaints.

We remained focused and achieved this goal. Additionally, we were able to achieve marked success on the other components of our 2005 Legislative Agenda.

- **Balance the state budget with no new taxes.**
- **Expand the Pre-K Program.** Using excess lottery revenue, this program will provide thousands of at-risk students an early start on their education. (HB 2333)
- **Improve the creation and retention of jobs.** The “Tennessee Jobs Growth Act of 2005” allows the Department of Economic Development to fast track certain infrastructure development and job training assistance programs. (HB 2287)

- **Lower the cost of prescription drugs.** Legislation was approved which will lower the cost of drugs to TennCare patients by requiring the use of generic drugs unless the prescribing doctor specifically notes otherwise, saving the state millions on TennCare prescription drug costs. (HB 1410)
- **Crack down on the scourge of methamphetamine abuse:** The “Meth-free Tennessee Act of 2005” is a comprehensive step toward ending this menace. It places items containing pseudoephedrine behind the counter, closes the personal use loophole and expands the ability of our law enforcement personnel to react as the drug culture changes and restrict the sale of other ingredients as they are used to make methamphetamine. (HB 2334)
- **Change health care so that those who really need it will have it:** The Governor’s Safety Net Task Force presented its recommendations to provide a soft landing for those who are removed from the TennCare roles. Working with the governor, we reached a tentative agreement with some TennCare advocates and stakeholders to preserve health coverage for approximately 100,000 of the sickest and neediest enrollees in exchange for legal relief from the Grier Consent Decree.

We accomplished each of these tasks and more. Listening to the citizens in our districts, we also addressed other issues that you told us are important to you.

- **Protected our investment in Tennessee’s children** by fully funding the Basic Education Program (BEP).
- **Created strict new Anti-Drug Legislation:** House Bill 291 expands the scope of Tennessee’s Drug Free Zones to include secondary schools, preschools, child care agencies, public libraries, recreational centers and parks and House Bill 191 protects the safety of Tennessee’s drivers by revoking the license and taking away the cars of those who use a motor vehicle to transport meth.
- **Expanded the Legislative Broadcasting program** so that House session now reaches over 1 million households on cable and an unlimited number via the Internet.
- **Approved new Consumer Protection legislation** so that Social Security numbers are not printed on driver’s licenses and complete credit card numbers are not printed on vendor receipts.

I look forward to now returning home, spending time with my family, listening to my constituents and preparing for the next legislative session in January. During the course of the summer and fall, if there is any assistance I can provide to you, please do not hesitate to call me at 615-741-0718 or 731-536-0200 or email me at [rep.phillip.pinion@legislature.state.tn.us](mailto:rep.phillip.pinion@legislature.state.tn.us)

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