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# Morning Fax<sup>®</sup>

Today's News... This Morning

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**(SEE PAGE 3 & 4 IN TODAYS EDITION)**

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Monday, March 04, 2024 Athens, Tennessee

## Community News You Can Use

- ✓ The Zion Hill Baptist Church's free prayer breakfast mentioned in Friday's edition of the church news will be at the TWU dining hall on April 20.
- ✓ On March 7<sup>th</sup>, join E.G. Fisher Public Library for a family-friendly movie. There will be popcorn and a coloring sheet to go along with the movie.
- ✓ Team Meeting for Relay for Life will be at 6 pm TODAY, March 4 at Allen Memorial Methodist church.
- ✓ The City of Athens Parks and Recreation Department has announced the Athens Easter Egg Hunt, for ages 12 and under, will be Saturday, March 23 at 12:00pm at the Athens Regional Park. There will be over 12,000 eggs filled with candy as well as the opportunity to win a grand prize. In addition to the grand prizes, the Parks and Recreation staff will be stuffing and hiding eggs filled with dozens of prize baskets and local business coupons. Eggs will be in the front of the park, behind the red brick house continuing across the front of the park, around the pond, and into the field beside the pavilion. All ages hunt together, and everyone must begin the hunt from the concrete walkways. The hunt will start promptly at noon and due to increased traffic for the event, the department advises participants to arrive 30 minutes early and to bring their own baskets or bags for hunting. Athens Regional Park is located at 2405 Decatur Pike in Athens, TN, conveniently off Exit 49 on I-75. For more information, call Athens Parks and Recreation at 744-2704 or email [recreation@athenstn.gov](mailto:recreation@athenstn.gov).

**LISTENING REMINDER:** This week's guest on Main Street Moments will be Sandra Kinney, New Main Street Athens Director. The broadcast will be aired at 8:15 a.m. Tuesday on WYXI RADIO: AM-1390 and FM-94.5.

## Gov. Lee Visits Tennessee National Guard Troops

Saturday, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee visited Tennessee National Guard soldiers at the Millington Tennessee Army National Guard Armory ahead of their deployment to the Nation's Southern border in the wake of the most severe border crisis the United States has experienced in decades. "America continues to face an unprecedented border crisis, and people across the nation are experiencing the devastating consequences of rising crime, drug trafficking and human trafficking," said Gov. Bill Lee. "Governors are working together, taking immediate action to do what the federal government won't do, and that is secure our border. I commend Tennessee's National Guard troops for answering this important call to service and providing critical support." Last month, Gov. Lee committed to deploying two waves of state active-duty soldiers to Texas to assist in their efforts. As the Tennessee Department of the Military continues to coordinate with Texas to determine areas of greatest need, this is the first deployment of approximately 50 Tennessee National Guard members who volunteered to join "Operation Lone Star." Tennessee has a long history of supporting Texas in efforts to secure the border. While the current administration has attacked and sued Texas for stepping up to protect American..... See Page 3 Guard Troops



- Monday-Sweetwater-Little Drugs-10:30 - 1:30
- Tuesday-Madisonville-10:30 - 1:30
- Wednesday-Sweetwater EK Auction HWY 68 - 9ish-4ish
- Thursday-Athens - Harbor Freight- 10:30 -1:30
- Friday-Sweetwater-Little Drugs-10:30 - 2:30

**2 DUDES BBQ & CATERING**  
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# The State of School Choice

**Op-Ed From State Senator Adam Lowe:** Since joining the legislature just one year ago, Tennessee has engaged in some of the most robust debates of our time. I have been told by numerous predecessors that it is difficult to recall a season like we have experienced. The 113<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has taken charge of issues on tax reform, public education funding, community violence, child protection, substance abuse, and state-wide economic growth in a time of hyperinflation. The addition of reformative discussions in school choice seems to be right in line with the temperament of the legislature to run head-on into controversial topics. Behind all of the rhetoric and the exhaustion from previous legislative challenges, school choice is an idea that deserves discussion. What is school choice? What are the benefits? Is this something that is good for Tennessee? It has been difficult to have these discussions constructively due to the political interference of many who proceed with preconceptions and rhetoric. The buzz words prevail. “Voucher scam”, “government interference”, and other toxic labels seek to elicit emotional responses from the public, not measured consideration. Some have even gone as far as to accuse school choice proponents of committing government fraud. It is apparent that many are entrenched in long-held opinions around the issue. In fact, the majority of letters released by school boards, directors, and the public that were in opposition to the bill came before it was available to read. Needless to say, assumption and assertion have impeded true discussion. As we began the talks around providing a public fund for families to use for educational freedom, I made it a point to meet with the various stakeholders in the space including public school officials, private school officials, homeschool educators, and parents. My questions were simple. What are the possible impacts of a choice program? What is the desire for one? What does it mean for my district? The feedback was as expected. Parents want more freedom. Schools want to protect the progress of students that remain in public education. We now effectively have two working drafts of the opportunity scholarship legislation proposed by the governor. The differences in the state senate and state house versions can be found in the proposed amendments to the legislation. Each version is evolving as it moves through the various committees and could ultimately be altered in conference between the body after session. The final form is still unknown but what we do know is that there is a pot of money being created for the use of some to pursue educational opportunities outside of their zoned public school system. How much money and eligibility requirements both for use and receipt are still being massaged in each chamber. I have long been a proponent of educational choice since I completed my doctoral dissertation on the topic more than a decade ago. When I ran for office, I openly supported the merits of empowering parents with educational freedom, and I have attempted to positively influence the evolution of this legislation. I believe school choice begins with healthy public schools and Tennessee has certainly made that investment in recent years. Since 2018, we have increased public educational funding by more than \$1.5 billion. This year alone, the increase to public education is more than \$100 million MORE than what has been proposed for the opportunity scholarship. It seems that Tennessee is in a position to support educational choice while also assuring we do not lose stride on the investments we have made in public education. However, the present environment in Nashville has not created an optimal environment for good reform. Some of those opposed to the measure have turned to dishonest narratives and fear tactics. Some of the groups pressing for the reform seem to be willing to settle for passage of a subpar version in order to “move the needle” on the issue. Meanwhile, a handful of legislators are working to generate a reform that matters for families in the state. I believe that most legislators are waiting to see the final version before committing to a vote, but we have come to a point where more legislators need to begin sharing what elements are important in that consideration. I am not immune from such deliberations and for clarity, will share the standard whereby I will judge any final legislation around school choice or opportunity scholarships.

1. The program must be an independent fund and not raid public educational coffers for financial support.
2. The program must respect the autonomy of private schools and homeschool networks and not obligate them to any additional testing or evaluation.
3. The program must be true, universal choice by allowing families to use the scholarship to attend ANY school of choice, even if it is another public school and not restrict choice to just private schools.
4. The program must include opportunities for the working and middle class and not isolated to only low-income families.
5. The program must be financially sustainable.

I believe that our best reform will come with this standard. It can create opportunities for educational choice statewide, even in communities where there is not an accessible private school option. It can continue the momentum we have in public education, even allowing for competitive fairness by well-performing public schools to benefit from opportunity dollars. Lastly, I hope this encourages my colleagues in both the legislative and educational spaces to abandon the toxicity of rhetoric for the goodwill of marrying the needs of public education with the desires of families pursuing educational liberation. It is a worthy endeavor.



# Compassionate Service in Your Time of Need

In times of grief, making difficult decisions about how best to honor the memory of someone so important can be overwhelming. We are here to help with complete, professional and compassionate funeral planning services to meet your needs and respectfully celebrate the life and legacy of your loved one.

# Ziegler Funeral Home

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Monday, March 04, 2024 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 3 Athens, Tennessee

## Obituaries

♦**Polly Liner**, age 95, a lifetime resident of Athens, passed away February 22, at West Meade Place in Nashville. Polly was an active member of Keith Memorial United Methodist Church. She participated in many church events and enjoyed being a member of "her circle". She graduated from McMinn County High School and was football queen in addition to playing the Alto Saxophone in the band. She graduated from Tennessee Wesleyan College with a business degree in 1946. In her early years Polly worked for Tennessee Wesleyan in the business department and later as an administrative assistant at TVA in Chattanooga. In her later years she had several retail jobs (frame or gift shops) because she loved all aspects of shopping, as well as interacting with people. Most of her life was spent as a housewife and mother of four. Graveside services will be at Cedar Grove Cemetery in Athens, on March 19, at 1:00 PM. The family wishes to thank long time family friends Jerry and David Smith of Smith Funeral Home in Athens for helping our family now and in the past. Smith Funeral and Cremation Services of Athens is in charge of arrangements.

♦**Velma Lee Underdown Davis**, age 92, lifelong resident of McMinn County, passed away on Thursday, February 29. She was a member of South Liberty Baptist Church. Velma enjoyed listening to gospel music, being outdoors, gardening, and farming. Visitation will be from 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM on Monday, March 4, at Ziegler Funeral Home. Funeral services will be held at 2:00 PM at the funeral home. Interment will follow directly after funeral services at South Liberty Cemetery in Athens. Ziegler Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

## Arrest Reports

### From The McMinn County Justice Center

Arrest Reports 2/28-2/29

- Cameron C. Wagoner, aged 31 of Etowah, was arrested for Violation of State Probation by the McMinn County Sheriff's Office. Cash Bond set at \$1,000.
- Taylor Bowman, aged 23 of Decatur, was arrested by the McMinn County Sheriff's Office for Unlawful Drug Paraphernalia. No bond was assigned.
- Jaylon Johnson, aged 23 of Athens, was arrested by the Etowah PD on charges of Child Abuse and Neglect. Bond was set at \$5,000.
- Sean Fritchman, aged 35 of Etowah, was arrested by the McMinn County Sheriff's Office for one charge of Aggravated Assault with bond set at \$15,000.
- Ashley Wilcox, aged 29 of Athens, was arrested for Violation of Probation by the McMinn County Sheriff's Office with a cash bond set at \$681.39.
- Robert Berry, aged 53 of Auburn, Alabama was arrested by the Tennessee Highway Patrol for Driving Under the Influence and Child Endangerment and is being held without bond.
- Stephen Coleman, aged 38 of Etowah was arrested by the McMinn County Sheriff's Office for Failure to Appear. No bond was issued. The accused are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. Information gathered from public sources.

### Guard Troops: Continued from Page 1:

...citizens amid the continued spike in illegal crossings, human trafficking, and trafficking of deadly drugs like fentanyl, Tennessee has stood in the gap to provide resources". Gov. Lee was joined by First Lady Maria Lee, U.S. Congressman David Kustoff, Sen. Ed Jackson, Sen. Brent Taylor, Rep. Chris Hurt, Rep. Debra Moody, and Rep. Chris Todd.



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**MCMINN COUNTY POLLING LOCATION NOTICE**  
**Presidential Preference Primary,**  
**McMinn County Republican & Democratic Primaries,**  
**Etowah City School Board Primary**

You are hereby notified that the Presidential Preference Republican & Democratic Primaries, County Republican & Democratic Primaries and Etowah City School Board Primaries will be held in voting precincts according to their district in McMinn County, Tennessee.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2024**  
**FROM 9:00 A.M. UNTIL 8:00 P.M.**

**THE POLLING PLACES ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

- |  |                             |           |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Athens City Intermediate School (Blue Side) | 255 Keith Lane              | Athens    |
| 2. Etowah Community Center                     | 155 Robinson St             | Etowah    |
| 4. Englewood School                            | 108 College St              | Englewood |
| 5. Rogers Creek School                         | 137 County Road 82          | Athens    |
| 6. Riceville School                            | 3592 Hwy 11 S               | Riceville |
| 7. Calhoun School                              | 150 Sherwood Ave            | Calhoun   |
| 8. Niota School                                | 418 N Burn Rd               | Niota     |
| 9. E.G. Fisher Library                         | 1289 Ingleside Ave          | Athens    |
| 10. McMinn Co High School                      | 2215 Congress Pkwy S        | Athens    |
| 11. McMinn County Courthouse                   | 6 E Madison Ave (Blue Room) | Athens    |
| 12. Allen Memorial United Methodist            | 800 Decatur Pike            | Athens    |
| 13. Jones Chapel Family Life Center            | 590 County Road 778         | Athens    |
| 14. E.K. Baker School                          | 1044 County Road 172        | Athens    |
| 15. Mt. View School                            | 145 County Road 627         | Athens    |

**ABSENTEE COUNTING BOARD-Will Meet at 1:00 PM**

McMinn County Election Commission Office  
6 E. Madison Ave, Athens, TN

The McMinn County Election Commissioners will also be at the Election Commission Office and Voting Precincts on Election Day.

If you have any questions about your voting location, please call the Election Commission Office at (423) 745-0843. You can also go to [GoVoteTN.gov](https://www.GoVoteTN.gov) and check your voter registration status and the location of your polling place.

**ATTENTION CANDIDATES & POLITICAL PARTIES**

Display of Campaign posters, signs or other campaign materials, distribution of candidate materials and solicitation of votes is strictly prohibited within 100 feet of any polling place. (TCA 2-7-111) During the hours the polls are open, candidates are not to enter a polling place unless they are there to cast their vote. (TCA 2-7-103)

**McMinn County Election Commission**  
**6 E. Madison Ave, Athens, Tennessee**  
**423-745-0843**

**Todd Watson, Chairman Bobby Goodman, Secretary**  
**Stephen Miller, Member Amber Robinson, Member Brenda Ratledge, Member**  
**TeAnna McKinney, Administrator of Elections**