

Office of the Governor

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Bill Haslam (R)

Governor of Tennessee

Bill Haslam, forty-ninth governor of Tennessee, was born August 23, 1958. In 2010, he was elected governor with the largest margin of victory in any open governor's race in the state's history, and in 2014, secured the largest reelection victory in modern Tennessee history.

Under his leadership, Tennessee has been recognized as a national leader in education, job creation, and fiscal responsibility. Tennessee is the first state in the nation to offer high school graduates and adults two years of community or technical college free of tuition and mandatory fees. He has launched the Drive to 55 initiative to increase the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary degree or certificate to 55 percent by 2025. He worked with the Tennessee General Assembly to pass the largest tax cut in Tennessee history while delivering a safe, reliable, and debt-free transportation system. He and his administration have cut more than \$500 million in recurring spending, shrunk state government by 10 percent, balanced the budget every year, ensured Tennessee has the lowest debt in the country, and more than doubled the state's savings account. Haslam has focused on making Tennessee the number one location in the Southeast for high-quality jobs.

Born and raised in Knoxville, Haslam excelled in academics and sports. He earned a degree in History from Emory University. Before entering public service, he managed his family's business, driving all over the country seeking locations for new truck stops, helping the business expand nationwide. In 2003, he ran successfully for mayor of Knoxville and was reelected in 2007 with 87 percent of the vote.

He and his wife, Crissy, have been married for thirty-six years and have three children and seven grandchildren. For more than three decades, they have been members of Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church in Knoxville.

Duties of the Governor

“The supreme executive power of this state shall be vested in a governor.”

This sentence in the Tennessee Constitution best describes the awesome responsibility of the governor, who, more than any other individual, is responsible for the operation of state government. The governor's duties, responsibilities, and authority are defined in the Tennessee Constitution. It governs issues ranging from the governor's qualifications to the right to convene the General Assembly in extraordinary session.

The governor is responsible for the enforcement of laws, the collection of taxes, and the general well-being of citizens. These responsibilities are entrusted to a Cabinet that includes the commissioners of the various departments and the governor's staff.

Intangible qualities that the governor should possess include the ability to lead and create an atmosphere of unity among the state's citizens; the energy to participate in various functions, both in Nashville and around the state; the compassion to understand problems and to assist in their solutions; the enthusiasm necessary to motivate others; and the ability to communicate with all segments of society.

The Constitution clearly defines the tangible responsibilities of the governor. For example, "He shall be commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy of the state, and of the Militia, except when they shall be called into the service of the United States."

In the Constitution, the General Assembly has the sole authority to pass laws, and the courts of the state have the sole authority to try cases. However, the governor has considerable influence in both areas. The governor is expected to recommend legislation and has the authority to veto bills that have been passed and that, in his judgment, are not in the best interest of all citizens. The governor also has the authority to appoint judges and chancellors to fill vacancies in the courts, with confirmation by the Tennessee General Assembly. The governor has the right to grant executive clemency, as well as the power to grant post-conviction reprieves and pardons, except in cases of impeachment.

The governor is the people's spokesman in national matters and their representative when a single voice is needed in matters of concern outside the state's boundaries, including labor and management, industry, agriculture, and business.

The governor appoints commissioners to head the various departments and assist in the operation of government. They report directly to the governor or an executive staff member. The governor and the executive staff occupy offices in the Capitol. The executive offices are on the first floor, and the legislative chambers are on the second. Commissioners' offices are generally located near Capitol Hill.

The governor also appoints members to boards and commissions to assist in governmental operations. Many boards and commissions regulate personal services performed in the state. Some boards and commissions are official agencies of the state, and others are semiofficial.

The boards and commissions on which the governor serves include the State Funding Board, State Building Commission, Board of Equalization, Tennessee Local Development Authority, and the School Bond Authority. He also chairs the Board of Regents and the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees.

The Constitution provides that the governor "shall be at least thirty years of age, shall be a citizen of the United States, and shall have been a citizen of this state seven years next before his election."

Candidates for governor must first obtain their party's nomination in an August primary election, and then must run against the nominees of other parties in a November general election. The governor is limited to two four-year terms. The governor may receive an annual salary of approximately \$190,000, as well as an official residence and funding for its operation.

The Tennessee Constitution provides that, in the event of a vacancy in the office of governor, the speaker of the Senate assumes the office. Next in the line of succession are the speaker of the House of Representatives, the secretary of state, and the comptroller.