



COAT NEWSLETTER

A Message from COAT President, Debbie Tittle



Happy New Year To All!

I am very humbled to have the opportunity to serve as President of the County Officials Association of Tennessee! I appreciate the nomination from my Register family and the acceptance of the COAT membership. I am excited to usher in the New Year with such an extraordinary group of individuals!

A big thank you is in order to former COAT President and Hickman County Clerk, Casey Dorton. His expertise in organizational leadership has been - and continues to be - inspiring to me.

The upcoming year is filled with opportunities for you, as COAT members. Whether serving on the board, a committee, or helping to organize a COAT event in your county, we look forward to working with you and putting your talents to good use for our association.

We are blessed with the outstanding leadership of our Executive Director Ben Rodgers, whom most of you have already had the pleasure of meeting. Ben's knowledge of county government operations and his extensive education and experience has prepared him well to lead us in our endeavors. Ben's attention to detail amazes me and reassures me that we are in very good hands, as is evidenced by our glowing financial reports and other positive changes he has implemented..

Our convention committee, lead by Carter County Register of Deeds Jarrod Ellis, is busy at work to offer you a convention experience second to none. Our conference will take place October 26th thru the 29th at Meadowview Conference Resort & Convention Center in Kingsport, Tennessee. The agenda is taking shape and we look forward to sharing with you. Our Director of Marketing and Communications, Lori Long, will be keeping everyone informed as our registration dates approach.

In closing, please know the success of the County Officials Association of Tennessee begins and ends with its members. The daily role each of you play in county government across our state speaks volumes as to the success of our association.

Debbie Tittle



A Message from COAT Executive Director, Ben Rodgers

COAT Members,

I hope everyone has stayed warm and safe during Winter Storm Fern. Our thoughts and prayers are with everyone as communities continue to mitigate damage and restore power. We are thankful for the many of you who have been providing storm recovery assistance to your communities. Once again, Tennesseans prove why we are the best through service and volunteering.

I am extremely thankful to our Past President, Casey Dorton, for the leadership he provided to our association in 2025. His vision, along with the board's, led to a successful annual conference. We are humbled and grateful for the 350-plus who attended the three-day conference. We were at max capacity for vendor booths. We are excited about the value they bring to our counties.

We are also thankful for our Madame President, Debbie Tittle, and her passion to serve. She has hit the ground running and, along with our conference committee, is busy planning this year's annual conference in Kingsport.

I am blessed with a great team in Lori and Brice, along with our board and committees. Everyone is committed to making counties stronger through advocacy and service. We maintain a constant presence on Capitol Hill and continue to offer educational opportunities in partnership with CTAS and other subject-matter experts. Our annual regional meetings are scheduled for April and offer up to 6 hours of COCTP recertification credits. And we have exciting news! We will be joining TCSA for breakfast at their County Government Day event on February 24th. I want to thank our Legislative Chair, Sheena Tinsley, Legislative Director Brice Hobby, and Marketing and Communications Director Lori Long for putting this together. This will give our members the opportunity to meet with their county mayors, county commissioners, and highway superintendents. Governor Lee, Lieutenant Governor McNally, and Speaker Sexton have been invited to TCSA's breakfast. Once breakfast is finished, we encourage our members to visit with their legislators and attend committee meetings.

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Please join Sheena, Brice, and me as we meet with legislators to discuss legislation affecting county government. Sheena and our legislative team will also present a two-hour class, "How a Bill Becomes a Law," on the afternoon of February 23rd at the IPS Training Facility in Nashville. You can earn COCTP recertification for attending.

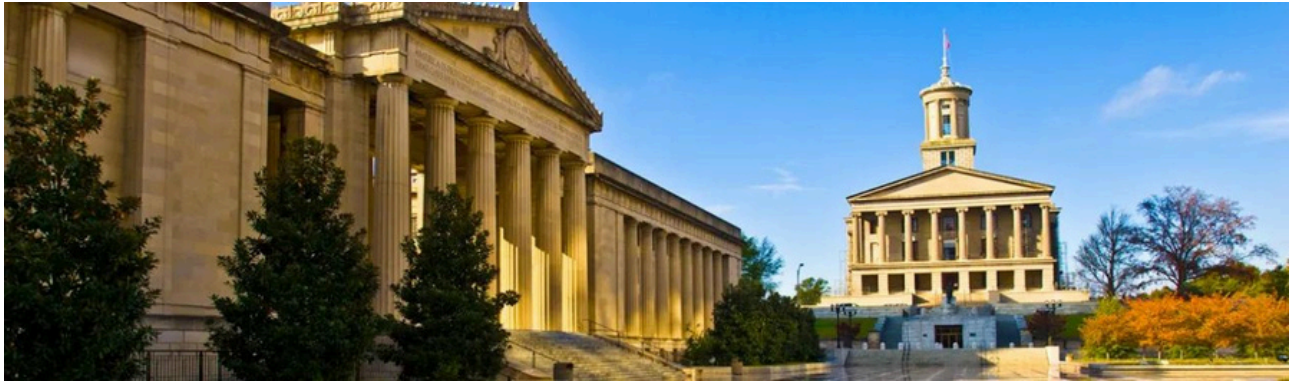
Finally, I want to thank each of you for your service to your counties and our great state. You impact more people than any other level of government. The services counties offer are essential and provide Tennesseans with a wonderful quality of life. Public service is my passion, and it brings me joy to serve alongside all of our county elected officials throughout the state. Thank you for the opportunity to support you in making counties stronger.

Ben Rodgers



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Legislative Update

As many of you know, the second half of the 114th General Assembly is back in full swing. The Senate and the House are filing new bills daily. We are working diligently with our COAT Legislative Committee to identify priority bills of interest. Once we have finalized each of our affiliate groups (formerly referred to as "tracks"), we will begin sending out weekly bill reports to the membership.

Each bill report will contain specific items for your affiliate. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the bills in this list, as they may have implications for your office, and we rely on your feedback.

We are anticipating a fast-moving, abbreviated session, as it is an election year. The Governor's State and the State Address is slated to take place on February 2nd at the Capitol in the House Chamber at 6 PM CST.

Bill Filing Deadlines

Senate: Due to the recent inclement weather, the bill filing deadline has been extended to February 2nd, with final language needing to be submitted to legislative legal by noon on January 29th.

House: The filing deadline will remain January 30th.

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UPCOMING 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

REGARDING LEGISLATION, COAT IS CONTINUING TO MONITOR BILLS AS THEY ARE FILED. JUST TO REITERATE, ONCE ALL BILLS HAVE BEEN FILED AND OUR AFFILIATE GROUPS ARE FINALIZED, YOU WILL BEGIN RECEIVING DETAILED BILL REPORTS WITH PERTINENT INFORMATION ON FRIDAYS. THERE HAVE BEEN ROUGHLY 5,000 BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS FILED IN THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE IN TOTAL FOR THIS 114TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Court Clerks:

As it relates to our court clerks, we are working on several pieces of legislation, including some cleanup language pertaining to the interlock indigency program. SB1845/HB1748 by Senator Hatcher and Representative Wright is our bill, which seeks to clean up the requirement that was passed last year for a clerk to determine indigency. COAT is actively working alongside Lauren Webb with the Department of the Treasury on this bill.

We are also working with the TBI to clean up a bill that was passed last year, called Savannah's Law, that pertains to a domestic abuse registry.

Trustees:

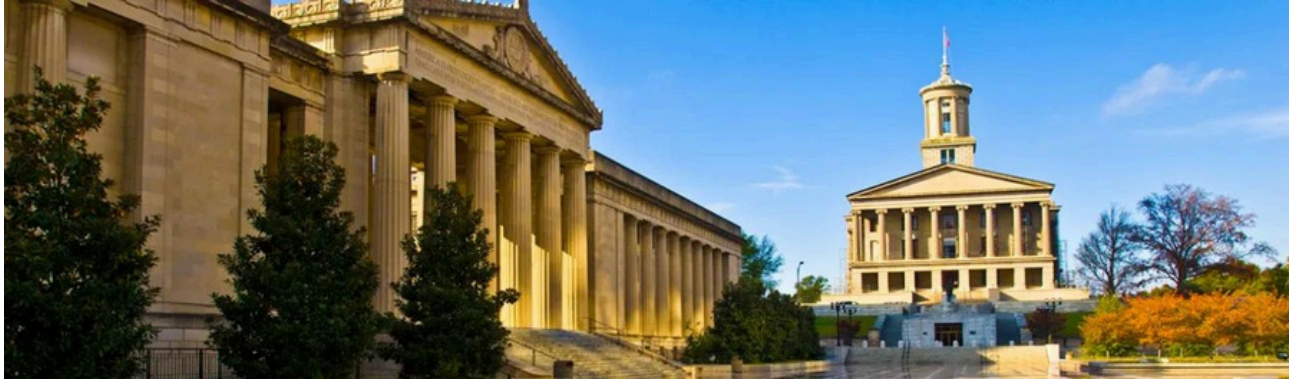
Our trustees are continuing to work with the Office of the Comptroller on legislation relative to property tax relief for elderly individuals. Last year, Senator Kyle and Representative Harris carried SB1326/HB1380, which ultimately failed in the Senate committee. We intend to work with the comptroller's office to bring a bill again this year that lowers the age requirement for relief from 85 to 80.

We are also playing defense on anything that would put a cap on property taxes, as well as anything that would restrict the county's ability to accept only the undisputed portion of an appeal of a property tax. Those conversations are ongoing, and our position has been communicated. We are continuing to work the bill.

We are also in conversation with the Commercial Real Estate Development Association to clean up a bill that was passed last year, which became public chapter 357.

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Register of Deeds:

We are bringing a bill on behalf of the registers this year, related to a memorandum of contract. We have secured sponsors, who are Senator Seal and Representative Martin. We have not yet filed the language. We are working with several stakeholders, including the Land Title folks, TBA, Bankers Association, etc.

The legislative intent is to provide an additional layer of transparency in the contracting process by requiring the seller to also sign the memorandum of contract, in addition to the buyer, who is the only signature required per the current law.

In addition to that, we are playing defense on several bills, including SB1707/HB1762, which would require a register to verify an attorney's bar number. We are in ongoing discussions with the land title folks, as they brought the bill. The sponsor, Senator Taylor, was receptive to our request to change the language to allow a register to accept that information rather than verify it.

We are awaiting a response from the land title folks on our proposed amendment.

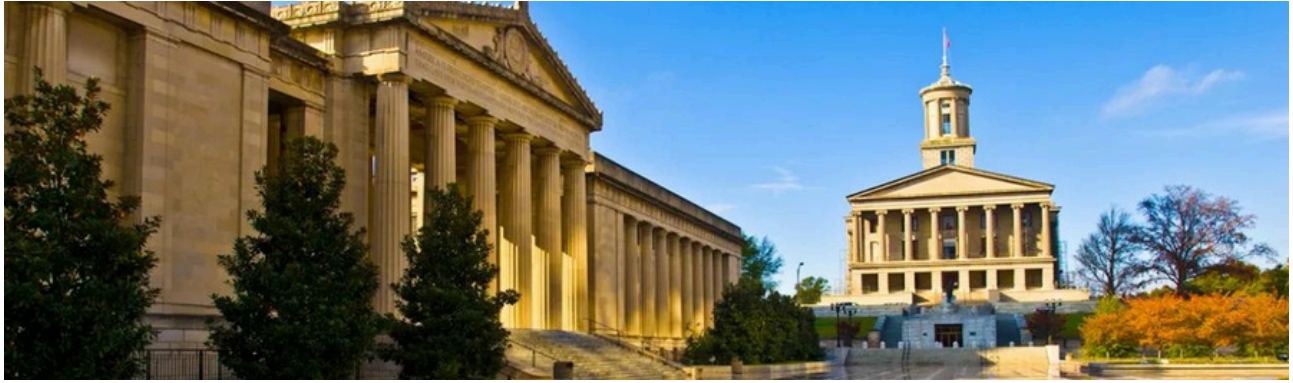
Another item we are working on for the registers pertains to real estate fraud. Register of Deeds Legislative Chair Marc Gravitt and Legislative Committee member and former title attorney Julie Runyon both spoke on the record during the December TACIR meeting against the real estate fraud report and the idea of checking IDs upon receiving walk-in documents. The report was voted on erroneously and is set to be heard again.

TACIR is slated to meet at the end of this month, where we anticipate a continued discussion.

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County Clerks:

Our county clerks will be playing major defense this year. Legislative Leadership, at the direction of the White House and the Department of War, is moving forward with legislation relative to immigration, which may require locals to verify legal status.

Several bills have already been filed, and we expect more by the time of the bill-filing deadline.

We are working with Senator Gardenhire and Representative Martin on SB1742/HB1874, which originated out of Hamilton County. It seeks to clean up a part of the code that defines a Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV). We have communicated with several stakeholders, including the Department of Revenue, as well as car makers. We have not received any pushback as of now.

Additionally, we have been working very closely with Representative Hicks on his efforts to bring a bill on insurance verification. County Clerk Legislative Chair and President, Jeff Whidby and Lisa Crowell, respectively, both made themselves available to attend an in-person meeting with Representative Hicks this week, which was productive.

One aspect of the bill is raising fines on the back end by a significant amount. It also changes the number of letters sent by the Department of Revenue when an individual is deemed unconfirmed in the system. From my understanding, it would not disrupt the current online kiosk system in a major way. We are awaiting the final language from legislative legal.

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The bills mentioned above are just a few highlights. You can expect weekly reports from COAT beginning two weeks from today, following the bill-filing deadline on 2/6.

The legislative session is always a crazy time of year! We thank any member who is willing to engage in the process. As an elected official, you have an elevated voice when reaching out to legislators. I would encourage each of you to foster a relationship with your legislator, especially if you do not already have one

Finally, defense. Playing defense is a MAJOR part of the legislative process. We will lean to you all as elected officials for support on high-priority items. There is power in numbers. You all are stronger and more effective as a collective.

Final thoughts...

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge our incredible Legislative Committee for this legislative session, without whom Ben and Brice would be lost! We would like to especially recognize and thank our Chairlady, Sheena Tinsley, for leading the pack this year.

- COAT Legislative Chair - Sheena Tinsley (Sullivan, Register of Deeds)
- COAT President - Debbie Tittle (Unicoi, Register of Deeds)
- Register of Deeds Legislative Chair - Marc Gravitt (Hamilton)
- Register of Deeds President - Cheryl Reddin (Obion)
- County Clerks Legislative Chair - Jeff Whidby (Williamson)
- County Clerks President - Lisa Crowell (Rutherford)
- Court Clerks Legislative Chair - Tommy Lee Kidd (Lawrence)
- Trustees Legislative Chair - Teb Batey (Rutherford)
- Trustees President - Glynda Pendergrass (Dickson)

Thank you to each member who is serving on this committee this year! Your role and feedback are vital to the success of our legislative year. Each of you serves as a subject matter expert and a point of contact for your respective affiliates.

It is worth noting that your COAT legislative committee meets every Friday to discuss legislative issues, which is a notable commitment. So, once again, THANK YOU!

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2026 COAT Board of Directors

A very special thanks to our 2026 COAT Board, led by COAT President Debbie Tittle, for their willingness to serve and for their continued support of the association.

- President - Debbie Tittle
- **Presidential Assistant - Abigail Kidd**
- Secretary - Patty Treadway
- President-Elect - Kristie Maxwell
- 1st Vice President - Cheryl Reddin
- 2nd Vice President - Glynda Pendergrass
- 3rd Vice President - Sheila Proffitt
- 4th Vice President - Lisa Crowell
- Chaplain - Stanley Mitchell
- Past President - Casey Dorton
- Finance Committee Chair - Karen Paris
- Legislative Committee Chair - Sheena Tinsley
- COAT Board Advocate - Cyndi Pickel

Court Clerks:

- 2 year term - Rebecca Carpenter
- 2 year term - Vince Dean
- 2 year carry over - Tommy Lee Kidd
- 2 year carry over - Gary Behler
- 1 year term - Mary Lonon
- 1 year term - Regina VanCleave

County Clerks:

- 2 year term - Donna Craig
- 2 year carry over - Crystal Crain
- 1 year term - Felicia Bilbrey

Register of Deeds:

- 2 year term - Cheryl Ingram
- 2 year carry over - Julie Runyon
- 1 year term - Pam Martin

Trustees:

- 2 year term - Beverly Beal
- 2 year carry over - Gina Burchfiel
- 1 year term - Laura Crain



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UPCOMING EVENTS

COAT DAY ON THE HILL 2026

JOIN US ON FEBRUARY 23-24, 2026 FOR COCTP RE-CERTIFICATION TRAINING AND BREAKFAST (IN CONJUNCTION WITH TCSA) WITH SEVERAL OF YOUR STATE OFFICIALS!

ALL PERTINENT INFORMATION, INCLUDING AN AGENDA AND HOTEL RECOMMENDATIONS ARE AVAILABLE ON ENGAGIFII. ACCESS BY CLICKING THE LINK:



2026 COAT REGIONAL MEETINGS

THIS YEAR'S REGIONAL MEETINGS WILL HOST **REGISTERS AND STATE COURT CLERKS ON THE FIRST DAY** AND **COUNTY CLERKS AND TRUSTEES ON THE SECOND DAY** IN EACH REGION. THEY ARE SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE ON THE FOLLOWING DATES:

MIDDLE TN: APRIL 1-2 IN DAVIDSON COUNTY (NASHVILLE)

EAST TN: APRIL 8-9 IN KNOX COUNTY (KNOXVILLE)

WEST TN: APRIL 15-16 IN MADISON COUNTY (JACKSON)

ALL PERTINENT INFORMATION, INCLUDING AGENDAS AND HOTEL RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON ENGAGIFII SOON!!

COMING
SOON

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SAVE THE DATE!

TN County Officials Association presents

58TH ANNUAL COAT CONFERENCE

October 26 - 29, 2026 at MeadowView
Conference Resort & Convention Center
in Kingsport, TN



More information will be coming in July, You won't want to miss this one!!

EVENT REGISTRATION POLICY

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Upcoming COCTP Training

Date	Title	Location
02/04/2026	Financial Series: Certified Tax Rate (CO) -1.5 Credits	Online (Zoom)
02/11/2026	Financial Series: Grants Management (CO) -1.5 Credits	Online (Zoom)
02/18/2026	Financial Series: Centralized Finance (CO) -1.5 Credits	Online (Zoom)
02/27/2026	Financial Series: Maintenance of Effort (CO) - 1.5 Credits	Online (Zoom)
03/04/2026	Ask CTAS: An Introduction to the Legal Resources at CTAS (CO)- 1.5 credits	Online (Zoom)
03/18/2026	Salary Suit & FMLA (CH) - 4 Credits	Jackson
03/19/2026	Managing Workplace Complaints and Employee Concerns & Understanding Garrity Rights (CO) - 3 Credits	Jackson
03/24/2026	Managing Workplace Complaints and Employee Concerns & Understanding Garrity Rights (CO) - 3 Credits	Nashville
03/26/2026	Salary Suit & FMLA (CH) - 4 Credits	Nashville
03/31/2026	Managing Workplace Complaints and Employee Concerns & Understanding Garrity Rights (CO) - 3 Credits	Knoxville
04/01/2026	Salary Suit & FMLA (CH) - 4 Credits	Knoxville
04/02/2026	Workers' Comp & Federal/State Pregnancy Act -(CH) 4 Credits	Knoxville
04/09/2026	Ask CTAS: County Commissioner 101: What You Need to Know (CO)- 1.5 credits	Online (Zoom)
04/16/2026	Workers' Comp & Federal/State Pregnancy Act -(CH) 4 Credits	Nashville
04/23/2026	Workers' Comp & Federal/State Pregnancy Act -(CH) 4 Credits	Jackson
04/29/2026	COCTP Capstone Event	Franklin
06/08/2026	COCTP Capstone Event	Franklin
09/24/2026	Ethics - (CORE) 4 Credits	Knoxville
09/29/2026	Ethics - (CORE) 4 Credits	Nashville
10/01/2026	Ethics - (CORE) 4 Credits	Jackson
10/20/2026	Media Relations for Newly Elected Officials - (CH) 4 Credits	Knoxville
10/22/2026	Media Relations for Newly Elected Officials - (CH) 4 Credits	Franklin
10/27/2026	Media Relations for Newly Elected Officials - (CH) 4 Credits	Jackson
11/04/2026	Communicating Like a Pro- (CH) 1 credit	Online (Zoom)
11/04/2026	Communicating Like a Pro- (CH) 1 credit	Online (Zoom)

- Click below for the direct link on the CTAS site:
<https://www.ctas.tennessee.edu>

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2025 CONFERENCE MARQUEE SPONSORS



2026 TRI-STAR GOLD PARTNERS



2026 TRI-STAR SILVER PARTNERS



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