



NEWS AFFECTING STATE EMPLOYEES

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Confidential Timetable Puts Privatization on Fast Track

Phil Williams, News Channel 5

That's the question raised by an internal document uncovered by NewsChannel 5 Investigates.

What it reveals is a timetable that could potentially turn the maintenance and operation of virtually all state buildings over to a big corporation in less than a year.

"I believe they understand that we and many legislators would oppose this plan and, therefore, they want to lull us into a sense of false security," said Randy Stamps, director of government affairs for the Tennessee State Employees Association.

Last week, Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam insisted no decision has been made about turning the maintenance and operation of college and university buildings over to a private corporation, along with potentially state prisons and all sorts of other government facilities.

That came after the state issued a Request For Information (RFI) to potential vendors.

"Let's wait and see," Haslam told reporters. "Let's wait and see what the results are."

But the TSEA says the confidential timetable, obtained by NewsChannel 5 Investigates, suggests the administration itself isn't waiting to see.

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Sunday column: Haslam and summer secrets, some revealed

Tom Humphrey, Knoxville News Sentinel

It has not been a good summer for Gov. Bill Haslam and his administration, having endured unwanted controversy on matters ranging from a new state logo and the sexism seen in an anti-DUI campaign to prison system problems and an emerging privatization plot.

In all these things, there is something in common: All were developed in somewhat secretive fashion, with little or no proactive public discussion outside the government bureaucracy. In three of the four given situations, most state legislators felt blindsided - and they like to know about such things.

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Privatization, Outsourcing Could Benefit Taxpayers: Haslam

Editorial Staff, TN Report

"Our responsibility is to provide the very best service at the very lowest cost," the governor said in an interview with TNReport. "For six and a half million Tennesseans, there is always way more demand for government services than there is our ability to fund those."

Haslam said his administration has asked private companies to provide proposals for how they might manage or run a range of government services. "We are not saying we're actually going to do anything differently, but we are asking for information to see who is interested in even making a proposal, so we are a long way from changing anything," he said.

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CCA says it didn't respond to TN privatization request

Dave Boucher, The Tennessean

Any company interested in responding to the state's "request for information" needed to do so by Friday. CCA didn't respond, said spokesman Jonathan Burns.

"While CCA is committed to identifying new opportunities to meet the needs of existing and potential government partners, we did not respond to this RFI," Burns said in an emailed statement.

The request is the first in a series of steps the state would need to take before it could move to privatize management of the majority of state facilities.

However, the administration of Gov. Bill Haslam already faced criticism after privatization on a smaller scale; Chicago-based JLL, previously known as Jones Lang LaSalle, manages several state facilities. A state audit said a "conflict of interest" resulted in JLL standing to make a profit off its recommendations to the state, while criticizing the state for allowing the company's contract to grow from \$1 million to \$10.7 million without any rebidding.

The JLL issues combined with the prospect of a larger outsourcing move that could drastically change the employment, pay or benefits for thousands of state workers made state Democrats and unions uneasy.

Haslam said the state would not release which, if any, companies responded to the state's request. If the state moves forward with a request for proposal, he said more information would become public.

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TN prison officials: Mistakes happen in incident reporting

Dave Boucher, The Tennessean

Officers and inmates have told The Tennessean that staffing shortages are leading to less safe

prisons. Schofield and Gov. Bill Haslam have denied that prisons are less safe. They say the 28-day schedule, as opposed to a traditional 40-hour weekly schedule where overtime is paid biweekly, is common among law enforcement agencies. Both also point to data that they say shows violence in prisons is down, and deny the state is changing how it reports assaults on officers in order to make the data look more positive.

In the letter provided to Windle and Stewart, the department said mistakes do happen in how the state reports prison assaults or other incidents. The lawmakers specifically noted reports obtained by *The Tennessean* and others that show times where officers were hit in the head with urine or a tray and the incident was not considered an assault.

"This incident was incorrectly modified the following day after review by the facility," the letter states, referencing an incident where an officer hit in the face with a tray was changed from an assault to a "staff/inmate provocation."

The letter echoes recent comments from Assistant Commissioner Tony Parker. Parker said if an inmate throws urine in a guard's face, then it is assault. But if the inmate throws anything that hits a guard anywhere else, and the incident doesn't cause any injury, then the event is considered a "staff/inmate provocation."

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Warden: 'Detain' workers who take rosters outside prison

Dave Boucher, *The Tennessean*

The state says no officers have been detained, but an officer could be fired if they are found with that information, frequently cited in reports to show concerns officers have with the Tennessee prison system.

West Tennessee State Penitentiary Warden James M. Holloway told two prison officials in an Aug. 14 email that officers found with employee rosters pose a security threat and should be detained.

"While such may be an attempt to help their cause, it is not authorized and can compromise the security and safety of staff who are working," Holloway wrote in the email obtained by *The Tennessean*.

"There is no guarantee inmates won't use that information to assist in an escape."

The Tennessean and other media outlets have used shift rosters or similar documents to highlight staffing and other issues at Tennessee prisons. The documents may show who is working at which positions, vacant positions or the number of hours worked by officers during a 28-day pay cycle.

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ACLU Gets Involved in the TN Dept. of Corrections

WGNS News Radio

"From dangerous working conditions to problems with staffing and dubious inconsistencies in reporting, the Tennessee Department of Correction is clearly in a state of crisis. Transparency is crucial to ensuring government accountability, especially at times like these and particularly when a government agency's actions have such a direct bearing on public safety," said Hedy Weinberg, ACLU-TN executive director. "Not only does the First Amendment clearly protect the right of those on the front lines in our state's prisons to speak out when they have concerns, their voices are vital to creating a functional criminal justice system."

ACLU-TN sent the letter after hearing reports that TDOC employees have been reprimanded for participating in rallies and for speaking to state legislators regarding staffing and prison conditions. Officers have allegedly been warned by their superiors to remain silent or suffer consequences "once the dust settles." Others were reportedly told that "internal affairs" officers would attend protests and rallies to photograph and record the names of participants.

According to the letter, "Such threats have a chilling effect on all TDOC employees' exercise of their right to free speech...Individuals do not relinquish their constitutional rights when they accept employment with the government...Public employees have the right to speak out as private individuals on matters of public concern...While TDOC may have a legitimate governmental interest in restricting its employees' speech on matters concerning specific security measures in prisons, none of the issues being discussed implicate those concerns."

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Guards Say Officials Are Lying About Safety Concerns in Tennessee Prisons; State Says Audit To Come

Chas Sisk, WPLN/NPR

[Sen. Jeff Yarbro] asked at the end of the three-hour hearing how so many guards could be complaining at the same time Schofield says the prisons are running well.

"Why are we here today?" Yarbro asked.

Schofield blamed misinformation, arguing that unhappy employees are giving outsiders a distorted view of what goes on inside Tennessee prisons.

"I gave you facts," Schofield said. "And you question whether I gave you facts, and I think that's why I'm here."

Schofield stood by his figures, but he acknowledged that many workers are unhappy about new scheduling rules that have gone into effect over the past year. He says the department has responded - by letting them pick between overtime pay or more time off when they work long hours.

"So we're not so stubborn that we don't think and we don't listen to our staff. We make adjustments."

Even corrections officers who testified in favor of the administration were forced to acknowledge that there has been widespread grumbling within the prison system over safety and staffing. Schofield announced the department would hire an outside agency to review five prisons.

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Haslam: GVDC Site Could Have 'Significant Use'

Sarah Gregory, The Greeneville Sun

Haslam said, state officials understand the economic toll the center's closure could have on the local community with the loss of almost 600 jobs.

"We understand how important that is to Greene County, and we're committed to trying to be a part of the economic development plan to, hopefully, bring some jobs back into the area," Haslam said.

The governor added that the sprawling campus could include some significant uses.

"We see that as a big asset both for the state and obviously for this entire area," he said. "We see ourselves as being part of a team with people like the Greene County Partnership and others working to make certain we maximize that use."

However, before any commercial developments could move forward at the site, other state agencies will be considered for the property.

The Tennessee Department of General Services oversees that process.

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Tennessee General Assembly's Website Wins Online Democracy Award

News Release, Market Watch

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) recently honored the Tennessee General Assembly with the Online Democracy Award for the best legislative website in the country. The award was presented during the NCSL's Legislative Summit in Seattle. The award recognizes a legislature, legislative chamber or caucus whose website stands out for making democracy user-friendly. This is the second time Tennessee has been presented with the Online Democracy Award, previously winning in 2009.

The website, www.capitol.tn.gov, uses a responsive design that allows access to the site from devices of all sizes, including tablets and smart phones, which makes it easier than ever for citizens to get access to their legislators and the legislative process while on the go. The modern design includes streaming video for legislative sessions, enhanced search capabilities, a bill tracking service, and easy to understand bill summaries.

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