



NEWS AFFECTING STATE EMPLOYEES

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Tennessee workers protest any Haslam privatization plan

Dave Boucher, The Tennessean

For months, Haslam and the administration have said they're exploring the possibility of privatizing facilities management at the majority of state facilities. Right now about 10 percent of the state's square footage is maintained by Chicago-based JLL. The administration and supporters argue the move helped the state avoid roughly \$13 million in maintenance costs in two years, but opponents argue the state is gaming the numbers and any expansion of the program will mean cuts to wages and benefits for state employees.

Haslam has repeatedly said that's not true, arguing JLL employees earn more than they did as state employees. Administration officials also have said universities would have the option to "opt out" of any privatization plan.

But the fact Haslam and the administration don't want to publicly release emails tied to the privatization plan, discourage employees from discussing the plan in public emails and have already created a potential timeline for expansion means Haslam is hiding something, said UCW spokesman Thomas Walker.

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Workers are real experts on outsourcing state properties' operations

Sen. Lee Harris and Rep. John Ray Clemmons, Knoxville News Sentinel

The folks we talked to don't make \$200 an hour, like the governor's facilities management consultants who advocate for outsourcing. Nonetheless, we believe they are experts on Tennessee properties.

We visited with the plumbers, electricians and facilities managers who spend more time at our cherished state properties, like that beautiful campus in Knoxville, than almost anybody.

We talked to students at UT who live on campus and depend on someone to show up to make sure there's hot water, make sure facilities are clean and make sure that they can get into their dorm during emergencies.

We didn't pay anyone to show up at our meeting, and we think there's less of a chance they would

have any reason to tell us only what we wanted to hear.

We asked those who attended tough questions and had a very honest, raw discussion. Does UT have too many employees? Answer: Not enough.

Are there opportunities to save money? Answer: Sure, there are. But many of us make only \$12 an hour and we give our hearts to this campus. No one will be able to do more than us for less pay than that. No one can.

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Fearful UTC workers question cost savings of outsourcing

Andy Sher, Chattanooga Times-Free Press

Some two-thirds of state workers involved in facilities management under the Department of General Services lost their jobs when Chicago-based real estate giant Jones Lang LaSalle took over. Haslam says the state saved \$12.9 million over a two-year period, but critics note the governor's administration and Jones Lang LaSalle touted even higher savings. Critics also question whether the cost comparisons are valid.

"I don't believe there are hard and fast numbers," said Randy Stamps, a former Republican state representative and current head of government affairs for the Tennessee State Employees Association, who also participated in the hearing.

One higher education worker scoffed at General Services leaders, calling them "the ones who proved they couldn't run their own facilities."

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Clover Bottom Developmental Center dies, age 92

News Release, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

The final people with disabilities to receive services and supports at Clover Bottom Developmental Center (CBDC) are moving into their new community homes marking the closure of Tennessee's first institution for the care of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

In recent years, the state closed Nat T. Winston and Arlington Developmental Centers in West Tennessee. The closure of CBDC leaves Greene Valley Developmental Center (GVDC) in East Tennessee as the state's only remaining institution for the care of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. GVDC is scheduled for closure in the summer of 2016.

"Closing the last of the large institutions in Tennessee, as challenging and difficult as it is, I believe will lead us to be one of the best states in regards to services for people with disabilities," said Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) Commissioner Debra K. Payne. Commissioner Payne's career in supporting people with disabilities began at CBDC in the 1970s. Payne went on to say, "I think institutional care served its purpose for many years. Today, there are many different options for people, and Tennessee is on the front edge of that."

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DCS stops sending kids to two privately-operated juvenile detention centers

James Bennett, Columbia Daily Herald

More than 60 girls have run away from the Columbia home since 2011, The Daily Herald reported in August. The problem was exacerbated over the summer when two girls escaped in a stolen Magnolia Academy van and eluded police for more than two months.

DCS worked with Magnolia Academy's parent company, ResCare of Louisville, to resolve problems, said Susan Mitchell, DCS executive director of network development. A series of corrective actions were unsustainable at the homes for low-level juvenile offenders and troubled foster children.

"We were in ongoing discussions with the parent company," Mitchell said. "They made some progress. But it seemed like when they turned off one spigot, another one would flood the premises. It was one problem after another.

"We had open communications and worked collaboratively, but I stand by the decision to stop sending girls," she added. "We all have precious few hours in the day. This problem continued to persist. We were continually having to put out little forest fires, little spot fires."

The Columbia Police Department felt it was being used as a private security force for Magnolia Academy. Whenever a girl would run away, Magnolia Academy staffers were forced to call police because employees were not given authority to stop them.

..."If ResCare opens other homes in the future, they need to get qualified staff," Arigbe said. "The majority of staff in Columbia and Lewisburg had never worked with that kind of clientele. Most of them came from working in fast food or retail. They had no experience or training with foster kids or juvenile offenders. If they open anywhere else, they will have the same issues without more-qualified staff.

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TN Rep. Hawk disagrees with state over when last state-operated developmental center will close

Sydney Cameron, WJHL

News Channel 11 checked in with the Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Thursday to get an update on the closure plan at GVDC. Officials said the state is still working towards its June 30, 2016 close date.

Currently, 75 people still reside at GVDC, down from 93 earlier this year. In a statement to News Channel 11 Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Spokesperson Cara Kumari said, "Virtually all of the people who remain at Greene Valley have chosen a community provider who will operate the community home to which they will transition."

But State Representative David Hawk does not think GVDC will be able to close by its June 30th, 2016 deadline. "Those community providers are not even close to ready to accept those residents right now," Hawk said. He said while providers say the facilities will be ready by the close date, he fears that might not happen.

"Many of these private care providers are going to have to build homes. That takes time. I'm not aware of any of those homes being constructed at the moment," Rep. Hawk said.

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Hawk Aims to Correct 'Weakened' Legislature

Brad Hicks, Greeneville Sun

"While the legislature is in session from January through April, I feel that we are an equal third branch of government," he said. "But for the other eight months of the calendar year, I feel like all we can do or say is, 'Wait until we get back into session in January.' We're living in such a fast-paced world now where issues can arise quickly, or when we leave issues hanging over from a prior session, I feel our constituents deserve better from the body that is supposed to be the people's voice in Tennessee."

To alleviate this concern and allow lawmakers to address issues that may arise after the legislative session has ended in April, Hawk said he intends to introduce legislation that would create a September legislative session.

"I've really pulled the month of September out because it comes after our prior fiscal year, our prior financial year has finished and we've got all the financial documentation so we know where we are budgetarily," Hawk said. "It also comes after the late spring and summer months when there potentially could be some issues that arise in the state that need to be addressed."

This September session, Hawk said, would allow legislators to more promptly address issues that arise after the typical session ends in April. Legislators' primary focus during the main session is developing a balanced budget, and a September session would allow lawmakers to focus more on creating new state policies.

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educated and informed
electorate so vital to our
democracy."

- Brad Henry

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