

# PUBLICATION

---

## Governor Bill Lee Announces Special Session Beginning January 27

Authors: Jacob D. Baggett

January 16, 2025

Governor Bill Lee has announced a special session of the Tennessee General Assembly starting on January 27, 2025. This session will address three critical legislative priorities: the Education Freedom Act, disaster relief for Hurricane Helene, and public safety measures related to illegal immigration.

### Education Freedom Act: Empowering Tennessee Students

The Education Freedom Act will establish Education Freedom Scholarships. Key components include teacher bonuses to recognize their dedication, higher starting pay for new teachers, and enhanced funding for K-12 facilities. Additionally, it includes further investment in the [Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement \(TISA\)](#) formula.

### Disaster Relief for Hurricane Helene: Comprehensive Support

In response to the unprecedented disaster caused by Hurricane Helene, the special session will focus on a comprehensive [disaster relief package](#). This includes \$240 million allocated to the Disaster Relief Grants (DRG) Fund, which aims to reduce the local cost-share burden and fund state-match requirements to access federal funds. An additional \$110 million will be directed to the Hurricane Helene Interest Payment Fund to assist local governments in managing loan interest for recovery costs. The Governor's Response and Recovery Fund will receive \$100 million to provide flexible financial resources for future emergencies, including agricultural recovery, unemployment assistance, and business recovery efforts. Furthermore, \$20 million will be allocated for the rebuilding of Hampton High School in Carter County, which was destroyed by the hurricane.

### Public Safety and Illegal Immigration: Preparing for Federal Policy

On the public safety front, the Tennessee General Assembly will consider measures related to illegal immigration to ensure the state is prepared for federal policy implementation. This initiative aligns with the incoming Trump administration's efforts to secure borders and protect communities.

### Next Steps

Governor Lee will issue an official call and provide additional details in the coming days. The special session aims to address these pressing issues with widespread support from the General Assembly and the public. Stakeholders are encouraged to stay informed and engaged as the session progresses.

Baker Donelson's [State Public Policy Advocacy](#) and [Government Relations and Public Policy](#) Teams look forward to working with clients throughout the 114th Tennessee General Assembly and will provide timely updates as developments occur. If you have questions about the legislative session or need additional information, please contact [Jacob D. Baggett](#).