2021 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

P.O. Box 121445
Nashville, TN 37212
www.tnconservationvoters.org
admin@tnconservationvoters.org
615-269-9090
TENNESSEE CONSERVATION VOTERS: THE ENVIRONMENTAL VOICE

Tennessee Conservation Voters (TCV) is the only statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated solely to protecting Tennessee’s environment and preserving our natural resources through effective legislative and administrative advocacy. In fact, the broad range of principles we advocate for and report about is broader than conservation and environment only. Most of us now understand that the following broad areas are interwoven, and all are important: clean water, clean air, wild spaces, state parks, scenic rivers, climate, sustainability, racial and economic justice, transportation, and open government are among our focus areas. TCV turns conservation values into Tennessee priorities by advocating for strong environmental protection policies and holding elected officials accountable.

TCV succeeds because of the strong support and participation we receive from our member groups and our individual members and donors! We urge you to remain informed and to act by contacting legislators and other policy makers. Legislators care about what is valued by their own constituents.

Developing good relationships with decision-makers, contacting them in an appropriate and timely fashion, and holding them accountable for how they vote are key to moving forward. Our advocacy efforts and yours are essential to guarantee that legislators are well-informed on the importance and value of safeguarding our clean air, clean water, biodiversity, and open spaces. The more they hear from representatives of TCV, our member groups, and especially from citizens and voters like you, the more we can successfully support clean water, clean air and our wild and scenic areas!

THREE ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TODAY

- **Commit to asking at least 3 people to join our [TCV Legislative Email Updates](http://www.tnconservationvoters.org) list at [www.tnconservationvoters.org](http://www.tnconservationvoters.org). When we are well-organized and informed on conservation issues, our message and impact on legislation is more successful.**

- **Send a polite and professional email to your legislators today and when they arrive back in session in January 2022 to let them know you are a constituent and that you care about the environment. No matter how good or how bad your legislators’ past votes have been on our issues, they need to know that their constituents care. Find your legislator by going to [capitol.tn.gov](http://capitol.tn.gov) and clicking "Find My Legislator"**

- **Continue working and planning together to make sure we stand unified in the face of unprecedented threats to our environment**
2021 LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

SB113/HB199 Storm water fee waiver.
Requires municipalities to waive storm water fees owed by property owners so that the fees are equal to the construction costs of holding or retention ponds constructed by the property owner in accordance with the Clean Water Act. Taking needed funds away from regulators will lead to a decrease in necessary oversight. **TCV opposes.** Deferred to summer study.

SB152/HB174 Tennessee Cleaner Landscapes for the Economy, Agriculture, and Nature (CLEAN) Act
Establishes the Tennessee CLEAN Commission, consisting of 13 members who create and implement a program to collect plastic, glass, and aluminum beverage containers. Requires the commission to develop and implement a statewide litter prevention and collection program. **TCV strongly supports.** Thanks to Senator Briggs and Representatives Faison and Clemmons for sponsoring.
Did not pass. Will likely be back in some form soon.

SB301/HB327 County commissioners and local government officials’ participation in meetings by phone or online
Authorizes county & city office holders and members of utility boards to participate in meetings electronically if a member is out of town for any one of several reasons. **TCV opposes as it is overly broad.** Decision-makers, outside of extraordinary circumstance like pandemics, should be present in-person to hear from citizens and to see who has come in-person to hearings.
Passed through multiple committees but ultimately did not become law.

SB369/HB934 Lease for use of a solar energy system.
Authorizes a commercial or industrial customer or group of customers to enter into a lease under which they pay for the use of a solar energy system or to enter into an agreement under which they pay a specific rate for the electricity that is generated each month from a solar energy system. **TCV supports.** Thanks to Senators Campbell, Kyle and Bowling and Representative Freeman for sponsoring.
Senate deferred to first calendar of 2022.

SB464/HB595 Tennessee Sustainable Agriculture Advancement Act.
Requires the Agriculture Commissioner, in conjunction with UT, to establish and maintain an office of sustainable agriculture whose primary duties are providing and coordinating technical assistance, support, and encouragement needed to enhance research and the statewide advancement of sustainable agriculture. **TCV supports.** Thanks to Senator Campbell and Representative Freeman for sponsoring.
Deferred to summer study.

SB508/HB509 Electronic meeting participation by utilities board members
Establishes that members of utility governing bodies may meet virtually without meeting specific criteria. These groups include: utility districts, water, wastewater, energy and natural gas authorities, and boards of public utilities. **TCV opposes as it is overly broad.** Decision-makers, outside of extraordinary circumstance like pandemics, should be present in-person to hear from citizens and to see who has come in-person to participate in the process.
Taken off notice in both the House and the Senate.

SB742/HB90 Primacy and Reclamation Act of TN regarding coal mining
Requires the TN government to assume jurisdiction over the regulation of surface coal mining and reclamation operations within the state, which is currently done by the federal government, without cost to TN. The bill is meant to promote more coal mining, which it likely won’t do for various reasons. **TCV strongly opposes.**
Public chapter 548.

**links are indicated by an underline**
SB790/HB1144 Incentives the TN board of energy and natural resources may adopt for alternatives to discharges to surface waters.

Allows this board to provide credits to recognize increased environmental performance and the beneficial reuse of wastewater. These credits serve as incentives for using alternatives to pollution discharge to surface waters. **TCV did not take a position.**

Public chapter 263.


Allows local governments to establish a C-PACER (Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy and Resilience) program. Allows commercial property owners to more easily pay for the upfront costs associated with energy efficiency and other renewable energy improvements.

For more details on the concept see: [https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2017/10/f39/FL1710_WIP_CPACEv2.PDF](https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2017/10/f39/FL1710_WIP_CPACEv2.PDF)

**TCV strongly supported. Thanks to Senators Rose Yarbro and Representatives Freeman, Hardaway, Lamar, Clemmons, Beck and Camper.**

Public chapter 138.

SB836/HB871 Open pit mines and quarries - exemption from local regulations.

Establishes that formerly operating pit mines or quarries that agree to receive fill or borrow material from state highway construction projects are exempt from local regulations that limit the operator's ability to fill the pit and to reclaim and restore the site. **TCV opposes.**

Passed Senate. Passed House committee but then was re-referred to the committee.

SB855/HB603 Carrying of handguns in public park.

Authorizes handgun-carry permit holders to carry handguns in a public park. May be amended to change other firearm laws. **TCV opposes.**

No significant legislative movement this past year.

SB928/HB936 Regional Strategic Infrastructure and Resiliency Planning Act.

Creates regional infrastructure councils of businesses, local and state government leaders, and community members to prioritize projects to make infrastructure more resilient and environmentally appropriate. **TCV supports. Thanks to Senator Yarbro and Rep. Freeman for sponsoring.**

Senate deferred to first calendar of 2022.

SB955/HB958 Incentives for conservation farming practices.

Adds specific conservation farming equipment to the list of tax-exempt items. Establishes requirements for cost-share grants and lowers the minimums for applicants who engage in conservation farming. **TCV supports. Thanks to Senator Yarbor and Rep. Clemmons for sponsoring.**

No significant legislative movement this past year.

SB1492/HB1136 Persons who withdraw 10,000 or more gallons of water per day.

Directs TACIR to study the impacts to the Memphis Sands Aquifer and its surrounding environment made by people who pump more than 200,000 gallons from the aquifer per day, as well as the mitigation cost to prevent any impact. **TCV supports. Thanks to Senator Akbari and Rep. Love for sponsoring.**

Passed Senate committee but has not yet moved in House.