



# NEWS RELEASE

GOVERNOR'S COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

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CONTACT: LYDIA LENKER  
615.741.3763 (OFFICE)  
615.289.9375 (CELL)

## BREDESEN URGES SWIFT PASSAGE OF EDUCATION INNOVATION PLAN

GOVERNOR URGES LEGISLATORS TO SEIZE THE MOMENT, POSITION TENNESSEE TO BE  
FIRST TO THE TOP IN EDUCATION

**NASHVILLE** - Governor Phil Bredesen today addressed a special session of the Tennessee General Assembly to urge swift passage of a range of education-reform proposals designed to spur improvement in Tennessee's education pipeline - specifically, improving student performance and graduation rates at both the high school and college levels. Collectively, the proposals are known as the "Tennessee Education Innovation Plan."

The two bills that comprise the Plan were introduced today as the special session on education convened. The "Tennessee First to the Top Act of 2010" will make changes in law as part of the Volunteer State's push in the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top competition. Second, the "Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010" will make changes in law needed to improve college completion rates, which lag behind the nation.

"The stars have aligned this year to create opportunities to make significant improvements in public education in Tennessee. When that happens, we're obligated as public officials to seize the moment," Bredesen said. "That moment is now."

### K-12 Education

The first opportunity is the federal government's Race to the Top competition. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, signed into law by President Obama in February 2009, provides \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top Fund, a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states that are implementing ambitious plans in four core education reform areas:

1. Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
2. Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
3. Recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
4. Turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

Tennessee is viewed as competitive in Race to the Top by national education-reform groups as a result of key successes in recent years, including the adoption of career- and college-ready high school standards through the American Diploma Project. Tennessee is also recognized for having one of the nation's oldest and most robust databases for tracking "student growth," or a child's improvement in the classroom over time.

"To effectively compete in Race to the Top, we need to unlock the prohibition on effectively using that information to help improve teacher quality and drive change in the classroom," said Bredesen. "That needs to change. And it takes legislation. The quality of the teacher is so important to a child's success. Making these changes will move us dramatically toward the goal of improving high school output of our public educational pipeline."

(MORE)

In addition to removing limitations on the use of this Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) data, the First to the Top Act includes measures to establish an Achievement School District to intervene in consistently failing schools, require annual evaluations of teachers and principals, create a 15-member teacher evaluation advisory committee to recommend guidelines and criteria to the State Board of Education, and to allow local school systems to create local salary schedules for teachers and principals with state approval.

## Higher Education

The second opportunity comes as Bredesen concludes nearly year-long talks with a bipartisan group of state lawmakers on how to improve higher education in Tennessee, consisting of colleges and universities in the Tennessee Board of Regents and the University of Tennessee systems.

The Volunteer State lags the nation in completion of bachelor's degrees, ranked 40th, and associate degrees, ranked 45th. On average, only 46 percent of full-time students at four-year schools graduate within six years, and only 12 percent of full-time community college students attain associated degrees within three years.

"We can do better. We've got to do better," Bredesen said. "Our economy hinges on our ability to develop a more skilled workforce and, more fundamentally, giving kids a quality education so they can earn a good living."

The Complete College Tennessee Act proposes key measures to improved Tennessee's college-completion rates. "These strategies are a natural extension of K-12 education reform measures," Bredesen said. "In fact, Race to the Top places a premium on states that aren't simply focused on getting kids through high school, but also are looking at college enrollment."

The legislation includes a new approach for funding higher education.

Currently, the state's antiquated formula for funding education is based almost exclusively on enrollment.

"At a time when state resources are tighter than ever, we've got to prioritize how we spend those finite dollars and retool our funding formula to make it based on success and outcomes, including higher degree completion rates," said Bredesen. "It's the responsible thing to do for the budget and, more importantly, that change, as much as any other, will drive decisions at the campus levels and help really focus us on the core mission of college completion."

In addition to changing the funding formula, the Complete College Tennessee Act makes community colleges a centerpiece of the state's strategy by expanding common programs and common courses to promote consistency and quality across the two-year system, create a statewide transfer policy so any student who earns a two-year degree at a community college can move on to a four-year university as a junior, and requiring the Board of Regents and University of Tennessee to establish dual-admission and dual-enrollment policies at all two- and four-year colleges and universities.

Bredesen urged lawmakers to move swiftly to approve the Tennessee Education Innovation Plan.

"Our Race to the Top application is due at the U.S. Department of Education in Washington on January 19th - just one week from today," Bredesen said. "In the November guidelines, the federal government made it clear: Those states that will be the most competitive will be the ones that have new policy changes in place at the time of the application. But I want to be clear, while our share of \$4 billion would be significant, there are no guarantees. Furthermore, money can't be the main reason for making these changes. The fact is, we've been talking about these ideas for years. In 2010, this is the way the education world is moving. Tennessee can and should lead the way."



# SPEECH

GOVERNOR'S COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 5 P.M. CST  
JANUARY 12, 2010

CONTACT: LYDIA LENKER  
615.741.3763 (OFFICE)  
615.289.9375 (CELL)

## ADDRESS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY - SPECIAL SESSION ON EDUCATION

GOVERNOR PHIL BREDESEN  
JANUARY 12, 2010

Lieutenant Governor Ramsey, Speaker Williams, Speaker Pro Temp DeBerry, Members of the 106th General Assembly, Friends, and my Fellow Tennesseans.

As we begin this evening, I want to recognize that we are sadly missing two members of the General Assembly – our former Senate Speaker and Lieutenant Governor, John Wilder, and Representative Larry Turner. Would you join me in a moment of silence to reflect on their contributions to our state and nation.

In my seven years as Governor, this is only the second time that I have exercised my constitutional authority to call you into Special Session. I am doing so now because I believe there are opportunities – and obligations – before us that are as compelling as any I have seen in my time as Governor.

This week, I ask you to come together in this extraordinary session and focus the attention, focus the energy and focus the will of this great body on a single task: demonstrating Tennessee's deep and abiding commitment to educating our children, from pre-K through college; our commitment to offering them to the very best of our ability the knowledge and skills that in the years ahead will mean good jobs and good citizenship in our great democracy.

I consider it a privilege for each of us to be in a position to act when the opportunity is there. The decisions we make in this next week about how Tennessee's education system works will resonate for years to come.

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If I could leave a thought for future governors and future General Assemblies, it would be this: Tennessee has got to solve the problem of creating a better-educated workforce. Our proportion of citizens with college degrees is well below the national average – we rank 42<sup>nd</sup> – and the rate at which we are producing new graduates is not sufficient to catch us up. This is going to hurt us badly in the future if we don't address it. Investment, and jobs, used to go where the ports were, where the rivers came together, where the railroads crossed. More and more in the years to come it will be where the human resources are; where there are people with the skills to make those investments productive.

Over the years, we have talked a great deal about graduation rates and degree rates and rankings and so on. Perhaps the best way to look at Tennessee's challenges, and our opportunities, in public education is to look at our education pipeline.

More specifically, look at those children who enter our public high schools. How they progress. And what happens to them when they leave.

Putting it in plain English: For every 100 students who enter ninth grade in our public schools, 67 graduate from high school in four years. Of those, 43 go directly to college after graduation. Of those, 29 return for their sophomore year of college. And finally, just 19 graduate with an associate's degree in three years or a bachelor's degree in six years.

Let me recap. For every 100 ninth graders, we ultimately produce just 19 Tennesseans who hold a two-year or four-year degree.

We can do better. We've got to do better.

As you know, I have committed throughout my time as Governor to make public education Tennessee's highest priority.

In years when other areas of state government were being drastically cut, together we have fully funded the Basic Education Program. We have worked together to raise teacher pay. We even managed to add hundreds of millions of dollars of new funding for public education in 2007, while at the same time raising standards and tightening accountability. But we still have a lot of work to do. For my part, I am committed to using the time I have remaining in this office to continue advancing the cause of public education. As elected officials, it is the most important thing we do.

I've called this Special Session because sometimes the planets just line up and there is an opportunity that you didn't expect. These are the times to seize the moment. This year, we have had two unique opportunities thrust upon us, which allow us to focus on the entire education pipeline in one panoramic view.

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First, the federal government's Race to the Top competition. This is President Obama's challenge for innovation in education. It's bold, it's bipartisan, it's transformational and I applaud him for it. More than \$4 billion will be split between a handful of states who prove they are ready to excel in public education. I believe that Tennessee is very competitive and I know you agree. Many national education experts concur, but I am taking nothing for granted.

We have a number of things going for us: the work we have done in raising high school standards through the Tennessee Diploma Project has gained us national attention for its depth and the speed with which it was accomplished. We have kept our K-12 funding intact through a very difficult recession, when many states were slashing education budgets. The value-added assessments that Tennessee began two decades ago are now a key part of many education reform efforts around the country; we're not proposing to implement them in the future, we already have twenty years of experience under our belt and that has the potential to be a tremendous asset to our proposal.

Our plan is to seek about \$485 million from the Race to the Top Fund. This is more than the federal guidelines recommend. But I believe that Tennessee has more to offer in potential for true education innovation.

If we are successful, half of the funds will be distributed over the next four years directly to participating local school systems through the existing Title 1 funding formula. The other half will go to the state, for the purposes of spurring additional education innovation at both the state and local levels.

As I know you understand, there are no guarantees here. If we don't win in the first round, we'll try again in the second this summer. If we don't win there, I'll be disappointed but we won't skip a beat and the actions we will have taken will only strengthen us.

Let me address one issue: there is a legitimate concern that's been expressed that these funds are a Trojan Horse: that we bring them into our state and they prove to be more than they seem at first; that they effectively create ongoing commitments beyond what we signed up for. Believe me, I'm making sure that our approach to using these funds is to use them during the four year period and not start a series of recurring expenditures that some future governor and General Assembly will have to deal with.

Our proposals for the use of these resources will include three major categories:

First, turnaround schools. For those schools that are consistently failing, we need a strategy-- and the resources--to turn them around. Race to the Top can transform our efforts in this regard.

With this in mind, the legislation before you in this extraordinary session includes granting the Commissioner of Education the authority to create a special school district — an Achievement School District — for the purposes of intervening in consistently failing schools, and getting them back on track.

Second, our Race to the Top plan will put a statewide emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math — or the STEM disciplines, as they're called. Tennessee already is emerging as a national leader in this critical area, and I believe it provides the opportunity for our proposal to shine.

Just last month, we unveiled a new partnership with Battelle — a world-class R&D concern — to sharpen our approach to STEM education. You may have heard of Battelle. Over the years, they have helped pioneer everything from Xerox technology to the compact disc. They manage or co-manage six of America's national labs, including our own Oak Ridge National Laboratory, in a partnership with the University of Tennessee. In Ohio, where Battelle is based, they have quarterbacked the creation of what is likely the most extensive network of STEM programs and schools in America. For the purposes of Race to the Top, Battelle has agreed to help us do the same in Tennessee. We'll be building new science labs, adding new technology, and creating new curricula to inspire and create new interest in science and math.

Ted Strickland, Ohio's Governor, is a friend of mine and we have talked about how to leverage what Battelle is doing in Ohio and has committed to do in Tennessee into a broader relationship between our states in STEM education. This could include the exchange of teachers and students, sharing technology, and a host of partnerships that will offer new dimensions of learning to our students.

Let me get to the heart of what this STEM concept is all about. Last month, I had the opportunity to visit Mt. Juliet High School here in Middle Tennessee, and participate in a homecoming celebration for one of their most prominent alums. Captain Barry Wilmore grew up in Wilson County, attended public schools, and earned his electrical engineering and aviation degrees from Tennessee Tech and UT. He joined NASA's astronaut corps — and in November realized a lifelong dream by piloting the Space Shuttle.

After the ceremonies and speeches in the gym, Captain Wilmore spoke to a group of science students in the astronomy lab. These were future engineers and maybe astronauts and they were absolutely riveted. He handed one student a NASA spacesuit patch that he had carried with him aboard that November shuttle mission. When that student took that patch, tears welled up in her eyes. You could see in her the inspiration and excitement of a thousand Tennessee kids who dream about one day piloting the shuttle into space, or discovering a cure for cancer, or writing software that changes our lives. I've got no question that she'll do something remarkable one day.

I was a physics major in college. I'm personally excited about this part of our Race to the Top plan. As Governor, I view Tennessee's partnership with Battelle as a way to expose our entire education system to the expertise of a world-class science organization and the entrepreneurial culture of Oak Ridge National Lab. This is the right thing to do for Tennessee's students.

Third, and most important, is a proposal for a vastly expanded approach to professional development for our teachers and principals.

I believe with all my heart that public education must refocus on the individual teacher — making a commitment to getting the best possible people to teach and giving them the support and skills that maximize their value. Education is not about organization, or technology, or administration. It is about teachers; finding, keeping and rewarding good teachers. If we have a choice between sending a child to, say, sixth grade in a state-of-the-art classroom with new computers, new desks and new books but with an indifferent teacher ... or a simple classroom with a blackboard and a GREAT teacher, which would we choose? You know the answer. More than everything else put together in education, teachers matter.

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It should be pretty clear to you by this point that I want to win this Race to the Top competition; it could be transformational for K-12 education in Tennessee. We're in a strong position — no guarantees certainly — but we have one significant weakness. Here in Tennessee, we have had comprehensive testing for nearly two decades; since long before No Child Left Behind or Race to the Top. And with our nearly two decades of consistent data on student achievement, we now have one of the best longitudinal databases in America. In fact, we are the envy of many in the national education community because of it. But we don't use it.

The Race to the Top application specifically requires that student achievement data, of which we have some of the very best in the nation, be used as a "significant factor" in the evaluation of teachers and principals. States which we see as our primary competitors have established themselves at 50 percent; half of the assessment of teachers and principals is based on how much their students advance while they're involved with them. A portion of that assessment is based on actual test results. The remainder is based on other objective measures of student achievement such as end-of-course assessments, Advanced Placement work.

I know this represents change, but this is not rocket science. It is a common sense notion; we pay teachers to teach children, a part of their evaluation ought to be how much the children they teach learn.

In particular, when making one important and far-reaching decision — the granting of tenure after three years — we are forbidden by our own laws from using value-added data at all. That needs to change and the legislation before you will do that.

While we once thought that we could promise in our Race to the Top application to change this in the future, we learned in November that the only things that will count are those that are established in the law on the date of application: January 19th. Right now we're not competitive. Your job this week is to fix that.

The legislation we initially drew up, and which I believe is the best approach, is to place the decisions about how to use and how much weight to give to student achievement data with the State Board of Education. But I also recognize that this issue causes some anxiety among many teachers, and a great deal of anxiety with their union: the Tennessee Education Association (TEA). I know this is difficult for them; they have spent decades on the other side of these issues of accountability and teacher evaluation, and now I'm asking them to change.

Here's what's at stake: the evaluation of the Race to the Top application is strongly oriented not to just what is proposed, but to the believability that those proposals will actually be able to be implemented. We're told there's a real premium on practicality. If you fail to act on these accountability reforms, we'll likely be pushed to the side. However, with the changes in the law that I'm asking you to make by the 19th, we'll have a bold, innovative, strong proposal. If, if, however, we could present a proposal that is all those things, and has the General Assembly, the Governor, the TEA and the State Board of Education visibly and genuinely working side by side toward common goals, we won't have a strong one, we'll have a dazzling one.

As of today, every school system in Tennessee has signed on as a partner in our Race to the Top application, knowing full well the bold actions that are required. Plenty of teachers are on board: Advocacy groups like Stand For Children are mobilizing in support of what we need to do here in Tennessee. Reform-minded policy organizations like SCORE, headed by my friend Senator Bill Frist, are bringing new ideas to the table in areas like how to best support professional development and career opportunities for our teachers. The statewide business community rightly sees this as an economic imperative. The need for reform, for accountability in education, is one of those fortunate areas that has not succumbed to purely partisan politics; this is a truly bipartisan effort, both here in Tennessee and nationally.

To my very good friends at TEA and to all the wonderful teachers who are members of their local chapters across our state: we share a common goal – to ensure that every child in Tennessee receives a year’s worth of growth from a year’s worth of instruction. Teachers matter: you bring something to this effort that no one else can. I invite you to join us.

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I want to move on now to higher education.

I spoke earlier tonight about the vital need to grow the number of college graduates in Tennessee in the years ahead. Last spring, I convened a group of legislators, members of the administration, and representatives of the boards of our higher education organizations and others to meet, with me, on a regular basis to come up with the best strategies we could to begin seriously addressing this issue.

While we couldn't include everyone from the General Assembly who had an interest in the subject, we had a solid, bi-partisan group that the Speakers thought represented the body well. We met a number of times around the lunch table. In the early meetings we talked about approaches; in later ones, we sometimes brought in experts from around the country to advise us.

Let me take a moment to thank all those from the General Assembly who participated:

From the Senate: Jamie Woodson, Andy Berke, Jim Kyle, Dolores Gresham and Randy McNally.

From the House: Lois DeBerry, Harry Brooks, Craig Fitzhugh, Beth Harwell, David Hawk, Mark Maddox and Les Winningham.

In addition, one of our Constitutional Officers, Comptroller Justin Wilson, was a member and contributed a great deal to the discussion.

I wasn't sure at the outset exactly what to expect: sometimes these groups work, and sometimes they get mired down. I needn't have worried; they did a gold standard job.

Early on, we began focusing on college completion rates as the key. I think about it like this: if I had a retail store that was not doing well, it would be a sensible strategy to first find those people who came in the front door and left without buying anything, and find out why, before I started trying to find new customers.

Again, let’s step back and look at our education pipeline. Of those 100 Ninth Graders I mentioned earlier, just 43 go to college. And just 19 end up with some sort of degree. The graduation rate at our four year colleges averages 44 percent and in our community colleges 12 percent.

The challenge is clear: We need more students pursuing postsecondary education. And of those who do go to college, we need more of them to be successful.

There are a lot of bright spots we can learn from. For example, Kingsport’s “Educate and Grow” program focuses on bridging high school and college with early college programs, and creating opportunities for free community college for those kids who can prove they’re college-ready. Kingsport is now building on those early successes with infrastructure, like its new Academic Village, to provide a venue for initiatives that move beyond high school and looking into college. Not coincidentally, Kingsport was recognized last fall by Harvard’s Kennedy School for its efforts in education excellence and innovation. All over our state, great things are happening.

NOW let’s push harder.

When I began talking with key lawmakers last year about higher education, most people assumed that talks would center on governance and organizational charts; that absent wholesale structural change, then somehow we weren't really "doing anything." But the more time we spent looking under the hood of higher education, the clearer it became that the real opportunities lay not in the "org chart" but rather in driving college completion.

I have introduced legislation in this special session to implement the recommendations that our working group eventually settled on. This legislation is somewhat different than the K-12 legislation we have discussed already, in that many of these things could technically be done by the Higher Education Commission, the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees or the Board of Regents themselves. But something this important needs the involvement and the imprimatur of the General Assembly. Neither the legislature nor the governor should micro-manage this; we have set up our higher education system with considerable authority for very good reason, but as the direct representatives of the people of the state, we need to establish the direction.

First of all, there was early and broad consensus on the need to retool our funding formula to make it substantially based on performance — especially higher associate and bachelor's degree rates. We need to get the financial incentives — how the funding for an institution gets determined — lined up with the outcomes we want.

Right now, we have a formula that is based almost exclusively on the numbers of students enrolled. The number of warm bodies in a seat in the fall is what drives the dollars. But that's not what we actually want: we want students still there in the spring, and especially, more than anything else, we want students who leave the institution with the degree that they came for in the first place.

The legislation before you authorizes the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to design a new formula that takes into account success factors like degree completion in determining state funding for colleges and universities. This is not one size fits all: the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and the University of Memphis and Middle Tennessee State all have different student bodies and have different missions, different roles to play. We shouldn't compare them with one another, but we can look at their peer institutions with similar missions around the nation, demand that they measure up, and enforce that demand by giving resources to those that do and taking them away from those who consistently fail to do so.

Funding and incentives are critical. But there was almost universal agreement among us that the centerpiece of Tennessee's strategy has got to be our community colleges. We have a broad and diverse group of these in our state, accessible to a great number of our citizens. They're affordable, both for the student and the state itself. More and more, around the country, community colleges are the entry point for four year degrees. I have a great many younger relatives whose very successful college experience has been two years in a community college, an associate's degree, and then a transfer to a four institution to get a bachelor's degree.

To do this, we need to make them operate as a much more tightly organized system, and one which is more responsive to the needs of students. The legislation you have does these things: It directs the establishment of a comprehensive and unified community college system to drive the changes we want. To help ensure the success of this, I will separately asked the Board of Regents to establish a President or vice-chancellor to oversee this unified community college system

It directs the system to make regular its course offerings: Chemistry 101 or American History 101 should mean the same thing in any community college in which a student takes it.

It directs the system to clearly identify for the student those courses for which credit at one of our four year institutions will be guaranteed. This is just simple truth-in-advertising: If a student pays for a course and does the work to pass it, he or she should know at the outset whether that course will be accepted at one of our four year schools.

There is a vital need to sweep away the complex, confusing, and ultimately dysfunctional and unfair system of ad hoc arrangements the student faces today. The four year school faculties can and should have a say in the content of the community college courses, but once that is established, the student is guaranteed credit for them

It directs the establishment of policies to guarantee that any student who has satisfactorily completed a two year degree at a community college is guaranteed admission to a four year state school, as a Junior. We have one more task for our community colleges. We spend a tremendous amount of time and money in our four year schools teaching remedial and developmental classes. We need to get out of that business in our four-year schools and ask the community colleges to help. If you meet the admissions standards of one of our four year schools, that is great and we welcome you. If you don't, and require remedial work, we ask that you get that at the community college level.

If a freshman at a four year college requires this kind of attention, then the odds are that he's not ready for a four-year environment. Instead, he may want to get caught up in a community college environment or take advantage of new dual enrollment options to do that work.

There is one further thing that the legislation sets up with regard to community colleges but I think really interesting.

I've described to you the difficulties with completion rates in our colleges; 44 percent in the four-year ones and 12 percent in the community colleges. However, we do have an educational institution here in Tennessee that is not only not falling behind but is actually doing almost stunningly well — our technology centers. I do understand that completing a certificate program is not the same as getting a bachelor's degree, but do you know what their completion rate is: 70 percent.

Many states do not have directly comparable institutions, so it is difficult to make direct comparisons, but it is safe to say that when experts see those numbers, their jaws dropped.

We can learn from this. When you dig down to uncover why this is happening — what's different — it is the clarity and directness of their approach. They don't tell the student, "Here is a course catalog, some are on this day, some are on that. Some are in the morning, some in the afternoon, some in the evening. Some are in the fall, some in the spring. Your job is to get the credits you need."

Instead, their proposition appeals directly: "If you will give us five days a week between 8:30 in the morning and 1:30 in the afternoon, we will make sure that you can take the courses you need and that when you have finished successfully you will get the certificate that you came here for."

Kids who are looking at community college want to get it done. They don't want to assemble a set of courses at widely separated times and then have to commute back and forth or kill time on a campus with few amenities. If they're ready to start in the middle of the spring, they don't want to wait until the fall.

The final part of the legislation you have for community colleges directs the Board of Regents to begin the process of consolidating and rationalizing course offerings so that they can make a similar clear offer. "If you give us these time slots for this long, and you pass your courses, you will get your associates degree." It should be easy and understandable for the students, not the faculty, and I believe will help us grow our completion rates substantially.

There are other changes proposed. But these are big ones.

In putting together these strategies, we have worked closely with experts from groups like the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems and also Complete College America, a new organization funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Carnegie and others.

What we hear from them is similar to what we hear from others who are handicapping Race to the Top. They all agree that Tennessee can be a national leader if we knuckle down and make some common-sense changes. If we seize the moment.

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Next, I would like to propose what I believe will be a historic leap forward in one particular area – the use of graduate-level higher education to accelerate economic development and research here in Tennessee – and help drive the culture of innovation in America.

Earlier, I mentioned Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the University of Tennessee and Battelle. Going all the way back to the '50s, UT and Oak Ridge have been building a relationship that has gotten closer over time – most notably, a decade ago, when UT and Battelle created a joint venture to co-manage the Lab. That has been a ground-breaking partnership in so many ways. But we've not yet fully realized its potential.

Today, I am proposing that we take a bold step forward toward realizing that full potential. In the legislation that is before you, I am proposing that we establish a new world-class graduate energy sciences and engineering program at UT and Oak Ridge National Lab. I'm calling it the UT Energy Campus at Oak Ridge.

The basic idea is this: an arrangement with Oak Ridge to make it more of an extension of the UT-Knoxville campus – a place with dramatically heightened levels of teaching and learning occurring in America's premier national lab. At its core, what this means is over the next few years granting as many as 200 faculty appointments among the existing researchers at Oak Ridge National Lab.

This will open the doors to the Lab to as many as 400 new graduate students, whom we'll recruit from across the state, across the country and around the world. In talking with the leadership of UT and the Lab, it appears realistic, over the next several years, to double the UT-Knoxville research fund from about \$200 million to \$400 million.

This is the way we become a top-25 public research institution.

This model already works out West, in the partnership between the University of California-Berkeley and Lawrence Berkeley National Lab. Last week, I communicated with the Department of Energy about this concept. As the owner of Oak Ridge National Lab, they are enthusiastic about it. Secretary Chu understands this concept. His previous job was the director of Lawrence Berkeley National Lab. This will require some limited "venture capital" to get underway, and I have proposed \$6 million of one-time money until it reaches the point of attracting research funds to be self-sustaining.

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Together, we've gotten a lot of things done for the children and young adults of our state. I've never heard anyone run for public office without being "for" education. The test comes when we're faced with real choices: does it have priority in funding, are we willing to make tough political calls when the opportunities or problems demand?

So far, together, I would claim that we have passed this test. We now have a chance to prove that commitment once again. In this extraordinary session of the 106th General Assembly, I ask you – not to "Race to the Top" – but to make Tennessee "First to the Top" in education reform ... to put in place common-sense strategies for driving college completion ... and help Tennessee excel and support America's education and research mission in an extraordinary way.

In my private office downstairs, I have a saying that has been framed in a little gold frame on my side table ever since I moved in. "Carpe Diem"--"Seize the Day". Many of you have seen it. It's always good advice, whether you're twenty or eighty, in good times or tough ones. Here, this evening, in January of 2010, we have an extraordinary opportunity to seize the day. Let's take it. Carpe Diem: For Tennessee, for our future.