

2026 Tennessee Governor's Race — Top 3 Viable Candidates

Stand for Health Freedom Comparison Guide | Primary: August 6, 2026

The Tennessee Governor's race will be a highly competitive primary battle. We are providing this guide to help showcase the health freedom stance of each of the three most viable candidates so you can make the best decision for your family at the ballot box.

Assessments are determined by an editorial panel based on four inputs: each candidate's response to the Stand for Health Freedom Candidate Survey (if completed), their documented legislative voting record, verified public statements, and direct constituent insights from those with firsthand knowledge of the candidate's positions and observed legislative conduct.

This comparison guide will be updated as needed.

We welcome candidates and the public to provide corrections or additional information. Send to: advocates@standforhealthfreedom.com

SHF opposes water fluoridation, vaccine mandates, Real ID, & pesticide industry liability shields. SHF is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization dedicated to informing & activating a grassroots movement to protect our health & our families.

	MONTY FRITTS	MARSHA BLACKBURN	JOHN ROSE
<p>FUNDING</p> <p>Source: Tennessee Registry of Election Finance (TREF), Rounded amounts as of Q1 April 10, 2026 filing deadline.</p> <p>In-state percents: Knoxville News Sentinel 6 Feb 2026 @pressreader</p>	<p>Primary Funding: individual donations</p> <p style="text-align: center;">100% donors in TN</p> <p>Donations: \$167,300 Self loan: \$26,000 PACs (2): \$22,200 Cash on hand: \$73,000</p> <p style="font-size: small;">As a state Representative, Fritts's campaign was barred from accepting donations during legislative session, mid-January through late April, and during the special session in early May.</p>	<p>Primary Funding: individual donations</p> <p style="text-align: center;">22% donors in TN</p> <p>Donations: \$6.7 million Self loan: \$0 PACs (44): \$454,200 Cash on hand: \$4.39 million</p> <p style="font-size: small;">Team Tennessee PAC not included in above totals.*</p>	<p>Primary Funding: Personal wealth, individual donations</p> <p style="text-align: center;">92% donors in TN</p> <p>Donations: \$1.6 million Self loan: \$5 million PACs (8): \$102,100 Cash on hand: \$4.45 million</p>

ISSUES	FRITTS: YES for BOTH	BLACKBURN: LIKELY NO for BOTH	ROSE: NO for AGRICULTURE LIKELY NO for HEALTH
<p>LIKELY TO APPOINT state Commissioner of Health and Commissioner aligned with Stand for Health Freedom and MAHA.</p> <p>In Tennessee, the Commissioner of Health has authority to add or remove vaccines from the state's school entry requirements and oversees the entire Department of Health — including its vaccine, public health, and disease surveillance programs.</p> <p>The Commissioner of Agriculture sets enforcement priorities for pesticide regulation, food safety, and farming standards across the state.</p> <p>Both commissioners serve at the pleasure of the governor, are appointed without legislative confirmation, and can be replaced at any time. The next governor will appoint both.</p>	<p>Donation/alignment record: Campaign is almost entirely grassroots-funded. No financial relationships with conventional agricultural chemical, dairy, pharmaceutical, medical industries found.</p> <p>Platform and legislative record reflect consistent opposition to corporate capture of regulatory agencies, including his public opposition to TN HB 809, a pesticide industry liability shield bill.</p> <p>Stated publicly at multiple campaign events that he is impressed with Florida Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo and the health freedom stance Florida has taken under his leadership — signaling the direction he would apply to his own Health Commissioner appointment.</p> <p>Stated philosophy of governance — "recalibrating government to realize it is bound by the Constitution and accountable to the people".</p> <p>Platform alignment, donor independence, and explicit public comments, are the strongest available indicators of appointment direction.</p> <p>QUOTE: "We'll have a commissioner of health under my leadership that will also stand for your rights. There is no room for the Tennessee Department of Health or any entity in our state to try to coerce you to make decisions for you and your children and your health." Source: https://x.com/MontyFritts4TN/status/2046582224162599106?s=20</p> <p>QUOTE: "I'm not going to allow myself to be influenced by these foreign nations or big pharma, big agribusinesses that often have forgotten the little farmer..." Source: https://x.com/MontyFritts4TN/status/2050191004628603136?s=20</p>	<p>Top Republican Senate recipient of pharma/health industry contributions, 2023-2024 cycle — \$316,656 (OpenSecrets/FEC data).</p> <p>Received "Champion of Health Care Innovation" award from the Healthcare Leadership Council, representing pharmaceutical manufacturers, health insurers, and hospital systems.</p> <p>The 2016 Ensuring Patient Access and Effective Drug Enforcement Act, co-sponsored by Blackburn, weakened the DEA's ability to suspend suspicious opioid shipments. Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/investigations/dea-drug-industry-congress/</p> <p>Agricultural connections dominated by Tennessee Farm Bureau alignment (which partners with Big Ag industry, including Bayer). Source: https://x.com/MarshaBlackburn/status/1869024578426798499?s=20</p> <p>Silent on pesticide industry liability, despite it being a current major federal and state issue.</p> <p>Close alignment on issues with President Trump suggests alignment with the pesticide industry since Trump and his Solicitor General side with Monsanto/Bayer on federal preemption of citizens right to jury trial for pesticide failure-to-warn claims.</p> <p>Donor & political relationships with pharmaceutical and conventional agricultural industries are the strongest available indicators of likely appointment direction.</p> <p>Blackburn's active supportive stance on vaccination (non-COVID) absent any safety concerns, combined with her close political alignment with Governor Lee** suggest her commissioner appointments would reflect continuity with the Lee administration rather than a departure from it.</p> <p>No public statement found indicating intentions for Health or Agriculture Commissioner appointments.</p>	<p>Donation/alignment record: Institutional Farm Bureau insider — dues-paying voting member of the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation; recipient of the American Farm Bureau Federation "Friend of Farm Bureau" Award for congressional voting record.</p> <p>Agricultural chemical industry alignment documented by active advocacy for federal pesticide liability shield (H.R. 7567, Sections 10205–10207) during House Agriculture Committee markup, March 5, 2026. His agricultural advisor in D.C. denied 10205 was a shield and affirmed passing it was a top priority for Rose. Voted against an amendment to strip the sections from the Farm Bill.</p> <p>Former Tennessee Agriculture Commissioner (2002–2003); eighth-generation century farm owner operating within conventional commodity system.</p> <p>Publicly silent on vaccination (non-COVID) and other SHF issues.</p> <p>Consistent documented deference to industry-aligned EPA and CDC across all health and agricultural regulatory matters suggests the same pattern would govern commissioner appointments.</p> <p>Criticism of Governor Lee's education commissioner appointment but silence on health commissioner suggest his appointment would reflect continuity with the Lee** administration rather than a departure from it.</p> <p>No public statement found indicating intentions for Health or Agriculture Commissioner appointments.</p>

	FRITTS: YES	BLACKBURN: LIKELY NO	ROSE: UNABLE TO DETERMINE
<p>LIKELY TO SUPPORT eliminating school and private employer vaccine mandates (COVID stances not included in scoring).</p>	<p>Legislation Fritts supported: HB0638 – anti-discrimination vaccine status HB1872 – civil action for medical coercion HB1003 – waive vaccine paperwork compliance HB1852 – mRNA vaccine ban HB1157 – Restore Trust in Public Health Messaging Act</p> <p>QUOTE: "Parents get to decide and governments have no Constitutional nor moral authority to mandate medical treatments for our children." Source: https://x.com/MontyFritts4TN/status/2003269208189337776?s=20</p>	<p>"After five decades of vaccination implementation... misguided anti-vax trends threaten to reverse this progress and put our young ones in danger." Source: Sen. Blackburn, Senate statement, August 28, 2019</p> <p>"Doctors have told us time and time again that the science is clear: vaccines save and improve the quality of lives." Source: Vaccines Save Lives Resolution, April 11, 2019</p>	<p>No relevant legislation, votes, or public statements found.</p> <p>Rose has not yet completed SHF Survey.</p>

	FRITTS: YES	BLACKBURN: LIKELY NO	ROSE: UNABLE TO DETERMINE
<p>OPPOSES fluoridation of public water</p>	<p>Co-sponsor of HB 2396 / SB 0162 — banning fluoride addition to public water systems. 114th session. Source: TN HB 2396</p>	<p>In 2015, co-sponsored HR 416 that recognized community water fluoridation as a vitally important public health initiative. Source: HJR 416</p> <p>No relevant public statements found indicating she has changed her stance.</p> <p>Blackburn has not yet completed SHF Survey.</p>	<p>No relevant public statements found.</p> <p>Rose has not yet completed SHF Survey.</p>

	FRITTS: YES	BLACKBURN: NO	ROSE: NO
<p>OPPOSES Real ID & national ID database</p>	<p>Legislation Fritts supported: SB1783 – requires being offered choice of state or Real ID at licensing office.</p> <p>QUOTE: "No digital ID in Tennessee. We should also push back on the silly federal Smart ID." Source: https://x.com/MontyFritts4TN/status/1982756795799031922?s=20</p>	<p>Original cosponsor of H.R. 418 (REAL ID Act of 2005) as a U.S. Representative (R-TN-7). Source: https://www.congress.gov/bill/109/h-congress/house-bill/418/cosponsors</p> <p>Blackburn has not yet completed SHF Survey.</p>	<p>Maintains a dedicated "Real ID Assistance" page on his official congressional website. Source: https://johnrose.house.gov/issues/real-id-assistance</p> <p>Rose has not yet completed SHF Survey.</p>

	FRITTS: YES	BLACKBURN: LIKELY NO	ROSE: NO
<p>OPPOSES Pesticide Industry Liability Shields.</p> <p>Opposes legislation making EPA pesticide labels satisfy a company's 'duty to warn,' shielding companies from accountability.</p> <p>The EPA regulates pesticides, but courts decide whether an approved EPA label conceals fraud, corporate misconduct, or violates state and federal misbranding laws.</p>	<p>Strongly opposed TN HB 809, a pesticide industry liability shield bill. While he voted for the bill in a committee early in the process, he later publicly withdrew his support, and stated his intention to vote against it on the house floor (bill never reached floor).</p> <p>QUOTE: "I have come to think the Big Chemical lobby doesn't mind shifting liability onto our farmers while providing broad immunity to their globalist chemical companies." Source: @MontyFritts4TN, X, 2025</p>	<p>Multi-year close association with the TN Farm Bureau, which lobbied with Bayer in support of HB 809, a pesticide industry liability shield bill. Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DL6WYvWvNumz/</p> <p>The federal senate farm bill has not yet been filed. If it contains liability shield language, this section will be updated to include Blackburn's comments and vote.</p> <p>Close alignment on issues with President Trump suggests alignment with the pesticide industry since Trump and his Solicitor General side with Monsanto/Bayer on federal preemption of citizens right to jury trial for pesticide failure to warn claims.</p> <p>Blackburn has not yet completed SHF Survey.</p>	<p>Strongly and actively supported the 2026 Farm Bill, Section 10205, saying a pesticide manufacturer has no duty to warn beyond EPA labels.</p> <p>QUOTE: "The [federal] bill protects our nation's producers in blue states from their woke legislatures by making it clear that pesticides are regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, not courtrooms." Source: https://www.rfdtv.com/texas-tennessee-lawmakers-weigh-in-as-2026-farm-bill-moves-through-congress</p> <p>NOTE: No "blue" state legislatures have yet battled pesticide liability shield bills. The German chemical giant Bayer has run the bills in red states, and most have been defeated in those Republican majority legislatures.</p>

*Team Tennessee is a Tennessee-registered multi-candidate political campaign committee whose first campaign reported donations occurred in January 2025. As of the most recent public disclosures (April 2026), it has raised approximately \$3.2 million. The PAC has made expenditures that include payments to field staff whose public LinkedIn profiles describe their work as supporting Marsha Blackburn's 2026 gubernatorial campaign (first reported by Adam Friedman - [Source](#)) It has not registered or declared itself as a single-candidate committee dedicated solely to Blackburn, but independent news reporting characterizes it as established to support or affiliated with Blackburn's gubernatorial bid. Team Tennessee PAC's known donors include Jeff Yass, a Pennsylvania billionaire (\$1 million); Advance Financial, a payday lender, (\$400,000); Tamara Stephens, homemaker (\$279,000); Spencer Patton, of Patton Logistics; \$250,000). 53% of donations from out-of-state donors. [Source](#)

**Lee's Health Commissioner is fully out of compliance with the [TN Restore Trust in Public Health Messaging Act](#) and the Department of Health, under his leadership, continues to promote COVID-19 shots and other vaccines to the public and healthcare practitioners in a manner unsupported by product labeling.