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House speaker urges civility in gas tax debate

FRONT PAGE

By ERIK SCHELZIG and JONATHAN MATTISE
The Associated Press



ERIK SCHELZIG | THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
HOUSE SPEAKER BETH HARWELL, R-Nashville, responds to the announcement in November 2016 that she has won the Republican nomination to serve another two-year term as speaker. Harwell is urging her Republican colleagues to show civility on the transportation funding proposal

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Speaker Beth Harwell is calling on her Republican colleagues to show civility as the Tennessee House prepares for a contentious vote Wednesday on Gov. Bill Haslam's transportation funding proposal.

Harwell, a Nashville Republican mulling a bid for governor next year, urged members to "be kind to one another" even if they disagree on the substance of the bill that would raise the state's gas tax for the first time since 1989.

"This is going to be a hard week; we've got a big vote," Harwell said Monday. "No matter how you come down on this, we're going to have good Republicans for this bill, we're going to have good Republicans against this bill."

Supporters note that it would make deeper cuts in areas like the sales tax on groceries than it would raise at the pump. Opponents question that math and have vowed to vote against any tax increase.

TRIP, a national transportation research group, released a study Tuesday that says deterioration, congestion and lack of

safety features on Tennessee roads and bridges cost state drivers \$6 billion annually in higher operating costs, traffic crashes and congestion-related delays.

The average extra cost to each driver annually is \$2,019 in Memphis, \$1,667 in Nashville, \$1,471 in Chattanooga and \$1,376 in Knoxville, the report says.

Republican Rep. Jerry Sexton of Bean Station has angered some GOP colleagues supporting the bill by berating them in a committee hearing, on the House floor and at a news conference.

Sexton has called it a "farce" to argue that tax cuts in Haslam's package are larger than the fuel tax increases. Republicans will have to explain themselves to the voters, he said.

"When you go to the pump, Republicans did it to you," he said. "Don't blame the Democrats."

Tennessee's gas tax is now 21.4 cents per gallon and its diesel tax is 18.4 cents per gallon. The transportation funding bill would raise the gas tax by 6 cents over three years, and the diesel tax by 10 cents over the same time period.

The some \$350 million the measure would add to road funding would be offset by a projected \$400 million in cuts to other taxes. They include a 20 percent reduction in the sales tax on groceries, a \$113 million cut in corporate taxes paid by manufacturers and a 1 percent reduction in the tax on earnings from stocks and bonds.

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End to 'missing link'



THIS WAS THE SCENE IN 2015 as contractors worked on one of five bridges on the Foothills Parkway between Walden and Weiss Valley.

BY ERIK SCHELZIG AND JONATHAN MATTISE
The Associated Press
GREATER ACCESS TO PANORAMIC VIEWS OF THE MOUNTAINS.
Congress authorized the Foothills Parkway on Feb. 23, 1964, according to a National Parks Service fact sheet updated in March 2016, but it is the only one of seven congressionally mandated parkways yet to be completed.
Locally, a 6.4-mile section between U.S. 221 in Walden and Carr Creek was constructed between 1966 and 2010, the fact sheet explains. In the 2000s, two contracts were awarded from around the world experience the Park more easily and have

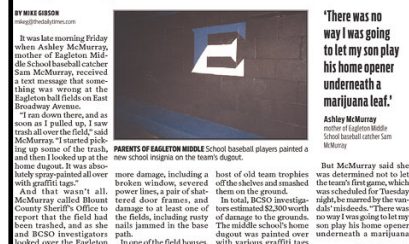
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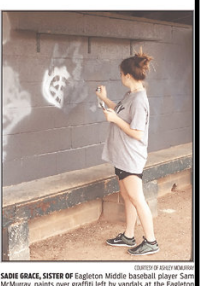
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Eagleton parents fix field after vandalism



PARENTS OF EAGLETON MIDDLE SCHOOL baseball players painted a new school insignia on the team's dugout.

BY MIKE GIBSON
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It was late morning Friday when Ashley McMurry, mother of Eagleton Middle School baseball catcher Sam McMurray, received a text message that something was wrong at the Eagleton ball field on East Dixie Highway Avenue.
"I ran down there, and as soon as I pulled up, I saw trash all over the field," said McMurry. "I started picking up some of the trash, and then I looked up at the home dugout. It was absolutely spray-painted all over with graffiti tags."
And that wasn't all. McMurry called Blount County Sheriff's Office to report that the field had been trashed, and as she and Blount investigators looked over the Eagleton grounds, they discovered more damage, including a host of team trophies broken windows, severed power lines, a pair of shattered door frames, and damage to at least one of the fields, including rusty nails jammed in the base path.
In one of the field houses, the perpetrators pulled a



ASHLEY McMURRY, mother of Eagleton Middle School baseball catcher Sam McMurray, paints over graffiti left by vandals at the Eagleton ball field.

That McMurry said she was determined not to let the team's first game, which was scheduled for Tuesday night, be marred by the vandals' misdeeds. "There was no way I was going to let my son play his home opener underneath a marijuana

clouds and sun
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