

State Legislation

We supported three state bills through the release of policy briefs and wrote our first-ever bill to decriminalize the distribution of absentee ballot applications. See our [113th Legislative Session Summary](#) to learn more about the bills we monitored during session.



Paid Family Leave Passed for State Employees and Teachers

Two paid family leave bills were passed this legislative session, giving most Tennessee state employees (HB0324/SB0276) and educators (HB0983/SB1458) 6 weeks of paid leave for the birth or adoption of a child. These policies will allow thousands more working families in Tennessee to care for a new child without risking their financial security and help the state retain more of their workforce. ThinkTennessee released a policy brief during session (*Paid Family Leave is Good Business for Tennessee*) with our partner A Better Balance to reiterate the economic and health benefits of paid family leave.

Raised Awareness of the Need to Decriminalize the Distribution of Absentee Ballot Applications

Current Tennessee state laws criminalize giving an absentee ballot application form to another person – a felony offense for the official application form and a misdemeanor offense for giving an unsolicited request for an application form. The laws were enacted prior to the advent of the internet and can be modernized as the official application is readily available online. ThinkTennessee introduced its *first-ever bill* (HB600/SB0326) to remove the felony and allow someone to share an absentee ballot application with someone who wants one. While the bill did not pass this legislative session, our efforts helped lay the groundwork for reform.

\$3.3 Billion Invested via Transportation Modernization Act

ThinkTennessee supported the governor's chief policy priority, the Transportation Modernization Act (TMA), through the production of two policy briefs on *Electric Vehicles (EVs)* and *Choice Lanes*, which discussed how the state can best support EV adoption and best practices in choice lane implementation. The landmark legislation will invest \$3.3 billion in transportation infrastructure, help the state address its rapid growth, and allow transit vehicles to access the choice lanes for free. We also produced a *new resource* to support city and county federal grant applications through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and created an *interactive map* detailing, for the first time, transit funding levels and sources in each of the 50-largest metro areas in the U.S.

GAVE

20 PRESENTATIONS
TO OVER

750

POLICY, ADVOCACY, AND
CIVIC LEADERS

PUBLISHED

41 REPORTS,
BRIEFS, BLOG
POSTS, AND
NEWSLETTERS

SUPPORTED **3** STATE
BILLS

APPEARED
IN THE MEDIA

12
TIMES

WROTE
2
OP-EDS

HOSTED

60
CIVIC LEADERS

AT **3**
LUNCHEONS

MET WITH

36
ELECTED
LEADERS

Local Legislation

In anticipation of mayoral elections in two of Tennessee's largest cities, we authored community-specific policy roadmaps with recommendations for improving transportation and affordable housing improvements in Nashville and Memphis.

Nashville's Next Mayor Should Lead the Way on Transportation and Housing

In Nashville, our [policy roadmap](#) recommended the mayor focus on three priorities: 1) Lead and empower a proactive and effective Metro administration; 2) Secure more dedicated funding for housing and transportation; and 3) Institute innovative policies to meet housing and transportation goals, like encouraging transit-ready development, prioritizing people-focused neighborhoods, and enabling more public-private partnerships.

Building Up Memphis: Equitable Growth through Transportation and Housing

In Memphis, our [policy roadmap](#) focused on four priorities: 1) Create vibrant, walkable neighborhoods with a variety of housing types, safe streets, and more transportation options; 2) Reimagine corridors to connect people and neighborhoods, rather than separate them; 3) Review what is working well and what needs improvement across city departments; and 4) Dedicate more funding for multimodal transportation and affordable housing.

Gatherings

This year, we engaged over 750 policy, advocacy, and civic leaders in discussions about the work that we do, including co-hosting events on affordable housing, presenting strategies for safer streets, and hosting civic luncheons with community leaders across the state.

Affordable Housing Events with Urban Institute

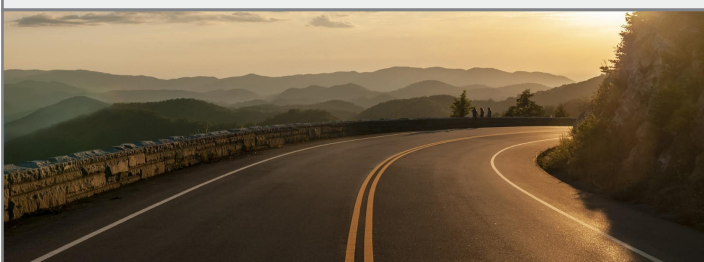
In partnership with the Urban Institute, we hosted two affordable housing discussions with representatives from local housing organizations, metro and state government, universities, faith groups, health institutions, and community organizations to better understand the barriers and opportunities of using institutional land for affordable housing in Nashville. These events brought together over 100 community stakeholders to explore paths forward on affordable housing.

Civic Leaders Luncheons

We hosted luncheons in Memphis, Chattanooga, and Knoxville to bring 60 local community leaders together in conversation about the issues that are most important to them. Common themes in these discussions included concerns about affordable housing, childcare, civic engagement, and education, reaffirming the focus on our priority areas. We look forward to continuing these conversations in 2024 as we revisit these regions.

Research

We developed comprehensive, data-driven reports on many timely and critical topics this year, including our state's transportation needs, voter engagement, and creative solutions to the affordable housing challenge.



Changing Lanes: The State of Transportation in Tennessee

In our *State of Our State: Transportation and Mobility* report and *Changing Lanes* policy brief, we provided data on the current state of Tennessee's transportation infrastructure and recommended evidence-based policies that can address them: 1) Prioritize health, safety, and equity in transportation investments; 2) Maximize the capacity of our existing assets, including prioritizing and investing in multimodal transportation; and 3) Consider additional revenue sources beyond the gas tax, such as pursuing federal funding and adopting dedicated transit funding in major metropolitan areas.

Election 2022 After Action Report

In our *Election 2022 After Action Report*, we found that while the November 2022 midterm election was safely and securely administered across the state of Tennessee, voter turnout continued to trail most other states, voter choice was limited, and calls to the national election protection hotline revealed that some would-be Tennessee voters continued to miss out on casting a ballot due to lack of information or challenges with some voting requirements. Drawing on this data, our report shared four recommendations for policymakers to consider ahead of the next election cycle that could help improve voter turnout.

Promoting Affordable Housing Partnerships in Nashville & Housing Resource Guide

This year, ThinkTennessee partnered with the Urban Institute in the creation of their report *Promoting Affordable Housing Partnerships in Nashville*, which explores how Nashville can promote and facilitate affordable housing development on land belonging to institutional landowners. To build upon the valuable feedback from stakeholders, we also produced a *Housing Resource Guide for Faith-Based Institutions*, designed for faith-based institutions interested in developing their land for affordable housing opportunities in their communities. This guide was developed by ThinkTennessee, Holland & Knight, and the Urban League of Middle Tennessee's R.E.D. Academy.