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NEWS, 5A

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Senate passes bill that would arm teachers

Covenant School mother calls actions ‘appalling’

Rachel Wegner, Vivian Jones and Melissa Brown
Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Tennessee Senate Republicans passed legislation Tuesday that would allow public K-12 teachers and school staff to carry concealed handguns on school grounds — despite vocal protests

from Covenant School families, their supporters and others seeking stricter gun-control measures.

The measure passed in a 26-5 vote that fell along party lines. Discussion over the bill halted as a group of around 200 gun-reform advocates voiced their opposition in the Senate gallery.

Several were holding signs, and the crowd reacted by snapping their fingers

in support or hissing in dissent as senators debated the bill.

Some spoke out during the early parts of the discussion.

After repeated warnings about disruptions, Lt. Gov. Randy McNally, R-Oak Ridge, called for state troopers to clear the gallery. He permitted a group of mothers of Covenant School students to stay, saying they had not caused a disruption.

Around 25 people initially refused to

leave, drawing the attention of several troopers. Eventually troopers told those who remained they would be arrested if they did not leave.

“There is no reason for you all to go to jail,” one told the group still in their seats.

As debate resumed on the bill, chants, cheering and shouts could be heard just outside the Senate chambers.

See **TEACHERS**, Page 10A

Forget rebuilding, Predators are in



Nashville left wing Kiefer Sherwood, left, and defenseman Roman Josi react after defenseman Spencer Stastney scored a goal against the Winnipeg Jets on Tuesday at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville.

ANDREW NELLES/THE TENNESSEAN



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Trotz gets team back in playoffs in first year as GM

He asked fans for patience, but he was never all that patient. Barry Trotz wasn't here to wait. The Nashville Predators had been waiting. As Trotz stepped into the general manager role, he was kinetic energy. Shook things up. Made a bunch of trades. Assembled draft picks. Fired the coach. Jettisoned some core players for the sake of culture.

Rebuilding. Or so we thought. And we thought it a lot, too, when these Predators started slowly or slumped in November or slumped again after the All-Star break. It was expected, the inevitable short-term pain of future gain.

But the NHL, with a long season, has its own way of separating the wannabes and the real ones.

See **ESTES**, Page 8A

Inside

What Predators players say about making the Stanley Cup playoffs. **1B**

Belmont to receive \$58M gift from Curb

Funds earmarked for Music Row facilities

Marcus K. Dowling
Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

In its 50th year, Belmont University's Mike Curb College of Entertainment and Music Business has announced a significant evolution of its literal and inspirational music industry footprint.

During a “Belmont at the Opry” Grand Ole Opry show featuring Belmont-graduated talent including Trisha Yearwood, Tyler Hubbard and Hailey Whitters, the institution announced a \$58 million gift from philanthropist and Nashville music executive Mike Curb to expand the institution's presence on Music Row.

The gift is the largest in university history. It will support the renovation of existing buildings and the construction of a state-of-the-art Music Row facility.

“Mike Curb's remarkable generosity and partnership with Belmont over many years has been invaluable in advancing entertainment and music business education,” said university President Greg Jones. “This latest transformational gift solidifies Belmont's position at the forefront of developing the next generation of music industry leaders. We are profoundly grateful to Mike and Linda for their continued investment in Belmont's mission.”

Brittany Schaffer, dean of Belmont's Mike Curb College of Entertainment & Music Business, adds the following: “For 50 years, our faculty, staff and

See **BELMONT GIFT**, Page 10A



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Teachers

Continued from Page 1A

Covenant mom calls Senate's actions 'appalling'

Beth Gebhard, whose son and daughter attend the Covenant School in Nashville, said her children were there last spring as a shooter killed three 9-year-olds and three adult staff members. She watched the Senate proceedings Tuesday with tears in her eyes, alongside several other mothers of students at the school.

She staunchly opposes the bill. She said her children, 9-year-old Ava and 12-year-old Hudson, survived the shooting because of well-trained teachers and police officers doing their job. She can't imagine a teacher having to also deal with confronting a shooter, especially one armed with an assault-style rifle.

"A handgun will do nothing against that," she said. "If what had happened on March 27 had gone down the way that it did with a teacher armed with a handgun attempting to put the perpetrator out, my children would likely be dead."

She called the lawmakers "cowardly" for clearing the gallery.

"If they are supposed to be representative of our voice and they are dismissing these people ... they are not for us and it is appalling," she said, holding back tears. "It's so upsetting. It makes me want to move."

Melissa Alexander and Mary Joyce, both mothers of students who attend Covenant, huddled with Gebhard after the vote. A Capitol building staff member who spotted the trio brought by a box of tissues, earning grateful smiles.

"As mothers of survivors, all we can do is continue to show up and keep sharing our stories and hope that eventually they will listen to them and take our advice," Alexander said. "We have real experiences in these tragedies. We are the ones who have been there, experienced this and lived through the aftermath of it."

Alexander said they'd lobbied lawmakers in recent days to amend the bill as a "last-minute Hail Mary," though both would have preferred to see the bill fail altogether.

"My child survived because the teacher kept the classroom quiet," Alexander said. "I've continued to tell that to all of the legislators."

They now plan to turn their attention to the House version in an attempt to make some headway. Alexander said they're deeply concerned parents could be kept in the dark about whether or not there is a firearm kept in their child's classroom.

"That's a pretty difficult thing as a



Covenant parents Mary Joyce and Melissa Alexander stand near other protesters outside the Senate doors after being removed from the gallery at the Tennessee Capitol in Nashville on Tuesday.

PHOTOS BY NICOLE HESTER/THE TENNESSEAN



Protesters gather outside the Senate doors after being removed from the gallery at the Tennessee Capitol in Nashville on Tuesday.

parent, not to know who your child is going to be around that's going to have a gun," Alexander said.

What opponents, supporters say about allowing Tennessee teachers to carry guns

Democratic lawmakers, gun safety advocates, teachers and students alike have sounded the alarm over the idea of armed teachers.

On Tuesday, the loudest reaction from the gallery came when Sen. Paul Bailey, R-Sparta, the Senate sponsor of the bill, confirmed that teachers would not need to disclose that they are carry-

ing guns. McNally ordered the gallery cleared after that outcry as people chanted: "Shame on you!"

"We won't even know who is in the building with a gun," Sen. Charlane Oliver, D-Nashville said during the discussion. "That is going to create a great deal of anxiety for people. How can they teach under these conditions?"

According to the bill, those who wish to carry must first get an enhanced handgun carry permit and complete annual training with law enforcement. Sen. Jeff Yarbro, D-Nashville, questioned the limited nature of that training as he spoke in opposition to the bill Tuesday.

Belmont gift

Continued from Page 1A

world-class facilities have made Belmont a top destination for future music executives, engineers, artists and songwriters. Mike's partnership over decades has allowed Belmont to continually elevate our entertainment curriculum and facilities in lockstep with industry needs. This lead gift allows us to deepen our integration with Music Row, creating an unprecedented immersive experience that will directly connect our students with industry leaders and opportunities while driving innovation alongside our partners in Nashville's entertainment landscape."

The two-phase project includes renovating the 17,000-square-foot former home of Capitol Records and Buddy Lee

Attractions' (until 2018) at 38 Music Square East.

That project is planned to add songwriting rooms, listening spaces, live sound classrooms, student lounges and updated space for Nashville's Leadership Music offices, continuing an existing partnership between the organizations.

The second phase will involve construction of a 75,000-square-foot building behind Belmont's existing Music Row footprint at 34 Music Square E. In the next two years, Belmont will commence building a facility encompassing a 150-plus person capacity performance venue, networking and gathering spaces for Belmont students and industry professionals, a coffee shop, content capture rooms and underground parking.

The university has also kicked off phase two's fundraising campaign.

"This latest transformational gift solidifies Belmont's position at the forefront of developing the next generation of music industry leaders."

Greg Jones Belmont University president

"As Nashville's music industry has grown and evolved into an international entertainment hub, it's crucial that our education system keeps pace to develop skilled talent," Mike Curb said.

"Belmont has been a fantastic partner over the years in preparing aspiring artists, songwriters, engineers, and music business leaders who go on to become invaluable employees for record companies throughout Nashville and

"We're sending people to 40 hours of training ... to learn how to handle a combat situation that law enforcement officers have trouble dealing with," Yarbro said.

Others have said the burden it puts on teachers is too great.

"I do not think that it is the responsibility of teachers in our state, who have taken the oath to educate our children, to now become law enforcement officers," said Sen. London Lamar, D-Memphis, said during the Senate Judiciary Committee last week.

Students and other advocates have argued that allowing teachers to be armed also adds to the risk of disciplinary actions or conflicts with students and others escalating.

Bailey sees it differently.

According to him, a teacher or staff member who accidentally shoots someone on school grounds would be solely liable. But he also pointed to three elements in the bill that work to prevent that scenario: training for the person carrying the gun, along with a psychiatric evaluation, and a sign-off from local law enforcement.

"I think any aspect of what you're saying would just not be," Bailey said after Yarbro pressed the issue of accidental shootings and liability.

According to the bill, the school district's director of schools, the school principal and the chief of the "appropriate" law enforcement agency must sign off on a staff member's authority to carry a concealed handgun. The bill appears to require this of each individual teacher seeking to carry a gun on campus, rather than allowing a joint blanket authorization for any qualified staff to carry.

Last week, Bailey said the bill would provide "another tool that can be used by those K-12 schools in the event that they're not capable of hiring (a school resource officer)." Nearly 600 public schools in Tennessee do not yet have school resource officers in place.

The bill was first introduced in January 2023. The debate over gun laws and school safety grew especially heated after the Covenant shooting.

What's next for the bill

As of Tuesday, no action had been taken by the House on the companion version of the bill. The bill made it through committees in the last session before being punted, along with all other gun-related legislation, to the current session. House Speaker Cameron Sexton, R-Crossville, told The Tennessean last week that he thinks the bill is strong and well designed.

"I think it creates a path that someone will be well trained before they ever do (carry)," he said. "It's not ... like anybody can do it."

Citigroup

Continued from Page 9A

manager at Hotchkis & Wiley, which has \$31 billion under management and owns shares of Citi.

Meeting the bank's target of 11% to 12% return on tangible equity would fuel big jump in the stock, given that its current profitability is much lower and will get closer to industry peers, Doble said.

Citi will report its first quarter earnings Friday and hold a virtual shareholders meeting on April 30.

It lost \$1.8 billion in the fourth quarter after taking several one-off charges that included losses with currency devaluation in Argentina and higher contributions to the FDIC, that ensures deposits.

Its biggest challenges are improving profits in banking and wealth management, according to Nerby at Moody's.

Challenges ahead

In an effort to boost performance, Fraser recently hired two prominent executives to run the divisions: Viswas Raghavan, former head of global investment banking at JPMorgan, and Andy Sieg, who previously led Bank of America's Merrill Wealth Management unit.

The recruitment of highly compensated executives was a snub to internal talent and detrimental to morale as employees were going through waves of layoffs, said the first source and two people who also declined to be identified discussing personnel matters.

In September, Fraser acknowledged the morale issue, saying the moves would not "be universally popular within our bank," but added that "our strongest performers are going to be fully supportive of these moves, and it is absolutely the right thing to do for our shareholders."

"Outsiders are what Citigroup needs now to really bring change," said Bank of

America analyst Ebrahim Poonawala.

Fraser has said Citi will leverage its relationships with the world's largest corporations to boost revenue in investment banking and wealth management. She also plans to drive more growth through a newly created division focused on client service. Still, analysts are awaiting more details on the strategy for the key units.

Another area of focus is Citigroup's U.S. consumer business.

Retail deposits only account for \$105 billion of the company's total \$1.3 trillion in deposits, with corporate deposits making up the bulk of the remainder. By contrast, JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America each have \$1 trillion or more in consumer deposits.

The U.S. retail business is a drag on returns, finance chief Mark Mason told investors in February when asked about the bank's strategy, saying the bank has less than 700 branches. Competitors have much larger networks.

When asked for comment about its

the industry at large. With this latest investment, we'll build upon that strong foundation to push entertainment and music business education ahead to the next level, ensuring a steady stream of well-prepared professionals for the ever-growing industry."

Fifty years ago, Belmont's music business program emerged as former university president Herbert Gabhart, professor and program founder Bob Mulloy, and pioneering Memphis and Nashville industry executives Curb and Cecil Scaife combined forces to create both an industry connector and talent incubator for aspiring undergraduate and graduate-level audio engineers, songwriters and industry creatives.

For more information on Belmont's Mike Curb College of Entertainment and Music Business, visit www.belmont.edu/curb/.

plans in consumer banking, Citi spokespeople referred Reuters to executives' earlier statements: To grow in the six U.S. metropolitan areas where it has more branches, boost digital channels and prudently grow mortgages.

Overseas, Fraser has made progress on her commitment two years ago to exit from 14 markets. Citi has completed sales of nine businesses in Asia, including in Taiwan, Philippines, Malaysia, India and Indonesia. The bank is also winding down businesses in China, South Korea and Russia. And it will try to sell its Polish bank and carry out an initial public offering for its Mexican business next year.

Citi will showcase its services division — which Fraser refers to as the company's crown jewel — at a June 18 event for investors.

The unit, which provides cash management, clearing and payments services for the world's biggest corporations, reported record revenue of \$18.1 billion last year.