Possible Issues to Address in the Policy Challenge

We have solicited policy concerns within the Tennessee region from UT and area governmental and non-governmental agencies. These are just some of the issues you might select to address through state or local policy, or you can define your own. As you will see, these issues affect millions of Americans all across the country. Students’ research in these areas will benefit communities throughout the United States and the world.

Knoxville Parks & Recreation – Joe Walsh, City of Knoxville  jwalsh@cityofknoxville.org
There is a well-publicized childhood obesity epidemic in the United States. 1 in 3 children is either overweight or obese. Tennessee is near the bottom of this list of states with the highest percentage, unfortunately. Minority children and children living in disadvantaged neighborhoods tend to have even a higher incident of being overweight than the average child. While the school system, health department, Children’s Hospital and various other groups are working on the issue, there are still many obstacles in solving the problem. What is it that can be done to involve and energize the communities hardest hit to get them to help address this? Eating better foods, getting more active, both as groups and individuals. What will it take to change this terrible trend that has been developing over the past 30-40 years? Get children from behind the “screen” (television, computer, game systems, etc.) and get them outside playing games, running around, being active. How will they make good choices for meals and snacks, cutting their calorie and fat intake?

Bike Walk Knoxville, Caroline Cooley, MD, President; Email: ccbikes@yahoo.com
Fewer and fewer children walk and bike to school while the childhood obesity epidemic continues. Parents demand lower Parental Responsibility Zones around schools due to unsafe routes by foot or bike to schools in their neighborhoods. Busing more students adds expense for school systems that are already struggling with budgets. Current transportation systems favor motorized vehicles. Bike Walk Knoxville would like help with implementing policies that improve the safety and mobility of non-motorists including pedestrians, bicyclists, and disabled users. Health issue as well as a societal dilemma. While some progress is being made the pace is not sufficient to have a beneficial impact in the near future. Organization’s website address: http://bwknox.org/

East Tennessee Quality Growth - Julie Graham julie.etqq@gmail.com  865.585.0811
The greater Knoxville region is currently challenged by the dual forces of an aging skilled workforce retiring and the difficulty of attracting and retaining millennials needed to fill those jobs and the jobs for emerging economic clusters. Existing focus groups meet to discuss attraction and retention of labor, but there continues to be a migration of millennials to other areas of the country. Also, Tennessee lags in educational attainment and companies must recruit workers to the area to fill existing jobs. The cost of recruitment and training is a significant investment. Tennessee is also benefiting from an increase in industry relocation. Millennials are needed in the
current workforce to replace aging workers in highly skilled positions, to fill leadership roles in the community. How do we solve this problem --- how do we attract millennials and keep them and help foster policy that changes the perception that this region is not inclusive?

Tennessee Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR) Lynnisse Roehrich-Patrick [www.tn.gov/tacir](http://www.tn.gov/tacir) 615-741-3012
TACIR has a number of issues on which they have been working. One idea was for the creation of an uninsured motorist database to help the Department of Safety enforce compliance with the Financial Responsibility Law. Another area of interest for TACIR was the creation of new funding mechanisms for emergency communication services and the efficiency of systems already in place.

Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) Joe Galbato, Deputy Commissioner/Chief Financial Officer  joe.galbato@tn.gov  615.741.2848
TDOT is interested in encouraging more cargo shipping via barge and rail versus tractor-trailer to reduce negative environmental effects and improve road safety. TDOT has also been concerned with the recent increases in distracted driving and automobile deaths due to unrestrained passengers (seat belt usage).

Knoxville Metropolitan Drug Commission – Karen Pershing  kpershing@metrodrug.org  865.588.0963
Metro Drug Commission has expressed concern over the high number of women addicted to opioids (921 cases in 2013) and a new state law that criminalizes mothers of children born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome. What policies are the most effective: Carrot vs. stick approach? Are there alternative ways to deal with the issues that other states have found to be effective?

Knoxville League of Women Voters - Ann Strange  astrangerus@gmail.com  865.607.4251
KLWV seeks to increase the participation of eligible voters in the Knox area. They are looking for innovative ideas to: (1) register eligible voters, (2) ensure voters are engaged and informed, and (3) vote regularly in state and local elections.  [http://www.statisticbrain.com/voting-statistics/](http://www.statisticbrain.com/voting-statistics/)

Knoxville/Knox County Food Policy Council - Chad Hellwinckel, Research Asst. Prof., Ag Econ chellwin@utk.edu
#1 Food prices have increased by 23% over the past 8 years. Over this same period the number of people in poverty has increased. National SNAP-benefit expenditures have mushroomed to over $70 billion per year, and Congress routinely threatens to cut program expenditures. **How can we increase food access to those in poverty without increasing government expenses?** Community gardens have been started around Knoxville but they have not been successful to date in increasing food access to the poor. Problems include lack of gardening knowledge, poor soils, no access to water, and gardens located too far from people’s kitchens. Are there other policies that can increase direct access to the poor? More gardens? Neighborhood composting? City garden education classes?
Edible landscaping in public spaces? Please help us figure out if these ideas (or new ideas) can increase direct access of good food to the poor.

#2 Food prices have increased by 23% over the past 8 years and over this same period a direct correlation between energy prices and food prices has emerged. If energy prices continue to increase, food prices will likely increase too. Increasing the amount of food grown (with low-input methods) within the Knoxville Foodshed has been proposed as a way to increase resilience of our food supply by reducing transportation and production costs (Hellwinckel et al. 2014). Yet barriers exist such as; lack of training programs for new farmers, high land values, small current market for local food, institutions like schools and hospitals unwilling (or unable) to buy local at a slightly higher price. We need people going into farming now to avoid price or supply disruptions in the near future, but attracting, training, and providing a comfortable living (now) are challenges. Help us figure out policies to make farming a viable option for the young.


Knoxville Family Justice Center - Amy Dilworth  adilworth@fjcknoxville.org  865.215-6868
Tennessee ranks 10th in the Nation for Women Murdered by Men. There were 53 women murdered in 2012 and that reflected 1.6 per 100,000 females. In those cases where the victim-offender relationship could be identified 100% (47 out of 47) were murdered by someone they knew. Of the female victims who knew their offenders 68% (32 victims) were wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders. Among the female intimates who were murdered 63% (20 victims) were killed with guns; 60% of these (12 victims) were shot and killed with handguns. For homicides in which the circumstances could be identified, 97% were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these 79% involved arguments between the victim and offender. 1 victim was less than 18 years of age, 7 were 65 years of age or older and the average age was 40. 1 victim was Asian/Pacific Islander, 21 were black and 31 were white. Other than guns, 8 were killed with knives, 8 with blunt objects and 6 with bodily force. Since the Family Justice Center has been open in Knoxville (May, 2006) TN has remained in the top 10 in the nation though this ranking does show some improvement. One effort is to develop Family Justice Centers statewide to help to get the state off of the top ten list. What can be done to save lives and get Tennessee off this Top 10 list?

Citizens for Safety & Clean Air - Harry Shatz  hshatz@bellsouth.net  631.745.5237
BRIEF BACKGROUND: Concerned citizens in the greater Bethel community have engaged in civic action for nearly twenty years to initially oppose the re-opening of a rock quarry and a new asphalt plant by actively participating in public hearings on the county and city level,[ Anderson County and the City of Clinton]. The areas of concern morphed into annexation of the rock quarry site by the City of Clinton, adoption of a new zoning map for the annexed area; disputes over sales tax divisions and the entanglement of public and private interests entangled in litigations ultimately resolved by a Master Settlement Agreement.
PROBLEM STATEMENT: [1] Is it appropriate for a county and or a municipality to globally resolve diverse matters in litigation where both broad public issues and narrow private grievances have been commingled and thereby settled?

[2] Does public confidence erode in governmental integrity when private interests can relentlessly bulldoze through a favorable outcome notwithstanding nearly twenty years of having been blocked judicially and legislatively?

Briefly explain why this is an urgent issue? This goes to the heart of good governance and not only the proper exercise of governmental power but the appearance of legitimately arrived at decisions in the public interest in the full light of day. Identifiable actions may be timely challenged by citizens who are aggrieved and not come away with the impression that a favored decision was railroaded by needlessly conflating it with other intractable issues so that complexity increases and the impression exists of undue influence or back room dealing. Given the prohibitive costs of litigation, should citizen groups have access to Legal Aid type services or members of the Bar offering pro bono counsel to level the playing field when the public groups have been excluded from certain litigations that are then globally settled without them being actively present?

http://www.eastanderson.com/wordpress/?p=276

Additional Ideas and Suggestions for consideration:

Baker Ambassador Trevor Dixon: 1. Many Appalachian communities have become very dependent on the coal industry. As the U.S. moves to more environmentally friendly energy alternatives, the industry will shrink, and areas of Appalachia will likely suffer from unemployment. To prevent this, we may need to encourage economic development and diversification of these areas. How do we bring new, green jobs to areas where the coal industry is dominant?

2. Public infrastructure in Tennessee and across the nation has fallen behind the global standard. How can we address this issue?

3. Tuition prices at post-secondary institutions have risen significantly in the past decade. Should new policy be considered to slow or halt this rapid growth? If so, how?

4. As personal electric vehicle technology becomes more accessible, one of the biggest industry obstacles is the lack of charging stations in public locations. Should public policy be drafted that regulates where and by whom these charging stations should be constructed? If so, what would that policy look like?

Fire Safety --Identifying Groups/Communities in TN with a High Risk for Fire Mortalities & Injuries and Strategies for Risk Reduction
- Strategies to Provide Adequate Fire Protection in Rural TN

**Animals** -- Identifying Best Practices at Animal Shelters: animal care, placement, and/or funding issues

**Education** -- **Pre-School that Works**: Replicating Success and Ditching Failure
  - Common Core

**Jobs - Does Green Pay?** The Economic Impact of Green Jobs in TN

**Wage Gap**

**Equity & Diversity Issues**

**Bikes & Bikeways**

**Billboard Sign Control**

**Air Quality**

**Recycling**