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BOYS STATE

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BOYS' STATE OPENS WITH ORIENTATION AND MEMORIAL SERVICE

In his second year overseeing the program, Judge Gary McKenzie opened the orientation and memorial service on Sunday evening by telling the audience that the week of sacrificing time, energy and attention would be worth the experience. McKenzie follows in the footsteps of Judge John Maddux, who served 35 years as Boys State Board of Directors chairman. Tennessee American Legion Adjutant and Finance Officer Dean A. Tuttle placed the POW-MIA flag on stage and the wreath at the foot of the American flag to honor those who have given their lives for our freedom.

Charles McCaskey, retired Army chaplain and minister of Cookeville's First Cumberland Presbyterian Church, told delegates at least 1,240,000 troops have lost lives in combat since the Civil War. "I have buried dozens of those, and I've held their wives' hands while they cried," he said. "I've put their children on my knee and bounced them while they tried to figure out why daddy didn't come home.

"When you eat breakfast in the morning, you give thanks for one of those people. When you stand in formation, you give thanks. When you return to high school, you give thanks. When you register to vote, give thanks," he admonished.

Cookeville/Putnam County Chamber of Commerce president George Halford encouraged delegates to "have a big time" and listen and learn and meet people. "With 600 miles from Mountain City to Memphis, most people never get together in the state like you are. Make the most of it," he said.

Marc Burnett, Boys State director, encouraged participants to lead. "As you go through the week, there are many people here who are leaders who look for other leaders to follow in their footsteps," he said.

2015 Boys State Lt. Gov. Nathan Longfellow led this year's delegates in taking the Boys State pledge.

Judge McKenzie informed the audience that Tennessee's Boys State program is considered the best of the 55 programs in the world. CPR/AED training will be offered to each participant. Streaming video will allow parents and friends to watch assembly speakers and parade ground activities on the Boys State website.

REMEMBER ME?

Judge John Maddux offered a well-received presentation on "Remembering Names and Faces." Boys Staters learned the importance of remembering names in order to influence, communicate, impress, sell and create and maintain friendships. He challenged delegates to learn every person's name in their cities by noon on Wednesday. Judge Maddux gave five steps and an acronym (INRAW) for remembering a person's name:

1. Be Interested
2. Get the Name (listen, ask about spelling and origin)
3. Repeat the Name (aloud, silently several times)
4. Associate Mental Image with Name (recall features, be silly)
5. Write it down (carry a notepad)

Keisling and Bailey speak on Major Political Issues in Tennessee

State Rep. Kelly Keisling, representing District 38, and State Sen. Paul Bailey, representing District 15, led an information and Q&A session on hot topics being discussed in the state legislature. Both encouraged delegates to contact and visit as special guests during a legislative session or out of session to take a tour. They covered top issues, including TN Ready testing, state budget priorities, bills passed this legislative session and how the State House and Senate operate.

Keisling opened the session with what he termed exciting numbers, explaining the state's budget was the largest in history at almost \$35 billion. "Year-to-date revenues for this fiscal year are \$572 million more than estimated," Keisling said. He described some of the state's funding totals, including the \$55 million for state parks, \$104 million for teacher salary increases and \$4.5 billion for the Basic Education Program. He followed with a catalogue of bills that became law or were House priorities in the recent legislative session.

Delegates applauded when Keisling said he supported "less testing, more teaching." They applauded again when he talked about the bill that would eliminate two high school tests, allow free sessions for retaking the ACT and SAT, and increasing testing transparency.

Bailey opened by strongly encouraging all delegates to learn how to be successful as a representative on any board or in any office. "I encourage you to learn proper parliamentary procedure," he said. "It is useful to understand the rules so you can rule."

Bailey expressed concern that issues with prescription and recreational drugs were jeopardizing entire communities economically because businesses are having trouble filling positions. "In the Upper Cumberland, one employer experienced over 60 percent of applicants failing drug tests."

Both elected officials extended their availability to students and met with dozens of Boys Staters after the scheduled session to listen and answer questions.

What is being done to address K-12 education? Bailey: We made the largest investment in K-12 education without a tax increase ever in our state's history, \$258 million. Keisling: With the funding, Tennessee Promise and the HOPE Scholarship, Tennessee has stepped to the plate so you have the opportunity to further your education.

Do campaign contributions cause a problem at the state level because of the donor influence? Keisling: I received good advice from a colleague. He said, "Vote with your constituents first, then with your heart, then with your party." I haven't witnessed campaign contributions affecting legislation. Bailey: It costs a lot of money to get your message out. But my stipulation is that it's fine to donate, but don't expect me to vote the way you want me to vote. I've voted against the wishes of donors at times, and they were fine with it.

What do you think about TN Ready and what's happened this year? Bailey: The Department of Education contracted with Measurement Inc. The computer test overloaded the servers, then they couldn't print paper tests in time to deliver to schools. I asked once they failed twice, how much money had we invested. It was \$1.6 million, and I asked if we were going to ask for that amount of money back. We were only paying on deliverables, so we terminated the contract and are taking bids now.