

TENNESSEE AMERICAN LEGION

BOYS STATE

Vol. 77, No. 1, Sunday, May 22, 2016
Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, Tennessee

More than 600 young men arrive at Tennessee Tech for American Legion Boys State

Over the past 52 years, tens of thousands of young men from across the state have learned to be better, more educated citizens by spending the week on Tennessee Tech University's campus at American Legion Boys State. This Sunday, more than 600 young men from Memphis to Mountain City will begin Boys State as they celebrate its 77th anniversary in Tennessee.

The program ranks as the best in the country because of the opportunities given to high school juniors from across the state. During the week they will receive instruction and advice from the state's governor, military leaders and government officials. Schools and communities select participants based on an assessment of their potential for leadership.

"This longstanding program is possible because of the established relationship between the American Legion and Tennessee Tech University," said Judge Gary McKenzie, criminal court judge for the 13th judicial district, who oversees the program. Judge McKenzie is a Tennessee Tech criminal justice graduate who earned his law degree at the University of Memphis.

Beginning Sunday, delegates will be immersed in learning state government by running a mock 51st state, Boys State. They will organize political parties and establish city, county and state governments by election, complete with primaries and political campaigns. American Legion posts across the state sponsor delegates and fund the activities held at Tennessee Tech.

This year's session also will feature an address from Gov. Bill Haslam. U.S. Congressman Diane Black will be the featured speaker at Saturday's inauguration of this year's new ALBS governor. Black is a member of the House Ways and Means Committee as well as the House Budget Committee.

For the 12th consecutive year, Boys State will host the SCALES program, the Supreme Court Advancing Legal Education for Students, during which the Tennessee Supreme Court will hold a special session to hear oral arguments in two actual Supreme Court cases.

Zavior Phillips, 2015 Tennessee ALBS governor, will participate in the opening orientation and memorial service. State Rep. Ryan Williams of Cookeville will lead a discussion on major political issues in Tennessee on Monday. Major Gen. Max Haston, Tennessee adjutant general, will be a guest speaker on Thursday.

MEET YOUR 2015 GOVERNOR ZAVIOR PHILLIPS

Zavior Phillips, representing Lahiere City and from Murfreesboro's Central Magnet School, was elected 2015 Tennessee Boys State governor by more than 600 delegates last year.

Phillips was honored by the Tennessee Sports Writers Association as a member of the Class A/AA All-State Soccer Team. He also was the Murfreesboro Daily News Journal's Boys Soccer Player of the Year, leading the county with 39 goals scored.

Phillips gave an effective speech during his campaign that resonated with delegates. He opened and closed his remarks by impersonating President Obama. "Leaders should refuse to be cocooned in their own affairs," he said. "The best leaders are servants."

He spoke of changes he would support, including adding soccer and dodge ball. He also called for better distribution of information about campaign rules and room inspections. He suggested a better use of bulletin boards to improve communication and decrease demerits.

His charge to his fellow Boys Staters is still relevant to this year's group.

"Our cities, counties and state are all fictitious. Boys State is real. Let us leave this thing better than we found it," he said.

AMERICAN LEGION

The American Legion was chartered by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic, mutual-help, war-time veterans organization. A community-service organization which now numbers nearly 3 million members -- men and women -- in nearly 15,000 American Legion Posts worldwide. These Posts are organized into 55 Departments -- one each for the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, France, Mexico, and the Philippines.

The American Legion's national headquarters is in Indianapolis, Indiana, with additional offices in Washington, D.C. In addition to thousands of volunteers serving in leadership and program implementation capacities in local communities to the Legion's standing national commissions and committees, the national organization has a regular full-time staff of about 300 employees.