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BOYS STATE

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BOYS' STATE OPENS WITH ORIENTATION AND MEMORIAL SERVICE

In his fourth 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 Vice Chairman Maddux positioned the wreath at the foot of the American flag to honor those who have given their lives for our freedom.

Commander Bobby Ferrell encouraged delegates to remember "you set your own destiny." He told delegates that knowledge is power and that Boys State was a great opportunity.

Director Steve Law told delegates "go ahead and amaze yourself because one thing is for sure, there are great leaders sitting in this room right now." He gave his Three Rs for leadership: Respect for Self, Respect for Others, and Responsibility for Actions.

Law presented a series of challenges to delegates:

Always be strong, but not rude. Be kind, but not weak. Be bold, but not a bully. Be thoughtful, but not lazy. Be humble, but not timid. Be proud, but not arrogant. Have humor, but not folly.

Cookeville/Putnam County Chamber of Commerce president George Halford encouraged delegates. "Tennessee is a broad state, and this is a rare opportunity to make these relationships. Sen. Lamar Alexander says the seed to be governor was planted at Boys State, and this can be your moment too. Have fun, learn and network."

Law 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. "You will never experience anything like this again."

Marzell Norris, current TNALBS Governor, led this year's delegates in taking the Boys State pledge.

Judge McKenzie challenged delegates. "Somebody, somewhere someone believes in you. We need leaders. Judges, governors, and senators have been where you sit now. Get out of your comfort zone. This is your opportunity."

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)

Williams, Bailey and Sherrell speak on Major Political Issues in Tennessee

State Rep. Ryan Williams, Rep. Paul Sherrell and Sen. Paul Bailey led an information and Q&A session on hot topics being discussed in the state legislature. They covered top issues, including the opioid crisis, healthcare, legalizing marijuana, gun legislation, taxes, and job creation.

Sen. Bailey opened by informing delegates that the state has a balanced budget and zero debt. "We are just like grandma, we pay as we go." He also described unprecedented growth in jobs and economic growth.

Rep. Williams explained that he and Sen. Bailey had recently worked on the governor's task force for school safety, grading all 1,800 schools in the state by federal standards with the purpose of identifying where improvements need to be made.

Sherrell encouraged delegates to work hard and establish goals for their future.

All 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 the legislature doing about Tennessee's opioid crisis?

Williams: We still have about 7.2 million prescriptions in the state. Most people get them legally. The medical community has created this problem. It's difficult to close the door, but we have eliminated surfing and have closed pill mills. And we have put more money into drug treatment so that more people can get the help they need.

How much do special interests groups play into state elections?

Bailey: You have to discern what is best for your district and the state. I work with some groups who align with my beliefs, and I listen to others with a different view point. Williams: Interest groups play a role in session to give us input, and that can affect policy. Out of session, they hold fundraising events and can contribute.

Are we being too highly taxed in Tennessee?

Williams: We've constitutionally prohibited almost any other tax and created an environment for a low overall tax burden for companies. The AllianceBernstein move is a huge economic indicator that what we are doing is working. Bailey: We have cut over \$550 million in taxes, decided to never have state income tax, and lowered grocery taxes three times in eight years. We do have high sales tax, but sales tax is a user fee.

Where do you see the state moving in marijuana legislation? Sherrell: The federal government says its illegal. As a state, we've looked at other states' actions, but the bill this year wasn't a good bill. There will probably be a bill one day that is in a good form, one that requires a prescription and usage appropriate for illness.

Is it realistic to have guns in our classrooms?

Bailey: We met with nine school directors and asked their concerns. Many did not oppose certain teachers carrying guns, but wanted to say who could and couldn't carry. No legislation moved forward. Williams: We have a morality problem. We need parents to be more responsible with their guns and their kids' access to them.

Was there any legislation to improve mental health care and facilities?

Williams: The Autism Awareness task force helps educate the public. We improved telemedicine for counseling services. We've seen overall improvement, and in the budget there was additional funding mental health services.