



## Observer Corps Report

**Observer:** Tanya Phillips

**Meeting Observed:** Knox County Commission

**Meeting Date:** 01.29.2026

**Agenda:** [Knox County Commission Agenda 01.29.2026](#)

**Video Recording:** [Knox County Commission Recording](#)

### Three Main Observations:

1. The two immigration agenda items were postponed the day of the meeting. The first was a resolution sponsored by Commissioner Lee that was in opposition to the School Board Legislative Priority #6 was moved to April. The second was Commissioner Fox's presentation, "A Christian's Biblical View of Illegal Immigration," which is a rebuttal to religious arguments made during the October meeting, was moved to February.
2. There was a strong community presence filling most of the room to show opposition for the two immigration agenda items even though they were postponed, and eight people spoke out against them.
3. Ordinance, [O-25-12-102](#), that prohibits discrimination against U.S. citizens in the sale or purchase of Real Property in Knox County passed 11-0 on its 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

Feature Evaluated	Yes	No	Comments
Meeting started on time?	X		Started at 5; adjourned at 8
All members present?	X		
Members attentive?	X		
Did members come prepared to discuss agenda items?	X		
Agenda posted 72 hours prior to meeting?	X		Two agenda items with significant public opposition were removed the day of the meeting. Some were not aware the items were postponed until they got to the meeting.
Agenda items clearly described what was to be discussed?	X		

Adequate opportunity given for public input?	X		All speakers were given their 3 minutes, and even if they went over their allotted time, they were allowed to finish.
Was there an appearance that some action items were discussed in closed rather than open session?		X	
Was background information available to the public?	X		
Facilities adequate (room size, lighting, ventilation, speakers, audible, ADA accessible)?	X		There were a few minor technical issues with the new electronic voting system, but overall, the transition was smooth. Some commissioners are not speaking directly into their microphone, so they are hard to hear.

**Were there any issues on the agenda relevant to LWV positions or programs? View the League’s [National](#), [State](#), and [LWVKKC](#) policy positions.**

*LWVKKC Policy Positions: Childcare, Land Use, Health, Homeless/Mentally Ill Persons, Urban Forestry, Use of School Facilities by Communities, Teacher Recruitment & Retention*

League Position	Issue
Education	<a href="#">R-26-1-904</a> – Resolution affirming the state bill HB 0793 but undermining the legislative priority set by the School Board that ensures a free education for all children.

**Do you recommend League action on any of these issues?**

Monitor the progress of the state bill HB 0793 especially between now and April when [R-26-1-904](#) is back on the agenda.

**Other notes/concerns?**

- Presentation – Knox County School Annual Report – the county moved from “Needs Improvement” to “Advancing System” in four years, and there has been four years of consecutive gains in every subject (ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies).
- Public Forum
  - Three people spoke on [RLA-17994](#). This is a consideration of the closure of a portion of Wye Way Lane.
  - Although the presentation on “A Christian’s Biblical View of Illegal Immigration” which is a rebuttal to religious arguments made during the October meeting, was moved to February, and [R-26-1-904](#), which is a resolution in opposition to the School Board Legislative Priority #6 – Free Education for All Children, sponsored by Commissioner Lee, was postponed until April, there

was still a large community presence to show opposition for these two items, and eight people spoke out against these two specific items or the issue of immigration.

- The common theme from those who spoke against the resolution was that it undermines the decision of the School Board, it's an administrative burden on an already overburdened school system and wanting to avoid the implications in section 4 that the school will only protect education for the most cost-effective students whose parents have the correct lineage. Here is the text from **SECTION 4, Legislative Priority**
    - *The Knox County Commission urges the Tennessee General Assembly to support proposals allowing school districts to collect or monitor student immigration status, as such authority may reduce financial liabilities and risks borne by local governments, lower long-term administrative costs, and minimize operational distractions from teaching and learning. The Commission further affirms the State of Tennessee's compelling interest in protecting public education for the children of citizens of Tennessee.*
  - Commissioners also made comments on the resolution: Durrett spoke out against this resolution because the Commission has no authority over the School Board, and Commissioner Lee responded that the resolution is about accountability and transparency.
  - A person spoke out against Commissioner Fox's presentation because it's contrary to any government body to debate matters of religion.
  - Commissioner comments on the presentation: Commissioner Fox defended his decision to present his Biblical view on immigration since the public is bringing Christian principles into the public square, and he plans to do a mini workshop with Bible verses. He also asserts that bringing Christian principles into the discussion is an admission that America is a Christian country. He believes America was always intended to be a Christian Country, and he states, "the Declaration of Independence was clear about that."
  - The audience clapped after every public speaker, and several people in the audience voiced their displeasure with comments made by Commissioners Fox and Lee prompting Commissioner Oster to call for order several times.
  - Commissioner Fox stated that he postponed the presentation because the Young Republicans had an event at the same time as the meeting, and they wanted to attend. No reason was given at the meeting as to why Commissioner Lee postponed her resolution.
- The consideration of the closure of a portion of Wye Way Lane [RLA-17994](#) caused an inordinate amount of discussion (almost an hour) that ultimately ended with the Commissioners to vote unanimously to postpone the decision for 90 days to give the land owner the time to get a survey. Some of the time was spent trying to overcome the technical hurdle of projecting a specific map on the screen. Even after it was clear a decision could not be made without an updated survey, some Commissioners continued discussion. It seems an agenda item pertaining to property lines, easements, and setbacks would be confirmed in the agenda review meeting that all needed documents are provided prior to bringing it in before the Commission to eliminate spending an enormous amount of time discussing something that can't be decided without the proper documents.
  - Ordinance, [O-25-12-102](#), that prohibits discrimination against U.S. citizens in the sale or purchase of Real Property in Knox County passed 11-0 on its 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.
  - The Junior Commissioners were all in attendance. At the end of the meeting Commissioner Jay was announcing their field trip to the jail and several other upcoming fields trips, and a member of the audience asked if these could be recorded in case members of the public had an interest.