



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mayor Burchett presents FY2013-2014 budget proposal

Knoxville, Tenn. — Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett today presented his Fiscal Year 2013-2014 county budget proposal to the Knox County Commission, before beginning a series of public community meetings in each commission district to discuss the proposal.

The budget proposal can be viewed online at <http://www.knoxcounty.org/finance/budget.php>.

Included in Mayor Burchett's FY2014 budget:

- No tax increase
- Maintains county services
- Fully funds Knox County Schools' \$419.9 million budget request
- \$4 million in Capital Improvement funding for completion of the Karns Connector
- Continues on track to reduce county's debt by \$100 million by the end of FY2016.
- 2 percent Cost of Living Adjustment for Knox County employees

During his budget presentation, Mayor Burchett made the following remarks:

Chairman Norman, members of the commission, thank you for being here today. Heath, thank you for the leading us in the pledge – and, John, thank you for the prayer. We appreciate the work you both do for Knox County.

Before I get started, I would like to take a moment to recognize some of our guests in the audience. Unfortunately, City of Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero was unable to join us today and sends her regrets.

I also want to take a moment to thank Finance Director Chris Caldwell and his staff for their hard work in putting this budget together.

In the next few weeks, this body will have the opportunity to consider my Fiscal Year 2014 budget proposal.

The budget that I present to you today is fiscally responsible, does not require a tax increase, and allows us to continue operating within our means.

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The amount of my total gross proposed budget is \$734,527,080 with a net budget of \$696,391,682 – that's \$22.3 million more than last year, with more than \$18 million of that increase going to General Purpose Schools.

In fact – this budget fully funds the School Board's operational and capital budget request. Education remains one of my top priorities – and let me be very clear: We must continue to see gains in the classroom – and this means making sure money goes to educate students and support our teachers.

It's important to point out that, when you don't include education-related increases, the overall county budget increased by less than one percent.

Public safety is the second largest piece of the county's budget – with more than \$75 million proposed this year. That's a nearly \$1.3 million operational increase over last year, in addition to almost \$1 million for new cruisers and a bus for the Knox County Sheriff's Department.

We have reduced Knox County's debt by approximately \$60 million since Fiscal Year 2012, and this budget keeps us on pace to cut the county's debt by \$100 million by the end of Fiscal Year 2016. This is being accomplished with a very simple approach: Don't borrow more than you pay down each year. That means we will continue to take advantage of opportunities to pay as we go – which is something foreign to Washington politicians, but is a daily reality for almost every family in Knox County.

Now, there are some who will say that these are just zeroes in a spreadsheet, but the truth is this sort of responsible financial management will allow students to be sitting in brand new classrooms inside a new Carter Elementary School on August 12 -- and the school will be completely paid for at that time.

This budget also provides the financial support needed for our Libraries and Health Department. It is important that the county's children have a place to study and easy access to books.

I am also committed to ensuring that families, especially children, have access to quality healthcare at our Knox County Health Department.

In many cases, there are things that private, non-profit organizations can accomplish better than government can. That's why this budget continues to fund some of those organizations through a defined services contract process that ensures transparency and accountability.

I talk a lot about the role of government. One of the things I think Government has a duty to do is provide sound roads and infrastructure. Over the past two fiscal years, we've been able to increase the number of paving miles in the Engineering and Public Works budget. We're increasing that funding again this year by approximately \$200,000.

The men and women in Engineering and Public Works help keep our roads safe – whether they're patching potholes or salting roads during a winter storm – which is something I now know a little about. Some of our highway workers are here this

morning – Jimmy Eubanks, Mark Ray and JaGade DeBurns -- and I'd like to ask them to stand and be recognized.

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I've often said that government doesn't create jobs, but creates an environment that encourages job growth. Supporting our Engineering and Public Works Department is one way we foster economic development in Knox County. Good schools and low taxes certainly play an important role, too.

An economic development effort you'll be hearing more about in the future involves Knox County's partnership with Mayor Rogero and other surrounding mayors in an attempt to recruit more low-fare air carriers to the area. Making Knoxville and East Tennessee more accessible by air is not only good for tourism, it's good for business and industrial recruitment as well – and all of that translates into jobs for the citizens of Knox County.

Two large projects that will have an important economic impact are the Karns Connector and the Halls Connector. The Karns Connector – which links Oak Ridge Highway and Karns Valley Drive – will be completed this year as part of the proposed Capital Improvement Plan.

Another project, the Halls Connector, took a big step forward this fiscal year with local funding for final design work, and construction is expected to begin by the end of Fiscal Year 2014.

Thanks to more than \$11 million in state funding, these much-needed improvements to the Halls Crossroads intersection will soon be a reality.

Our Knox County Senior Centers are very popular, and the growth in annual attendance is proof of that fact. That's why I'm happy to say that my proposed Capital Improvement Plan calls for funding the construction of a new Senior Center in the Karns Community. My staff is currently working with architects to determine the facility's specifications, and construction should begin during the upcoming fiscal year.

Finally, I have included \$2 million in this budget for a 2-percent Cost of Living Adjustment for Knox County workers. Our employees work hard, and they deserve this increase.

In short, the budget that I present to you today is sound, responsible and effective, and it provides for all of the services Knox County's citizens have come to expect. As in previous years, when I leave here, I will be taking this budget to the citizens of Knox County in a series of public meetings – the first of which will be held this morning. I hope you will attend some or all of these meetings, and support this budget with your vote.

Thank you.

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