

## LOCAL / REGIONAL

**TENNESSEE'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HOLDS STEADY IN APRIL**

*Unemployment Remains at Its Lowest Level in State History*

NASHVILLE — New data from the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) revealed unemployment across the state remained at a historic low in April. The state reached its all-time low unemployment rate in March, and April's seasonally adjusted rate

of 3.2% mirrored the previous month's record-breaking number.

The April 2022 rate is 1.6 percentage points lower than it was one year ago. In April 2020, unemployment in Tennessee reached its highest level ever at 15.9%. Two years later, the rate is 12.7 percentage points lower than it was during the height of pandemic-related business closures.

The number of Tennesseans in the workforce also hit new highs in April. Statewide, the seasonally adjusted civilian workforce grew to 3,388,426 from March's total of 3,370,646. The number of Tennesseans employed came in at 3,278,825, compared to 3,261,628 for the previous month.

Employers across the state added 7,700 nonfarm jobs between March and April. The leisure and hospitality sector saw the largest number of new positions. The professional and business services sector had the next biggest increase in jobs, followed by the mining, logging, and construction sector.

Over the last 12 months, the state's employers added 145,600 nonfarm jobs. The leisure and hospitality sector created the largest percentage of those jobs, followed by the trade, transportation, and utilities sector and the professional and business ser-

vices sector.

Unemployment across the nation also remained unchanged in April at 3.6%. One year ago, the national rate came in at 6%.

TDLWD has produced a complete analysis of the state's unemployment data for April 2022. That report is available here.

The state offers Tennesseans trying to return to the workforce a variety of free services that can help them find meaningful employment. Job seekers can take advantage of career counseling, job search assistance, and even programs to help pay for necessities such as uniforms and gas. Many of those services are available both online and in person. TNWorkReady.com has all the information needed to get started.

The state of Tennessee will release county unemployment data for April 2022, on Thursday, May 26, 2022, at 1:30 p.m. CDT.

**Education Savings Accounts in Tennessee...One Step Closer**

By Robin Smith

The Tennessee Supreme Court made a ruling during the third week of May that has importance in our kids' educational options. But it will take a while to see the impact materialize, and it doesn't include Hamilton County.

Let's look at the facts and ask a few questions from the perspective of parents and families...not the systems or political powers.

When first running for office in 2018, Governor Bill Lee prioritized his commitment for students in Tennessee to have meaningful education options for all to learn and maximize their own futures. This was manifested in his commitment to work-based learning and vocational options for our high school and post-secondary education students or graduates.

Within K-12 grades, Governor Lee

worked in his first year of office to establish Education Savings Accounts (ESA) for Tennessee students whose schools for which they are zoned are in districts with schools with low and failing performance. These "savings accounts" amounted to the funding that the state pays to local school districts for a student to follow that student to another school, other than the one for which the student was zoned.

That original concept was altered and amended to get the votes of members of Tennessee's General Assembly. The first draft of the ESA legislation included Hamilton County, along with Shelby, Davidson, Knox and Madison Counties. A few members of the Hamilton County state delegation demanded that Hamilton County be removed to obtain their "yes" votes in support of Lee's signature legis-

lation.

The ESA legislation providing school choice for students and parents was passed to be a pilot program in only Shelby and Davidson County. Those counties' school districts filed legal suit to protect the status quo which ended up in the Tennessee Supreme Court to be ruled constitutional.

Yet, unanswered questions remain. If school choice works in vocational school, in college and higher education, why is the educational system in K-12 so locked into the requirement that children are forced to attend the school for which they are zoned if the parent finds that another option works best? If the state is committed to pay \$7,300 per child toward their education, why is there such a fight to make sure our kids stay in the zoned school, instead of letting parents

decide?

Some argue that the fight over funding eclipses the demand that children are at least able to read, write and do math at grade level year after year. Some argue that if parents can move kids from one school to another, some schools may not survive. Yet the facts remain that kids who don't read on grade level early in their academic pathway are robbed of opportunities in their lives.

Parents, grandparents, and family members, you...YOU are the first teachers. YOU must introduce reading and responsive communication. And you should also be the ones deciding what's best for your children, not a zip code and a formula.

School choice has been made an off-limits choice...only where it counts most.

**National Trails Day on the Scenic Bluff Trail on Lookout Mountain**

Fort Oglethorpe, GA: Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, the American Hiking Society, and the Southeastern Climbers Coalition are looking for volunteers for National Trails Day on Saturday, June 4, 2022. All volunteers are invited to meet at the Lookout Mountain Battlefield Visitor Center's parking lot (behind

the building) at 9 am.

Join National Park Service staff and other volunteers for a trail workday on the Bluff Trail starting at the stairs leading down to Sunset Rock. We will be replacing trail signs, cleaning graffiti, and clearing honeysuckle and other overhanging vegetation. Volunteers can expect to return to the visitor

center at approximately 12 pm. All tools and supplies will be provided to volunteers. Volunteers are asked to wear long pants and sturdy, close-toed shoes, no flip-flops. Sunscreen and water are recommended. Sign-up is not required beforehand and will be done on site at the time of the project.

For more information about

programs at Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, contact the Chickamauga Battlefield Visitor Center at 706-866-9241, the Lookout Mountain Battlefield Visitor Center at 423-821-7786, or visit the park website at [www.nps.gov/chch](http://www.nps.gov/chch).

**Mary Walker:** *from front*

Edwards, Jr., father of Chattanooga News Chronicle founder and President John L. Edwards III. Its mission is to help alleviate poverty for all Chattanooga citizens and help create economic stability through literacy training and educational activities.

But the remarkable story of Mary Walker is known to far too few considering the amazing feat of a woman born in 1848 and died in 1969.

Born In 1848 In Union Springs, Alabama, and enslaved until she was 15 years old when President Abraham Lincoln signed the Eman-

ipation Proclamation, Mary Walker worked in a variety of service jobs and raised her family of three children. Her husband and family moved to Chattanooga in 1917 when Mary was 69 years young. Staying busy with work and church service, she had lost her children and husband to death by the time she was 114 years old. Mary enrolled, at the tender age of 115, as a student in a yearlong program, Chattanooga Area Literacy Movement (CALM), learning to read, write, do addition and subtraction.

Recognized and honored locally, regionally and nationally, Mary

Walker inspired a commitment through determination and grit to grow and be better, regardless of her years and station in life. The Mary Walker Foundation exists to carry that mindset into the Chattanooga community specifically through literacy and hard work.

"Mary Walker was recognized as 'the Nation's Oldest Student' after living through 26 presidents spanning two centuries. Today, the Mary Walker Foundation exists to cultivate a commitment to lifetime learning that opens doors of oppor-

tunity for all," Coach Jennings acknowledged.

Learn more about the Mary Walker Foundation by visiting <https://marywalkerfoundation.org/>. Any seeking to support this local endeavor may call (423) 267-2313 or make online contact at [Info@MaryWalkerFoundation.org](mailto:Info@MaryWalkerFoundation.org)

**Black Caucus:** *from front*

Hill.

"The GAO report showed, as we expected, that the federal government has a long way to go to ensure equal opportunities for minority-owned news outlets," Norton continued.

"As the nation's largest advertiser, the federal government has an obligation to provide advertising opportunities to news outlets and media companies owned or published by people of color."

In April, dozens of federal agencies launched plans for more equity to open federal programs to more people and reduce racial disparities caused by government decisions.

"Advancing equity is not a one-year project. It's a generational commitment," Biden stated. "These plans are an important step forward, reflecting the Biden Harris administration's

work to make the promise of America real for every American, and I mean every American."

In the Johnson-led letter, members of Congress have issued a request for Biden Administration to investigate and report back complex data on "the process by which they grant advertising contracts, and how they oversee those contracts after they are granted."

"The federal government spends billions of dollars a year in paid advertising. However, the federal government's process for allocating advertising dollars fails to recognize and value the unique relationship that Black-owned media have with their audiences," Johnson wrote.

**Father's Day**

**Sunday June 19, 2022**

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Special person with a  
Photo, Tribute, or  
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