

August 24, 2026

MARSHA BLACKBURN 2026 TENNESSEE GOVERNOR

A Political Campaign Strategy Report



Figure 1. Tennessee 2026 campaign geography — original schematic analytical graphic. Source: S1, S46, S41

The American Newspaper — <https://americannewspaper.org>

The Tennessee Times — <https://tennesseetimes.org>

Research report • public-source verification • election data • scenario analysis

Executive Summary

Neutrality and analytical boundary

This report does not endorse, recommend, rank, or select among candidates. It reports public records, campaign positions, media/expert assessments, arithmetic election structure, and clearly labeled scenarios. It does not assign an independent numerical win probability or a 10-point candidate score. Where the report describes the race as Safe/Solid Republican, that classification is attributed to named third-party forecasters. The requested 10-category scorecard is replaced with a non-numeric evidence dashboard to preserve neutral treatment.

Marsha Blackburn is the sitting U.S. Senator from Tennessee and the Republican nominee for governor. On August 6, 2026, she won the Republican primary with 311,328 votes (43.6%), defeating U.S. Rep. John Rose (235,511; 32.9%) and state Rep. Monty Fritts (167,971; 23.5%). Jerri Green, a Memphis City Council member, won the Democratic primary with 244,194 votes (69.0%). The open seat exists because Gov. Bill Lee is term-limited. The general election is November 3, 2026; thirteen independents are also on the ballot. [S1][S4][S5][S35][S56]

The primary result established two simultaneous facts. First, Blackburn proved that a long-built statewide brand, large donor network, national conservative media profile, and Trump association could survive a heavily financed intra-Republican challenge. Second, 56.4% of the three-candidate Republican primary vote went to someone else, which means the post-primary campaign has a real consolidation task even in a state whose recent statewide results strongly favor Republicans. The latter is an arithmetic observation, not a forecast about how Rose or Fritts voters will behave in November. [S1]

The Trump relationship changed materially after the primary. Trump did not formally endorse a candidate before August 6, even though Blackburn repeatedly used his image, quotations, and America First language. On August 7, Trump issued a formal “Complete and Total Endorsement” of Blackburn for the general election. That transition—from association without primary endorsement to explicit general-election endorsement—is one of the most important post-primary facts in the race. [S6][S25][S30]

The money picture is similarly asymmetrical but should not be reduced to candidate-committee totals alone. Tennessee Registry of Election Finance-derived data updated August 14 show Blackburn had raised \$10.74 million, spent \$8.04 million, and held \$2.69 million cash on hand; Green had raised \$849,586, spent \$731,584, and held \$118,002. Rose, who lost the primary, raised \$14.97 million, including about \$13.0 million in personal loans. Outside groups backing Blackburn—especially the Club for Growth-linked Tennessee Freedom Fund/Team Tennessee network—also played a major role. [S2][S28]

A separate campaign-finance controversy requires careful legal wording. Tennessee Lookout reported that Blackburn’s federal Senate committee gave \$4.8 million to Club for Growth Action on May 8 and that School Freedom Fund later transferred \$4.81 million to Tennessee Freedom Fund, which spent the same amount backing Blackburn. OpenSecrets’ Brendan Glavin characterized the pattern to the Lookout as an apparent “workaround.” But an earlier state-level complaint about federal-account spending was dropped without action by the Tennessee Registry, and no confirmed legal violation was identified in the reviewed sources as of August 24. The report therefore separates transaction facts, criticism, and legal disposition. [S27][S29]

Public general-election polling is thin. Tennessee Firefly’s tracker lists a pre-primary April 20–27 Targoz/Beacon survey of 1,200 registered voters at Blackburn 51%, Green 27%, with 22% other/undecided, and an August 2025 Quantus survey at 49%–28%. No public post-August-6 head-to-head poll was located in the sources reviewed through August 24. National forecasters compiled by Tennessee Firefly rate the race Safe or Solid Republican (Cook, Sabato, Inside Elections, RealClearPolitics, Race to the WH). Those are third-party assessments; this report does not convert them into an independent probability. [S3][S62][S63]

The structural context is durable. Tennessee’s two-decade trajectory moved from Democratic Gov. Phil Bredesen’s 68.6% reelection in 2006 to Republican presidential shares above 60% in 2016, 2020 and 2024, Republican gubernatorial shares near or above 60% in 2018 and 2022, and Blackburn’s own 63.8% Senate reelection in 2024. The Democratic coalition remains concentrated in the urban cores of Shelby and Davidson Counties and among Black voters, while the Republican coalition is strongest in rural Tennessee, East Tennessee, exurban counties, and many middle- and upper-income suburbs. [S46][S47][S48][S49][S51]

Observed Blackburn campaign behavior points to a general-election structure built around five recurring pillars: statewide conservative identity; Trump/America First alignment translated into state executive themes; public safety and immigration; education/parental-rights/Big Tech issues; and economic/tax continuity with an insistence that Tennessee should become an even more assertive conservative “model” state. Geography changes the emphasis: Memphis is treated as a public-safety and margin-management battlefield; Middle Tennessee suburbs are both growth engines and coalition-maintenance zones; and East Tennessee provides the deep Republican turnout reservoir that underpins large statewide margins in recent elections. [S7][S14–S22][S41–S44]

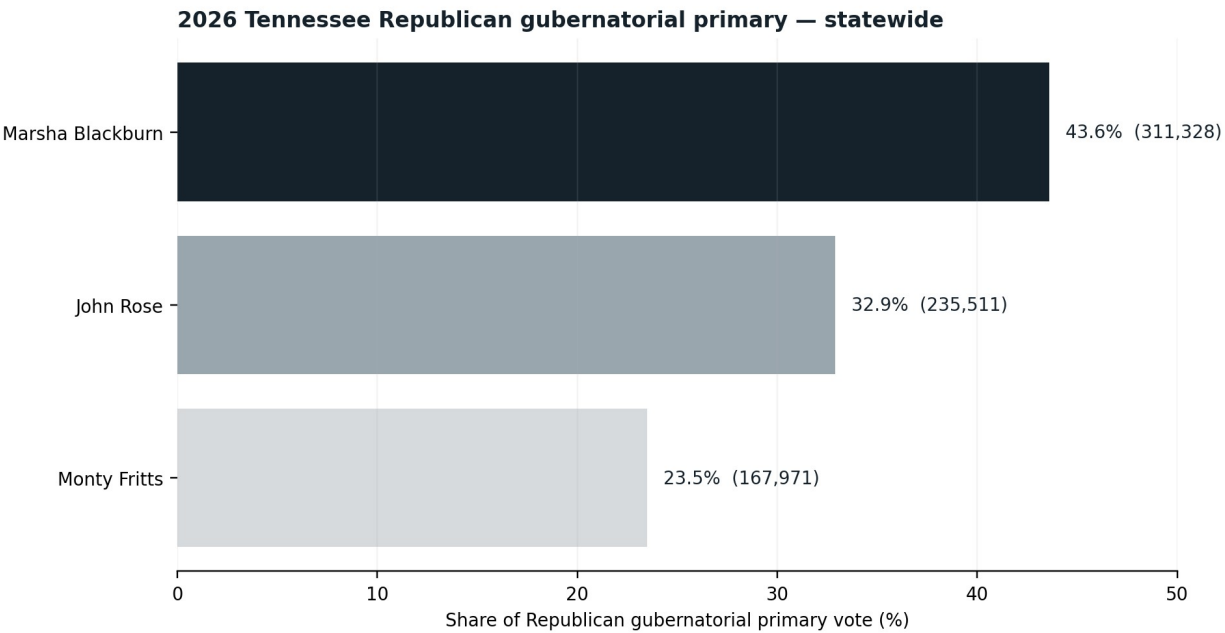


Figure 2. Final Republican primary result, Aug. 6, 2026. **Source:** S1

1. Race Status, Ballot and Calendar

Item	Verified status as of Aug. 24, 2026	Source
Current office	Marsha Blackburn is a sitting U.S. Senator from Tennessee; elected to Senate in 2018, reelected in 2024.	S37, S38, S46
Republican nominee	Blackburn won Aug. 6 GOP primary: 311,328 votes (43.6%).	S1, S55
Democratic nominee	Jerri Green won Aug. 6 Democratic primary: 244,194 votes (69.0%).	S56
Open seat	Gov. Bill Lee cannot seek a third consecutive term; the seat is open.	S4, S26
General election	Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026; early voting Oct. 14–29.	S5, S31
Other candidates	13 independents qualified, producing 15 names on the general-election ballot.	S5, S35, S36
Trump endorsement	No formal GOP-primary endorsement; formal general-election endorsement issued Aug. 7, 2026.	S6, S25
Public post-primary poll	None located in reviewed public sources through Aug. 24; available head-to-head surveys predate the primary.	S3

Source: S1, S3, S4, S5, S25, S35, S37

The November field

The major-party nominees are Blackburn and Green. Thirteen independent candidates qualified by petition: Misam Abidi, Dean Brewer, Ray Brown, David Hatley, Wendell Jackson, Charles Van Morgan, Eddie Lee Murphy, Lauren Pinkston, Victor L. Scoggin, Dave Seeman, Karl Knox Smithson, L. Webb Taylor, and Robert C. Vick. Tennessee Firefly reports that the August primary set a 15-name November ballot. [S35][S36]

Because independent candidates do not pass through a party primary, their general-election relevance cannot be inferred from August primary vote totals. The campaign-finance tracker also showed that most independent candidates had no TREF disclosure on file at its August 14 refresh; Lauren Pinkston was the largest independent fundraiser shown at \$342,264 raised. [S2]

2. Blackburn: Biography, Career and Political Brand

From Mississippi to Williamson County

Marsha Wedgeworth Blackburn was born June 6, 1952, in Laurel, Mississippi. She attended Mississippi State University, moved into sales and marketing, worked for Southwestern, and later built a Tennessee-based marketing career. Her official Senate biography emphasizes early private-sector work in sales and management and the founding of Marketing Strategies, a firm focused on retail, electronic and print media. [S38][S55]

Her political rise in Tennessee was tied early to economic and tax politics. Blackburn served in the Tennessee State Senate from 1999 to 2003 and became nationally identified in Tennessee politics with opposition to a proposed state income tax. She then represented Tennessee's 7th Congressional District in the U.S. House from 2003 through 2018, won the open U.S. Senate seat in 2018, and was reelected in 2024 with 63.8% of the statewide vote. [S46][S55]

Brand architecture

Brand element	How it functions in 2026	Evidence type	Source
Conservatism / tax	The anti-state-income-tax fight functions as an origin story: low-tax conservatism is presented not as a new campaign theme but as a long Tennessee record.	Official campaign message	S13, S18, S55
Trump / MAGA	Early Trump ally; campaign announcement explicitly tied a state governorship to Trump returning power to states. Pre-primary association was strong despite no formal endorsement; formal endorsement followed Aug. 7.	Verified relationship + campaign framing	S7, S25, S30
Social/cultural conservatism	Women's sports, "right to life," parental rights, opposition to DEI/"woke" curriculum, Second Amendment.	Official issue agenda	S8
Immigration / border	State cooperation with Trump deportation policy, anti-sanctuary positioning, drug/cartel financial enforcement.	Officially announced direction	S11, S15
Crime / public safety	Support for police and first responders; criticism of progressive prosecutors; Memphis public-safety focus.	Repeated campaign message	S16, S60
Economy / taxes	Low taxes, lower regulation, recruitment of employers, in-state small business, workforce development.	Official campaign direction; implementation details limited	S14, S18
Big Tech / children	Long federal profile on tech; campaign proposes stronger state tools, audits, and "Bell to Bell: No Cell."	Specific campaign proposals	S12, S20
China	Calls for complete prohibition on China's ability to own any type of Tennessee land; ties to farmers and America First trade.	Specific state policy	S10, S17
Education / school choice	Parental rights, school choice/EFS implementation, vocational expansion, 529 strengthening, phone-free school day.	Specific + repeated themes	S12, S19, S57

The unifying political idea is that Blackburn's federal profile is being reinterpreted as a state-executive mandate: the campaign argues that Tennessee should use state power more aggressively to implement conservative goals that complement the Trump administration. That is a description of campaign positioning, not an endorsement of the policies. [S7][S8]

3. The Tennessee Partisan Baseline: How a Competitive State Became Republican-Dominant

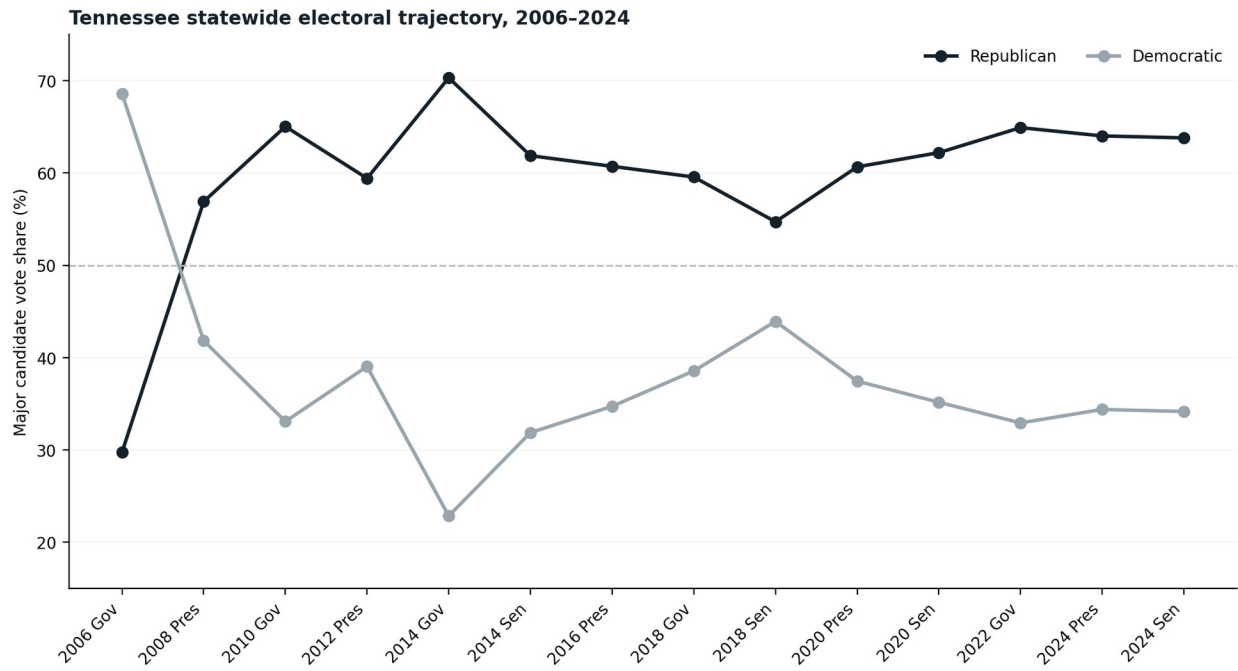


Figure 3. Selected statewide results over the last 20 years. 2006 governor through 2024 president/Senate. Source: S46, S47, S48, S49, S50, S51, S66

Election	Republican	Democratic	Interpretive context
2006 Governor	Bryson (R) 29.74%	Bredesen (D) 68.60%	Last Democratic statewide victory used as starting point.
2008 President	McCain (R) 56.90%	Obama (D) 41.83%	Republican presidential advantage established.
2010 Governor	Haslam (R) 65.03%	McWherter (D) 33.08%	Large GOP gubernatorial margin.
2012 President	Romney (R) 59.42%	Obama (D) 39.04%	GOP near 60%.
2014 Governor	Haslam (R) 70.31%	Brown (D) 22.84%	Low-turnout midterm landslide.
2014 Senate	Alexander (R) 61.87%	Ball (D) 31.87%	Statewide federal race also strongly Republican.
2016 President	Trump (R) 60.72%	Clinton (D) 34.72%	Trump-era GOP coalition passes 60%.
2018 Governor	Lee (R) 59.56%	Dean (D) 38.55%	Competitive national midterm but comfortable GOP state win.
2018 Senate	Blackburn (R) 54.71%	Bredesen (D) 43.92%	Blackburn's first statewide Senate race.
2020 President	Trump (R) 60.66%	Biden (D) 37.45%	GOP presidential hold.
2020 Senate	Hagerty (R) 62.20%	Bradshaw (D) 35.16%	Large GOP Senate margin.

Election	Republican	Democratic	Interpretive context
2022 Governor	Lee (R) 64.91%	Martin (D) 32.92%	Midterm governor baseline.
2024 President	Trump (R) 64.01%	Harris (D) 34.38%	Certified statewide result; GOP margin 29.63 pts.
2024 Senate	Blackburn (R) 63.80%	Johnson (D) 34.16%	Blackburn's most recent statewide vote before governor race.

Sources/reference years: S46, S47, S48, S49, S50, S51, S66

Geographic structure

- East Tennessee: the most durable Republican reservoir. Knox/Hamilton are less Republican than surrounding rural counties, but the broader Appalachian/East Tennessee vote typically supplies large GOP margins. The 2026 GOP primary also showed Blackburn leading in Knox, Hamilton, Sullivan and Washington, while Fritts showed concentrated strength in Roane and several nearby counties. [S1]
- Middle Tennessee: combines Davidson County's large Democratic core with fast-growing, generally Republican-leaning suburbs/exurbs such as Williamson, Rutherford, Wilson, Sumner and Maury. The 2026 GOP primary showed Rose's home-region strength: he carried Davidson, Wilson, Sumner, Putnam and other Middle Tennessee counties even while losing statewide. [S1][S6]
- West Tennessee: Shelby County/Memphis is the state's largest Democratic anchor, but suburban Shelby and much of rural West Tennessee vote Republican. Blackburn's primary performance in Shelby was one of her strongest large-county showings, while Green's political base is Memphis. [S1][S31][S56]
- Urban/rural divide: 2024 results place Shelby and Davidson clearly in the Democratic column while most rural counties and many suburbs are Republican. Knox and Hamilton function as large Republican-leaning metros whose margins are smaller than surrounding rural areas but still material statewide. [S46]

Demographic structure

A Tennessee-specific 2024 voter analysis (sample roughly 2,350–2,370 respondents depending on item) provides a useful descriptive benchmark. It is survey evidence, not an official vote count, and it describes the 2024 presidential electorate rather than the 2026 gubernatorial electorate. [S67]

Dimension	Group	Share	2024 presidential vote	Counterpoint
Race	White	85% of sample	Trump 72 / Harris 27	Black voters: Harris 86 / Trump 13.
Age	18–29	14%	Trump 61 / Harris 38	45–64: Trump 68 / Harris 31; 65+: Trump 67 / Harris 32.
Education	No college degree	61%	Trump 70 / Harris 29	College degree: Trump 56 / Harris 42; postgraduate: Trump 52 / Harris 46.
Household income	Under \$50k	38%	Trump 64 / Harris 35	\$50k–\$99,999: Trump 67 / Harris 32; \$100k+: Trump 61 / Harris 38.
Religion	White evangelical / born-again	45%*	Trump 88 / Harris 11	White Protestant/other Christian: Trump 80 / Harris 19; no religion: Harris 58 / Trump 40.

*The white-evangelical item shown by the publisher reports a smaller item sample than the full statewide survey. The pattern is nonetheless directionally consistent with Tennessee's long-standing Republican strength among white evangelical voters. The same crosstabs show a meaningful education gradient: Republicans remained ahead even among college graduates, but by a much smaller margin than among non-college voters. Income differences were smaller than race/religion differences. [S67]

For 2026, these data imply that neither campaign can simply transpose a presidential electorate onto a midterm. Blackburn's strongest structural blocs are white, evangelical, older and non-college voters, while Green's clearest demographic reservoir is the Black electorate, especially in Shelby County, plus more Democratic-leaning urban and highly educated voters. This is descriptive electoral analysis, not individualized targeting advice. [S46][S67]

Turnout structure

Tennessee's electorate changes sharply by cycle. The 2022 gubernatorial election occurred in a lower-turnout midterm environment than a presidential election; the 2026 party primaries were smaller still. The critical analytical point is not that one candidate automatically benefits, but that a November 2026 midterm electorate cannot be assumed to reproduce the 2024 presidential electorate. Campaign organizations therefore matter most where habitual-party turnout is not automatic.

4. Case Study: The 2026 Republican Primary

The primary must be separated from the general election because it tested a much narrower electorate and produced a three-way conservative contest. All three leading candidates presented themselves as pro-Trump conservatives; the argument was over authenticity, record, electability inside the party, and who best represented the Trump-era Republican coalition. [S6][S30]

Date	Development	Source
Aug. 6, 2025	Blackburn formally announces one year before primary; announcement frames Tennessee as a "conservative leader," links governorship to Trump's return, and emphasizes jobs/energy, parental power, deportation, life and sex-based definitions.	S7
Late 2025–early 2026	Early polling gives Blackburn large leads and reflects very high name recognition; Rose continues organizing and self-funding; Fritts consolidates a smaller hard-right constituency.	S3, S55
Spring 2026	Rose intensifies retail campaigning and argues for a more confrontational MAGA credential; criticism focuses on Blackburn's Washington tenure and 2020 certification. Blackburn continues statewide fundraising and endorsements.	S6, S24, S30
June 2026	Outside spending becomes increasingly visible. Club for Growth-linked Tennessee Freedom Fund runs pro-Blackburn/anti-Rose advertising; Rose increases television and self-funded spending.	S27, S28
July 8	Blackburn launches first official TV ad of race: China/Tennessee land.	S10
July 14	Second official TV ad: illegal immigration, drugs, cartels and money transfers.	S11
July 23	"Bell to Bell: No Cell" ad turns to classroom phones/Big Tech; Bill Hagerty formally endorses Blackburn.	S12, S23
July 30	Official ad focuses on Memphis public safety, a state-local implementation theme linked to the Trump relationship.	S60
Aug. 3	Closing ad uses Trump praise, anti-income-tax biography and Big Tech; Tennessee Lookout reports \$4.8m PAC money-flow pattern.	S13, S27
Aug. 6	Blackburn wins with 43.6%; Rose 32.9%; Fritts 23.5%.	S1
Aug. 7	Trump gives formal general-election endorsement after having stayed neutral in the primary.	S25

Polling trajectory — and why it matters

Field date	Pollster	n	Electorate	Blackburn	Rose	Fritts	Other/U	Context
Mar. 17	Cygnal	500	Likely voters	58	7	—	35 other/undec.	Public tracker; early race
Mar. 24	VictoryPhones	300	Likely voters	56	14	11	~19	Public tracker
Apr. 20–27	Targoz / Beacon	529	Registered/ primary sample	63	10	5	22	Pre-primary public survey
Jun. 30	McLaughlin & Assoc.	600	Likely GOP primary	44	29	13	14	Race visibly tighter
Jul. 23–25	OnMessage	800	Likely GOP primary	35	31	26	8	Sponsor not clearly identified in tracker memo
Jul. 26–28	Fabrizio, Lee & Assoc.	800	GOP primary	42	25	22	11	Blackburn campaign-sponsored
Aug. 1	Wick	600	GOP primary	51	32	17	—	Late poll; actual Blackburn share lower

Source; note: S3

The polling sequence shows why early name-recognition leads should not be read as final vote forecasts. Blackburn remained in front in most surveys, but late surveys revealed a much more competitive three-way race. Her final 43.6% was lower than several earlier surveys and close to the July campaign poll's 42%. [S1][S3]

County-by-county pattern

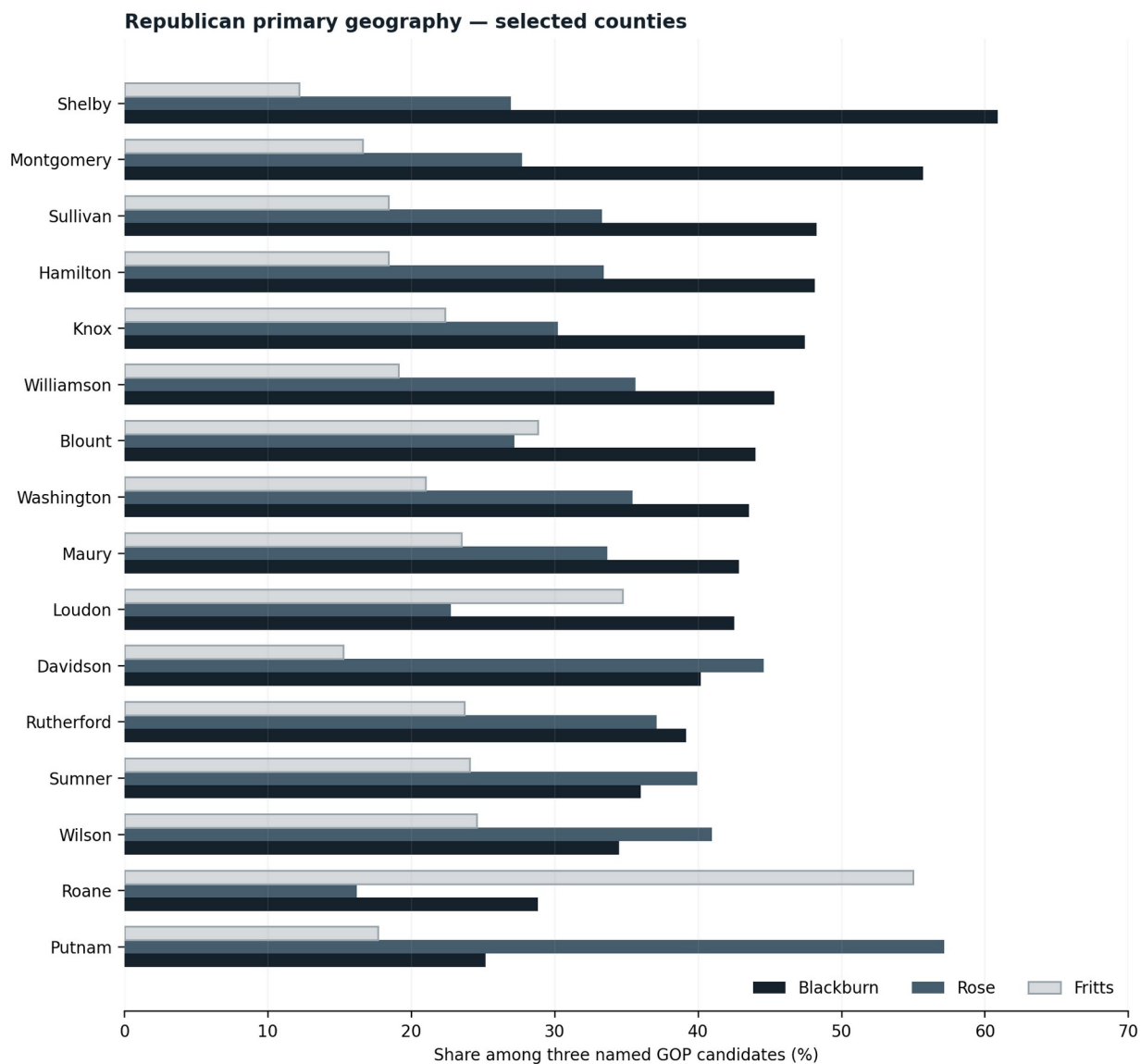


Figure 4. Selected-county GOP primary shares. Percentages calculated from Tennessee Firefly's complete candidate vote totals; write-ins excluded from this chart. Source: S1

County	Blackburn	Rose	Fritts	Top finisher	3-candidate votes
Shelby	60.9%	26.9%	12.2%	Blackburn	40,590
Knox	47.4%	30.2%	22.4%	Blackburn	52,182
Hamilton	48.1%	33.4%	18.4%	Blackburn	35,491
Williamson	45.3%	35.6%	19.1%	Blackburn	32,521
Davidson	40.2%	44.5%	15.3%	Rose	28,627
Rutherford	39.2%	37.1%	23.7%	Blackburn	24,695
Wilson	34.5%	40.9%	24.6%	Rose	21,219
Sumner	36.0%	39.9%	24.1%	Rose	19,885

County	Blackburn	Rose	Fritts	Top finisher	3-candidate votes
Montgomery	55.7%	27.7%	16.6%	Blackburn	14,189
Blount	44.0%	27.2%	28.8%	Blackburn	17,112
Sullivan	48.3%	33.3%	18.4%	Blackburn	17,081
Washington	43.5%	35.4%	21.0%	Blackburn	15,828
Putnam	25.2%	57.1%	17.7%	Rose	12,811
Maury	42.8%	33.7%	23.5%	Blackburn	12,716
Roane	28.8%	16.2%	55.0%	Fritts	8,751
Loudon	42.5%	22.8%	34.7%	Blackburn	9,806

Source: S1, S54

The strongest Rose pattern is geographically coherent: Davidson, Wilson, Sumner, Putnam and several Middle Tennessee counties align with his congressional/home-region base. Fritts was strongest around his Kingston/Roane base and parts of East Tennessee. Blackburn, by contrast, won many of the state's largest Republican vote pools—Shelby, Knox, Hamilton, Williamson, Montgomery, Sullivan and Washington—giving her a broader statewide map even where her percentage was below 50%. [S1][S6][S54]

What the primary demonstrated — and what it did not

Observed evidence	What it supports	What it does not prove
Blackburn won 43.6% statewide	Plurality coalition across multiple regions; broad statewide name recognition and organization.	It does not prove majority enthusiasm inside the GOP primary electorate.
Rose spent heavily and won parts of Middle Tennessee	Money and localized organization can narrow a statewide frontrunner's advantage.	It does not prove Rose voters will defect in November.
Fritts took 23.5%	There was a material constituency for a candidate campaigning to Blackburn's right/on MAGA authenticity.	It does not map directly onto a general-election protest vote.
Trump did not endorse before primary	Blackburn had to win without a formal Trump primary endorsement.	It does not mean Trump was neutral in the general election; he endorsed Aug. 7.
Blackburn used Trump imagery/praise	Trump association was central to her persuasion and identity strategy.	Use of old praise was not itself an official 2026 primary endorsement.
Rose publicly conceded after loss and GOP elites moved toward nominee	Elite-level consolidation begins quickly after a primary.	Voter-level consolidation requires post-primary polling, which was not publicly available in reviewed sources.

5. Jerri Green: Nominee, Platform and Campaign Structure

Jerri Green is a Memphis City Council member from District 2. Her campaign describes her as a lifelong Tennessean who was raised in Memphis, studied English and political science at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, earned a law degree, worked as a public defender and in public-interest roles, and later served in Shelby County and Memphis local government. She won the Democratic gubernatorial primary with 244,194 votes, 69.0%. [S31][S33][S56]

Green's campaign is structurally different from Blackburn's. Its public events archive shows a highly retail-oriented statewide travel schedule—including Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Clarksville, Jackson, Cookeville, Franklin, Murfreesboro, Tri-Cities stops and smaller communities—while its message foregrounds affordability, public-school funding, healthcare access, reproductive rights and gun policy. [S31][S32][S34]

Issue	Green campaign position	Status	Source
Working families	Paid family leave, affordable childcare, living wage, labor rights, workforce development.	Official platform	S32
Education	Fully funded public schools, teacher pay, pre-K/support staff, opposition to censorship; campaign contrasts with vouchers.	Official platform	S32, S58, S64
Healthcare	Medicaid expansion, rural access, maternal health, medical-debt relief.	Official platform	S32
Abortion/reproductive rights	Executive action and policy emphasis on reproductive freedom.	Official platform	S32
Gun policy	Background checks, red-flag laws, gun locks.	Official platform	S32
Immigration	Stop Tennessee Highway Patrol cooperation with ICE; oppose state participation in deportation enforcement.	Official Day One plan	S32
Housing/childcare relief	Specified TANF proposals: \$10m housing deposits, \$50m childcare waitlist, \$10m medical debt.	Official Day One plan	S32
Private prisons / health monopoly	Notify CoreCivic of non-renewal; seek end to Ballad Health state-sanctioned monopoly.	Official Day One plan	S32
Energy/data centers	Keep TVA public; data-center moratorium/stop state incentives.	Official Day One plan	S32

Parallel candidate evidence matrix — factual, not a ranking

Dimension	Blackburn	Green	Source
Current office	U.S. Senator; statewide elected 2018/2024.	Memphis City Council member, District 2.	S37, S31
Geographic base	Brentwood/Williamson County; statewide federal constituency.	Memphis/Shelby County; local office plus statewide campaign travel.	S55, S34
2026 primary	311,328 GOP votes; 43.6%.	244,194 Dem votes; 69.0%.	S1, S56
Candidate funds as of Aug. 14 tracker	\$10.736m raised; \$2.691m cash on hand.	\$849,586 raised; \$118,002 cash on hand.	S2
Core public agenda	Tax/regulatory restraint; Trump/America First; immigration; public safety; school choice/parents; China; Big Tech; social conservatism.	Affordability; public schools; Medicaid/health; reproductive rights; gun measures; anti-ICE cooperation; labor/family support.	S8, S32
Formal Trump endorsement	Yes, Aug. 7 for general election.	No.	S25
Named endorsements	Hagerty; several TN federal/state Republicans; FOP; NRA; Chamber; conservative groups.	Steve Cohen; Lee Harris; TN Democratic legislators/local officials; progressive/civic groups.	S23, S24, S31
Public general-election polling	Named in two public pre-primary head-to-head polls.	Same surveys; no public favorability measure located by Firefly.	S3

How to read this table

The side-by-side format reproduces public facts using common categories. It is not a candidate ranking, recommendation, or score. Electoral assessments elsewhere in this report are attributed to named third-party forecasters or shown as neutral scenario mechanics.

6. Money, PACs, Super PACs and Outside Spending

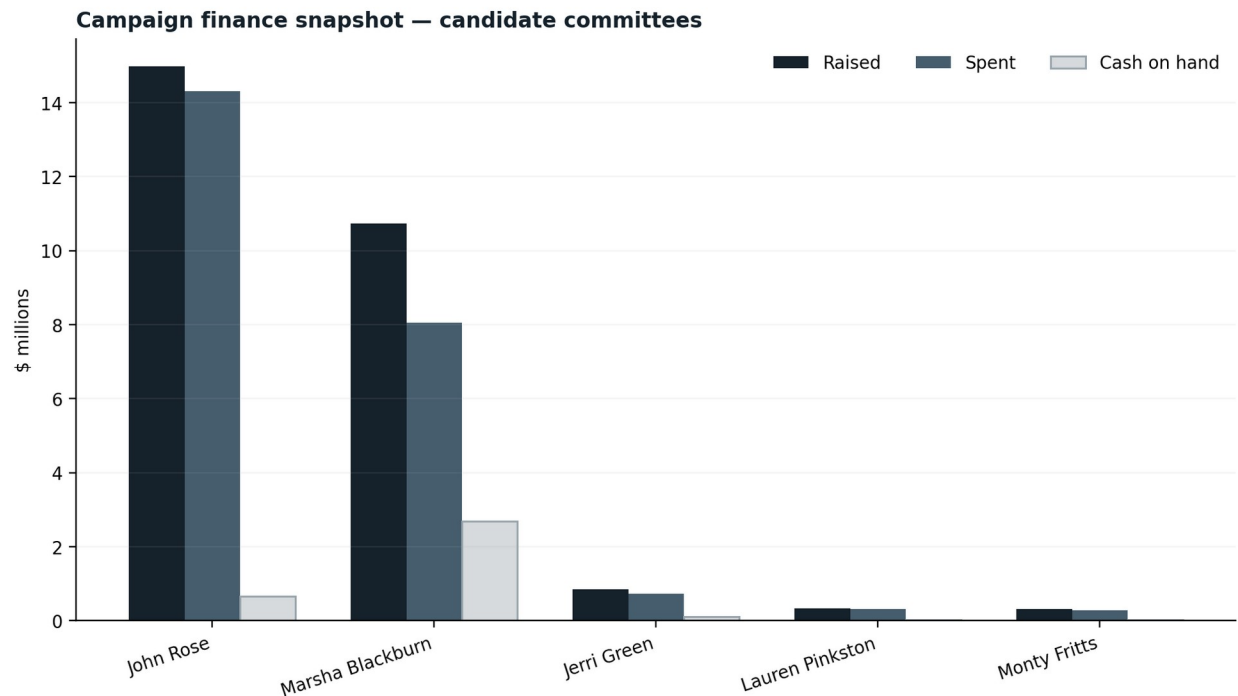


Figure 5. Candidate-committee finance snapshot. Dollar figures in millions; tracker updated Aug. 14, 2026. Source: S2

Candidate-committee figures alone understate the scale of the Republican primary because Rose's personal financing and outside pro-Blackburn spending were central. The TREF-derived tracker shows Rose at \$14.97 million raised, including \$12.9998 million in personal loans; Blackburn at \$10.74 million raised with no personal loans; Green at \$849,586; Pinkston at \$342,264; and Fritts at \$315,130. [S2]

Tennessee Lookout reported that pro-Blackburn independent-expenditure groups Tennessee Freedom Fund and Team Tennessee consolidated under one entity after raising \$12 million during the cycle by August 4. That total should not be combined mechanically with Blackburn's candidate-committee receipts because independent groups are legally separate and may not coordinate with the campaign. [S28]

The same report identified major outside-group donors including the School Freedom Fund/Club for Growth network, Jeff Yass, Advance Financial, Tamara Stephens, Spencer Patton and a \$250,000 contribution from Anthropic. These are reported donor facts, not a finding that the candidate directed the money. [S28]

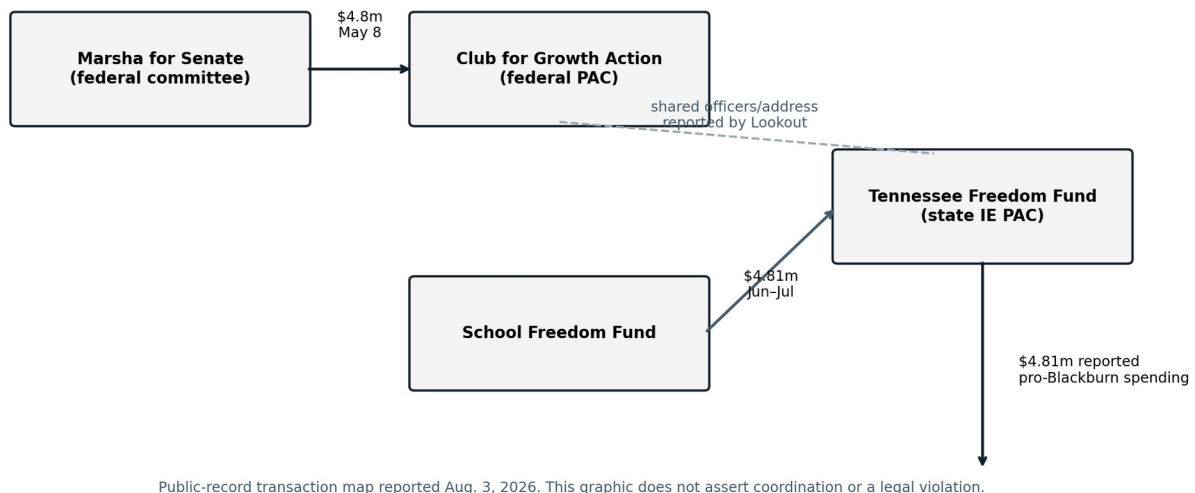
Reported federal/PAC money flow — legal status must be distinguished from criticism

Figure 6. Reported flow involving Blackburn's federal committee and Club for Growth-linked entities. Source: S27, S29

The federal-to-state controversy: allegation, transaction and legal disposition

1. Confirmed transaction: Blackburn's federal Senate campaign donated \$4.8 million to Club for Growth Action on May 8, 2026, according to FEC records summarized by Tennessee Lookout. [S27]
2. Confirmed subsequent transfers reported by Lookout: School Freedom Fund transferred \$4.81 million to Tennessee Freedom Fund in June and July; Tennessee Freedom Fund spent about \$4.81 million supporting Blackburn. [S27]
3. Relationship evidence: Lookout reported that Club for Growth Action, School Freedom Fund and Tennessee Freedom Fund shared officers and/or the same Washington address. [S27]
4. Outside assessment: OpenSecrets' Brendan Glavin told Lookout the sequence looked like an apparent workaround. That is a third-party assessment, not an adjudication. [S27]
5. Legal distinction: Tennessee law bars direct federal-campaign money from being used by the gubernatorial campaign; Lookout reported federal law did not prohibit the federal committee's donation transaction itself. [S27]
6. Earlier complaint: the Tennessee Registry took no action on a complaint alleging use of federal money in the governor effort because, according to its executive director, there had been no transfer from a federal account to a state account at that time. [S29]
7. As-of conclusion: no reviewed source established a final legal finding that the reported 2026 PAC sequence violated law. The issue remained a political/legal controversy rather than a confirmed violation. [S27][S29]

7. Endorsements and Coalition Infrastructure

Endorser/sector	Status	Source
Donald Trump	FORMAL — Aug. 7, 2026 general-election endorsement. No formal primary endorsement before Aug. 6.	S25, S6
Gov. Bill Lee	No gubernatorial endorsement located in reviewed sources through Aug. 24; he explicitly had not endorsed before primary.	S26
Sen. Bill Hagerty	FORMAL — endorsed July 23, 2026.	S23
U.S. House delegation	Formal Blackburn endorsements located from Tim Burchett, Chuck Fleischmann and Matt Van Epps; do not infer unanimity beyond named endorsements.	S23, S24

Endorser/sector	Status	Source
State legislative leaders	Formal endorsements tracked from Jack Johnson, Ken Yager, William Lamberth, Shane Reeves and others.	S24, S59
Law enforcement	Tennessee Fraternal Order of Police; Shelby County Deputy Sheriffs' Association; campaign also organizes a law-enforcement coalition.	S23, S59
NRA	Campaign reported formal NRA endorsement July 13.	S23, S59
Business	Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry endorsement reported by campaign.	S23
Conservative organizations	Americans for Prosperity State PAC, Club for Growth PAC, Turning Point Action and others tracked by Tennessee Firefly.	S24
Veterans	Honor Our Veterans formally endorsed; campaign has veterans coalition.	S23
Evangelical / faith	Faith coalition exists; no single statewide umbrella evangelical endorsement was verified in the reviewed source set.	S8, S59

Green's official endorsement list includes U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen, Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris, multiple Democratic state senators and representatives, numerous Memphis and Nashville local officials, and former Republican Tennessee House Speaker Kent Williams. The mix shows a Democratic institutional base centered on urban/local officials with some cross-party symbolic support. That description is about public endorsements, not the comparative value of those endorsements. [S31]

8. Television, Digital and Earned-Media Strategy

Official Blackburn TV-ad sequence — primary closing phase

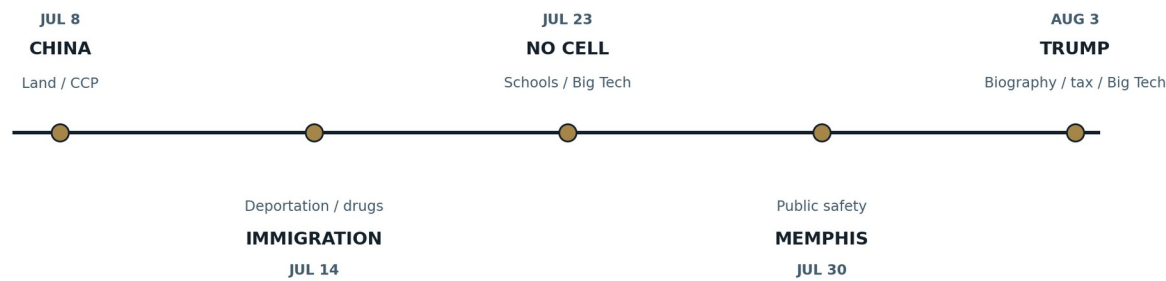


Figure 7. Official Blackburn TV-ad sequence in the closing month of the GOP primary. Source: S10, S11, S12, S13, S60

Date	Ad	Core message	Attack target	Visual frame	Trump use	Issue	Src
Jul. 8	First TV ad / China	Protect TN land from Chinese front companies; "crack down on China."	No named opponent	Fortune-cookie / China visual metaphor	Trump mentioned as policy partner	China / land / agriculture	S10
Jul. 14	New TV ad / Immigration	Deportation, drugs, cartels, cash transfers.	No named opponent	Direct-to-camera law-and-order framing	Trump agenda implicitly aligned	Immigration / crime	S11

Date	Ad	Core message	Attack target	Visual frame	Trump use	Issue	Src
Jul. 23	Bell to Bell: No Cell	Phone-free school day; Big Tech distraction.	No named opponent	Classroom / phones / children	Not central	Education / Big Tech	S12
Jul. 30	Fighting for Memphis. Keeping Tennessee Safe.	Memphis public safety and federal-state enforcement partnership.	No named primary opponent in title/theme	Memphis / crime / enforcement	Trump partnership central	Crime / Memphis	S60
Aug. 3	Latest TV ad	Trump praise + anti-state-income-tax biography + Big Tech; broad safe/prosperous/free close.	No named opponent	Biographical montage / Trump clips	Explicit and dominant	Biography / taxes / tech	S13

The sequence is strategically notable because the official campaign’s television close did not primarily attack Rose by name. It used issue identity—China, immigration, schools, Memphis public safety—and ended by merging Trump praise with Blackburn’s own long Tennessee biography. Meanwhile, independent groups performed more of the direct negative contrast work against Rose. This separation is consistent with a campaign protecting a frontrunner’s positive identity while outside groups wage harsher primary attacks; it is an analytical description of the observed division of labor, not a claim of coordination. [S10–S13][S27][S28]

The nationally recognizable conservative-media profile is an asset in earned media and fundraising because Blackburn begins with more name recognition than a typical gubernatorial candidate. The tradeoff is presentational: a governor’s race rewards state-specific competence, so the campaign repeatedly converts national fights—border, China, Big Tech, Trump—into Tennessee administrative claims about land, policing, schools, spending and state sovereignty. [S7][S8][S55]

9. The Trump Factor: From Primary Association to Formal General-Election Endorsement

Trump is not merely an endorser in Blackburn’s message architecture; he is the bridge between her Washington record and her state-government argument. The August 2025 launch says “Trump is back” and argues that, as power moves from Washington toward states, conservative governors should “bring the revolution home.” The campaign’s August 3 TV ad used Trump praise and branded Blackburn as trusted by Trump. [S7][S13]

The primary created a subtle problem: Rose and Fritts could both claim MAGA authenticity, and Rose emphasized issues on which he argued Blackburn had not gone far enough, including the 2020 certification fight and the SAVE America Act. Trump’s decision not to endorse before August 6 prevented Blackburn from closing the argument with a formal presidential endorsement. Instead, she relied on historic relationship, imagery and issue alignment. [S6][S30]

That ambiguity ended August 7, when Trump formally endorsed Blackburn for governor. The timing matters: it preserves the factual distinction between a competitive primary in which Trump stayed out and a general election in which he explicitly backs the Republican nominee. [S25]

Potential general-election effect	Evidence-based mechanism	Countervailing consideration
Republican consolidation	Formal Trump endorsement can reduce ambiguity among pro-Trump Republicans who backed Rose or Fritts.	No public post-primary survey yet measures how complete voter consolidation is.
Rural / evangelical turnout	America First, immigration, guns, abortion and cultural issues overlap heavily with Tennessee GOP messages.	Turnout in a midterm can differ from a presidential electorate; organization still matters.
Suburban Republicans	Trump approval is high within the Republican coalition, and Blackburn has longstanding Williamson County ties.	Some college-educated/suburban voters are less Republican than rural voters in recent election surveys.
Independent/moderate voters	State-specific crime, jobs, schools and tax themes can localize a national brand.	A highly nationalized Trump identity may reduce differentiation from federal politics among voters seeking state-focused governance.

Neutrality note

The table above identifies plausible mechanisms supported by observed campaign messaging and electoral structure. It does not rate whether Trump alignment is “good” or “bad,” nor does it recommend a voter response.

10. Bill Lee Continuity vs. a More Trump-Era Executive Model

Bill Lee leaves office after two terms with a governing record centered on low taxes, business recruitment, workforce development, infrastructure, conservative social policy and the Education Freedom Scholarship program. In April 2026 Lee described a \$58.3 billion budget and final-session agenda covering education, workforce, infrastructure and next-generation nuclear energy; in May he signed expansion of Education Freedom Scholarships to 35,000 students for 2026–27. [S39][S40]

Policy area	Relationship to Lee	Evidence	Source
Low-tax / pro-growth economy	Strong continuity	Blackburn's anti-income-tax history, tax-cut message, deregulation, employer recruitment and small-business agenda mirror core Republican state policy.	S14, S18, S39
School choice	Strong continuity	Campaign supports school choice/EFS and parental rights; also adds “bell-to-bell” phone prohibition and anti-DEI framing.	S12, S57
Workforce / vocational	Continuity	Public-private partnerships, 529 strengthening and vocational training align with Lee workforce emphasis.	S19, S39
Infrastructure	Continuity with growth framing	Roads and broadband are central; Nashville-area growth increases administrative relevance.	S21, S42–S44
Social conservatism	Continuity, stronger Trump-era rhetoric	Women's sports, abortion, guns and curriculum remain central; rhetoric is closely tied to national conservative conflicts.	S8
Immigration	Differentiation / intensification	Blackburn explicitly proposes state cooperation with Trump deportation enforcement and aggressive anti-sanctuary posture.	S11, S15
China / foreign land	Distinct emphasis	Complete ban on China's ability to own any type of Tennessee land is a signature state-level proposal.	S10, S17
Progressive prosecutors / crime	Distinct emphasis	Campaign emphasizes removing/pressuring local prosecutors and Memphis public-safety intervention.	S16
Big Tech / children	Distinct emphasis	Federal tech brand converted into state child-safety and school-phone policies.	S12, S20
Crypto / Bitcoin	Distinct new emphasis	Listed as a gubernatorial issue, beyond Lee's core legacy agenda.	S8

On campaign positioning, Blackburn is therefore neither simply “Lee's successor” nor wholly discontinuous. The closest description is continuity on Tennessee's low-tax, school-choice and pro-business governing architecture combined with a more explicitly Trump-linked executive agenda on immigration, China, prosecutors, culture and technology. That is a synthesis of campaign materials, not a normative evaluation. [S7][S8][S39][S40]

11. Blackburn Policy Matrix: Specific Proposal, Repeated Message or Not Yet Fully Specified

Policy	Classification	What is actually specified as of Aug. 24	Source
Economy / jobs	Repeatedly emphasized; broad official direction	Keep taxes/prices low; reduce regulation/spending; recruit employers; support in-state small business; workforce development. Exact sector targets/incentive reforms not fully detailed.	S14
Taxes	Repeated message + general policy	Low-tax posture anchored in anti-income-tax history; seek opportunities to cut burden. No comprehensive tax package or revenue score located.	S18
State spending	Repeated message	Cut “wasteful”/“liberal” spending; detailed agency-by-agency targets not yet published in reviewed material.	S8
Education / school choice	Official policy + repeated message	Support school choice/EFS; parental rights; anti-DEI/curriculum politics; higher-ed/vocational partnerships.	S8, S19, S57
Classroom phones	Specific announced policy	Bell-to-bell prohibition on student cellphone use, extending beyond 2025 instructional-time law.	S12
Immigration	Specific direction	State cooperation with federal deportation enforcement; anti-sanctuary posture; drug/cartel financial enforcement. Legal/operational details would depend on state/federal authority.	S11, S15
Crime / public safety	Repeated + specific direction	Back law enforcement; confront prosecutors deemed ineffective; Memphis safety emphasis. Exact statutory mechanism for DA removal not fully specified in campaign page.	S16
Abortion	Repeated ideological position	“Right to life” listed as core issue; detailed gubernatorial legislative package not located.	S8
Gun rights	Repeated ideological position	Second Amendment protection; detailed new state statutory agenda not located.	S8
Transgender policy / women’s sports	Repeated policy message	Protect women’s sports and sex-based classifications; detailed implementation beyond existing state law not fully specified.	S8
Healthcare / rural health	Not fully specified as state plan	Blackburn has a federal healthcare record, but a detailed gubernatorial TennCare/rural hospital plan was not located on the reviewed campaign issue pages.	S8
Infrastructure	Official direction	Roads plus broadband/digital divide; detailed project list/funding plan not yet published.	S21
Housing	Not fully specified	No comprehensive statewide housing/affordability plan located in reviewed Blackburn issue materials.	S8
Agriculture	Official direction; partial specifics	Protect farmland; ban Chinese ownership; support farm/forestry sectors. Detailed farm-credit/subsidy/regulatory package not located.	S17, S22

Policy	Classification	What is actually specified as of Aug. 24	Source
Energy	Repeated message; partial detail	Launch promised Tennessee as an energy-producing powerhouse; detailed generation/utility plan not fully specified in reviewed issue pages.	S7, S8
China / foreign investment	Specific announced policy	Complete ban on China having ability to own any type of land in Tennessee; align with America First trade.	S17
Big Tech / child online safety	Specific direction	State tools, platform accountability/audits; builds on Kids Online Safety Act profile; school-phone ban.	S12, S20
Election / party registration	Issue officially listed	Campaign supports election protections and party registration; implementation detail limited on main issue index.	S8
Crypto / Bitcoin	Issue officially listed	Positive innovation positioning; detailed state-regulatory architecture not fully specified in reviewed main materials.	S8

12. General-Election Geography: Memphis, Nashville Metro, East Tennessee

Memphis and Shelby County: public safety plus margin management

Shelby County is a Democratic stronghold in statewide general elections: in the 2024 presidential race, Harris won 61.8% to Trump's 36.4%; in the 2024 Senate race, Gloria Johnson also carried Shelby. Blackburn nevertheless won the Shelby Republican primary by a wide margin among GOP primary voters, 24,712 votes to Rose's 10,931 and Fritts's 4,947. [S1][S46]

Observed Blackburn activity is more consistent with limiting the Democratic county margin and maximizing suburban Shelby Republican turnout than with an effort to win Shelby County outright. That inference rests on three facts: the county's recent Democratic general-election baseline, Blackburn's strong Shelby GOP-primary result, and her unusually sustained emphasis on Memphis public safety and suburban law-enforcement/mayoral relationships. It is an analytical inference, not a campaign instruction. [S1][S16][S23][S46]

The campaign's Memphis messaging centers on crime, policing and cooperation with the Trump administration. A July 30 official ad explicitly framed the race around "Fighting for Memphis. Keeping Tennessee Safe." The campaign also touts backing from the Shelby County Deputy Sheriffs' Association. No distinct, fully developed gubernatorial proposal focused specifically on FedEx, Memphis International Airport, logistics-sector incentives or Black-voter outreach was located in the reviewed Blackburn policy material through August 24; those topics should therefore not be invented as existing campaign planks. [S23][S60]

Green's home base creates the opposite structural imperative. Her local-government biography and endorsements from Steve Cohen, Lee Harris and multiple Memphis officials give her a dense urban organizational network. Her public events archive shows frequent Memphis/Shelby appearances but also extensive statewide travel, suggesting an effort to avoid being defined as only a Memphis candidate. [S31][S34]

Nashville and the fast-growing Middle Tennessee ring

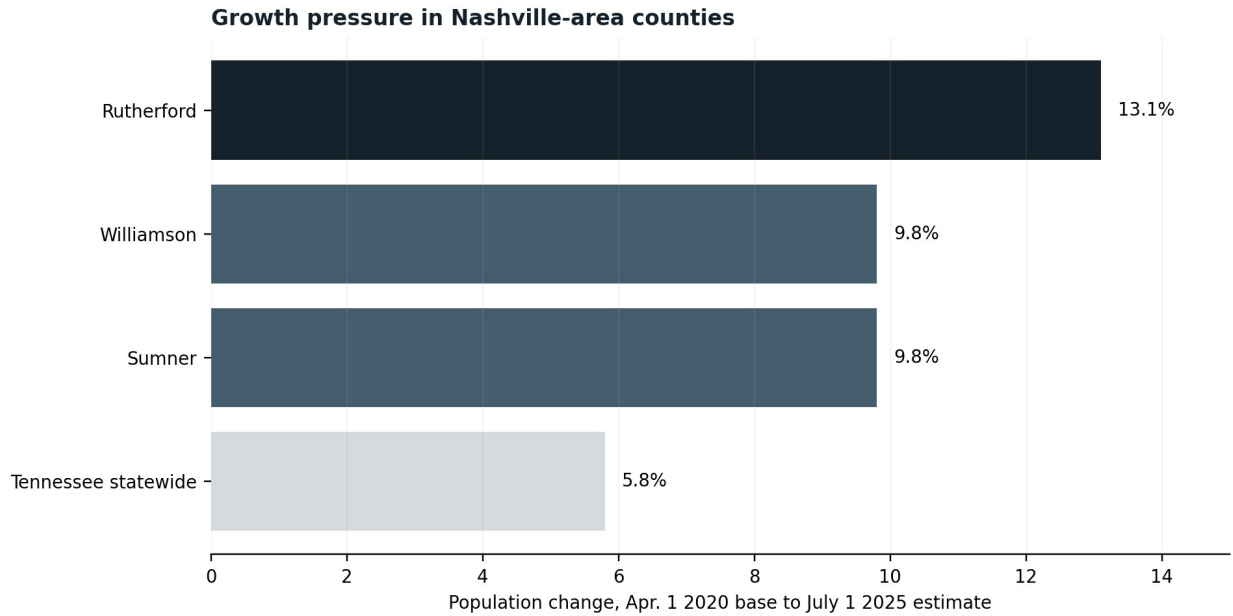


Figure 8. Population growth in selected Nashville-area counties compared with Tennessee overall, 2020 base to July 1, 2025 estimate. **Source:** S41, S42, S43, S44, S45

Middle Tennessee is the most internally contradictory region in the race. Davidson County is a major Democratic anchor, while Williamson, Rutherford, Wilson, Sumner and Maury are large Republican-leaning or Republican-dominant suburban/exurban counties. Census Vintage 2025 estimates show growth well above the statewide pace in key counties: Rutherford +13.1%, Williamson +9.8%, Sumner +9.8%, compared with Tennessee +5.8% from the April 2020 base to July 2025. [S41–S45]

Growth and interstate migration can alter the composition of suburban electorates, but the direction of partisan effect cannot simply be assumed. The more reliable strategic fact is that these counties are adding voters and households, increasing the value of organization, voter-file maintenance and state-specific economic/education messaging. The 2026 GOP primary also revealed a regional warning for Blackburn: Rose carried Davidson, Wilson and Sumner and ran close in Rutherford, demonstrating that Middle Tennessee Republican voters were less uniform than the statewide result. [S1]

Williamson is particularly important to Blackburn’s identity: her long political career is rooted in the area, and she carried the county in the primary. In the 2024 Senate general election, she won Williamson comfortably; yet county growth, high educational attainment and national suburban trends mean the campaign cannot treat all new residents as automatic partisan voters. This is a structural observation rather than a prediction of a partisan shift. [S1][S46][S43]

East Tennessee: the statewide margin engine

East Tennessee has historically been the Republican Party’s deepest regional base in the state. Blackburn carried Knox, Hamilton, Sullivan and Washington in the Republican primary, while Fritts’s localized strength in Roane/Loudon-area counties shows that the region also contains a significant intra-Republican ideological constituency. [S1]

In a general election, Knoxville/Knox County and Chattanooga/Hamilton County matter both for vote volume and as metropolitan tests of Republican margins; the Tri-Cities and surrounding Appalachian counties matter for very large GOP percentages. A Republican statewide landslide historically requires both the raw volume of Knox/Hamilton and overwhelming rural/Appalachian margins. A closer-than-normal race would show up not only in Memphis/Nashville turnout but also in compressed Republican margins in these eastern metros. That is election arithmetic drawn from recent statewide geography, not a prediction. [S46]

13. County-Level Baseline and Sensitivity Framework

County	2024 general-election anchor	2026 GOP primary split*	Structural role
Shelby	D+21.7 (2024 Senate, approx.)	B 60.9 / R 26.9 / F 12.2	Democratic urban anchor; Republican suburban turnout / margin management.
Davidson	D+27.7 (2024 Senate, approx.)	B 40.2 / R 44.5 / F 15.3	Democratic urban anchor; Rose won GOP primary among local Republican voters.

County	2024 general-election anchor	2026 GOP primary split*	Structural role
Knox	R+18.3 (2024 Senate, approx.)	B 47.4 / R 30.2 / F 22.4	Large East TN Republican vote pool; metro margin indicator.
Hamilton	R+14.6 (2024 Senate, approx.)	B 48.1 / R 33.4 / F 18.4	Large southeast metro; Republican-leaning but less red than surrounding rural counties.
Williamson	R+33.3 (2024 Senate, approx.)	B 45.3 / R 35.6 / F 19.1	High-growth/affluent suburb; Blackburn home-region network; key suburban retention zone.
Rutherford	R+21.0 (2024 Senate, approx.)	B 39.2 / R 37.1 / F 23.7	Large, fast-growing exurb/suburb; primary almost even Blackburn–Rose.
Montgomery	R+19.6 (2024 Senate, approx.)	B 55.7 / R 27.7 / F 16.6	Growth/military-linked Clarksville county; Blackburn strong in GOP primary.
Sumner	R+41.1 (2024 Senate, approx.)	B 36.0 / R 39.9 / F 24.1	Fast-growing Nashville ring; Rose carried GOP primary.
Sullivan	R+56.5 (2024 Senate, approx.)	B 48.3 / R 33.3 / F 18.4	Tri-Cities/Appalachian Republican margin reservoir.
Washington	Strong R in recent statewide elections; exact 2024 Senate margin not reproduced in this report	B 43.5 / R 35.4 / F 21.0	Tri-Cities/Johnson City region; GOP turnout/margin reservoir.
Blount	Strong R in recent statewide elections; exact 2024 Senate margin not reproduced in this report	B 44.0 / R 27.2 / F 28.8	Knoxville exurban/East TN strong Republican county; Fritts second in primary.
Wilson	R+~39 (2024 Senate; official precinct totals reproduced in TN records)	B 34.5 / R 40.9 / F 24.6	Nashville exurb; Rose carried GOP primary; strong recent GOP general-election margin.

Source: S1, S46

*Primary split is calculated from Blackburn/Rose/Fritts votes only and is not a prediction of November behavior. For counties where this report does not reproduce an exact 2024 Senate percentage, no number is invented. [S1][S46]

Uniform-swing sensitivity: what would have to move?

A neutral county sensitivity exercise can be stated without assigning probability. Starting from Blackburn’s 2024 Senate result (63.8% statewide) and county pattern, a materially closer 2026 gubernatorial race would require a combination of larger Democratic margins/turnout in Shelby and Davidson plus simultaneous Democratic movement in Republican-leaning metros/suburbs such as Knox, Hamilton, Rutherford, Williamson and Montgomery. A major upset would require those changes to occur together and to be large enough to overwhelm the very large Republican margins in rural and Appalachian counties. This is a mechanical description of the coalition math, not an independent forecast. [S46]

14. Turnout: 2022 Governor vs. 2024 Presidential vs. 2026 Primary

Election	Result / volume	Electorate	Analytical use
2022 Governor	Bill Lee 64.91% / Jason Martin 32.92%	Midterm gubernatorial electorate; materially lower participation than a presidential year.	Recent gubernatorial benchmark.
2024 President	Trump 64.01% / Harris 34.38%; 3,072,624 presidential votes	High-turnout presidential electorate.	Best recent partisan ceiling/floor reference but not a midterm composition. [S51]
2024 Senate	Blackburn 63.80% / Johnson 34.16%; 3,007,608 Senate votes	Same presidential-year electorate; direct measure of Blackburn’s statewide brand.	Most relevant candidate-specific statewide baseline. [S46]

Election	Result / volume	Electorate	Analytical use
2026 GOP primary	714,810 votes for Blackburn/Rose/Fritts combined	Much narrower Republican primary electorate.	Measures intra-GOP coalition, not general-election share. [S1]
2026 Dem primary	353,661 candidate votes; Green 244,194 (69.0%)	Much narrower Democratic primary electorate.	Measures Green's control of primary field, not November ceiling. [S56]

The primary totals show that Republican participation was roughly twice the Democratic candidate-vote total in the governor primaries, but open-primary rules, strategic crossover voting, uncontested down-ballot races, and local contests can affect primary participation. It should not be converted directly into a November vote forecast. The more defensible use is organizational: the GOP enters the general election with a much larger recent primary universe, while Green must expand substantially beyond the Democratic primary pool. [S1][S56]

15. Polling and Third-Party Race Ratings

No post-primary public head-to-head poll located
As of the August 24 research cutoff, the reviewed public trackers contained no general-election survey fielded after the August 6 primary. The available head-to-head numbers therefore measure a pre-nomination environment and must not be presented as a current post-primary poll.

Field dates	Pollster	n	Sample	MoE	Result	Sponsor/affil.	Caution
Apr. 20–27, 2026	Targoz Market Research / Beacon Center	1,200	Registered voters	±2.77–2.8	Blackburn 51 / Green 27 / 22 other-undecided	Beacon/Targoz	Pre-primary; names tested before nominations were final.
Aug. 5–7, 2025	Quantus Insights	600	Registered voters	±3.5	Blackburn 49 / Green 28 / remainder split other-undecided	Quantus; partisan affiliation noted by aggregators	Very early; tracker presentation has duplicated undecided/other labels.

Source: S3, S62, S63

Third-party forecaster	Published rating	Rating date
Inside Elections	Solid R	Aug. 28, 2025
Race to the WH	Safe R	Jun. 19, 2026
RealClearPolitics	Solid R	Jun. 5, 2026
Sabato's Crystal Ball	Safe R	Sep. 4, 2025
The Cook Political Report	Safe R	Sep. 11, 2025

Source for compiled ratings: S3

Reuters described Blackburn as the heavy/clear favorite after the primary, and CBS likewise characterized her as the favorite in a state where Democrats have not won a statewide election since 2006. Those are third-party media assessments. This report does not translate them into an independent numerical probability. [S4][S6]

16. General-Election Strategy: What the Campaign Is Already Doing

Strategic component	Observed mechanism	Evidence status	Source
Consolidate the GOP primary electorate	Post-primary Trump endorsement; Rose/Fritts contest was overwhelmingly conservative; campaign can now frame race as party-vs-party rather than intra-MAGA authenticity.	Trump endorsement is verified; voter-level consolidation not yet measured by public poll.	S25, S1
Maintain Trump/MAGA coalition	America First language, immigration/China/crime, August 3 Trump ad, Aug. 7 endorsement.	Demonstrated before and immediately after primary.	S7, S13, S25
Rural Tennessee margins	Agriculture, land/China, guns, abortion, taxes, energy, law enforcement.	Issue mix maps closely onto Republican rural coalition; turnout performance remains future event.	S8, S17, S22
Suburban Republicans and independents	Tax/business/schools/phones/public safety can be framed as state governance rather than ideological abstraction.	Campaign has Williamson roots and statewide brand; no post-primary independent-voter polling available.	S12, S14, S18
Memphis / Shelby	Public-safety ad and law-enforcement endorsements; suburban Shelby organization.	Observable pattern consistent with margin limitation and suburban GOP mobilization, not countywide win attempt.	S16, S23, S60
Nashville metro growth ring	Education, taxes, roads/broadband, small business; maintain organization in Williamson/Rutherford/Wilson/Sumner/Mary.	Population growth increases electoral weight; primary showed Rose pockets of GOP strength.	S1, S21, S42–S44
East Tennessee	Maintain very high Republican participation/margins; statewide organizational presence in Knox/Hamilton/Tri-Cities.	Primary results confirm large GOP vote pools; Fritts pockets show need for intraparty consolidation.	S1
Women / suburban women	Campaign foregrounds female leadership, children online, school phones, crime and economy while retaining abortion/women's-sports positions.	No public post-primary gender crosstab available; effect remains unmeasured.	S8, S12, S20
Evangelicals / social conservatives	Abortion, women's sports, curriculum, parental rights, guns and faith coalition.	Repeated issue architecture; no single statewide evangelical umbrella endorsement verified in reviewed set.	S8
Small business/agriculture/law enforcement/veterans	Dedicated issue pages/coalitions and endorsements.	Organizationally explicit.	S14, S22, S23

17. Democratic Lines of Contrast and Republican Vulnerabilities

Green and Tennessee Democrats do not need to invent issue contrast: the two campaigns already occupy sharply different policy positions on vouchers/public schools, Medicaid, abortion, gun policy, immigration enforcement, labor/family policy and the role of federal-Trump policies in state government. Green's campaign materials also use anti-corruption and anti-insider language, creating a natural bridge to the separate campaign-finance controversy around Blackburn's federal and outside-group money. [S31][S32][S27]

Issue	Existing line of contrast	Analytical status	Source
Abortion / reproductive rights	Blackburn lists "right to life"; Green promises executive protection of reproductive freedom.	Direct policy contrast already on campaign sites.	S8, S32

Issue	Existing line of contrast	Analytical status	Source
School vouchers / public schools	Blackburn supports EFS/school choice; Green emphasizes public-school funding and opposes voucher direction.	Direct policy contrast.	S57, S58
Healthcare	Green calls for Medicaid expansion/rural health; Blackburn gubernatorial healthcare plan remains less specified in reviewed materials.	Asymmetry in policy specificity, not an evaluation of merit.	S32, S8
Guns	Blackburn emphasizes Second Amendment; Green supports background checks/red flags/locks.	Direct policy contrast.	S8, S32
Immigration / ICE	Blackburn supports state cooperation with Trump deportation agenda; Green's Day One plan would end THP-ICE cooperation.	Direct policy contrast.	S15, S32
Campaign finance / establishment	Outside-group flows and federal-campaign spending controversy create an attack line; Blackburn allies argue spending/transactions complied with legal distinctions.	Controversy without confirmed violation.	S27, S29
Primary plurality	Blackburn won 43.6%, below majority.	Potential narrative about GOP resistance; actual November defection unmeasured.	S1
National vs. Tennessee focus	Blackburn's national profile and Trump brand are central; opponents can argue state concerns require different focus.	Image/positioning issue, not a factual defect.	S7, S13

18. Four General-Election Scenarios — Conditions, Not Probabilities

How to read the scenarios

These scenarios are not rankings and do not assign probabilities. They are conditional descriptions of what the observable vote structure would have to look like for each outcome family.

Scenario	Required vote/turnout structure	Historical relationship	Source
A. Blackburn landslide	Republican turnout near recent statewide norms; rapid consolidation of Rose/Fritts voters; very large rural/East TN margins; Williamson/Rutherford/Sumner/Wilson remain strongly Republican; Shelby/Davidson Democratic margins do not expand materially; national environment does not create a large anti-GOP wave.	Result resembles or exceeds the Republican margin range seen in 2022 governor and 2024 statewide races.	S46
B. Blackburn comfortable victory	GOP baseline holds but suburbs move somewhat toward Democrats or Democratic urban turnout improves; Republican margins in East/rural Tennessee remain large enough to offset those changes.	Still structurally consistent with Safe/Solid R ratings published by third-party forecasters.	S3, S46
C. Closer-than-expected race	High Democratic turnout in Shelby/Davidson; stronger Green performance in Montgomery/Hamilton/Knox; meaningful Republican-margin compression in Williamson/Rutherford/Wilson/Sumner; national midterm environment favors Democrats.	Would require multiple regional movements at once, not only a Memphis/Nashville surge.	S46

Scenario	Required vote/turnout structure	Historical relationship	Source
D. Democratic upset	Exceptional Democratic turnout plus significant GOP defections/abstention; large suburban/metro movement; unusually weak Republican rural/East turnout or margins; independent vote distribution also cuts against GOP nominee.	Would represent a break from the state's post-2006 statewide pattern and from current third-party Safe/Solid R ratings.	S3, S46

19. Historic Stakes and the U.S. Senate Vacancy

Because both major-party nominees are women, Tennessee is positioned to elect its first female governor in November 2026. Blackburn would therefore become Tennessee's first female governor if elected; Green would also make the same history if she won. Blackburn previously became the first woman elected from Tennessee to the U.S. Senate. [S5][S38]

A Blackburn victory would also trigger a federal office consequence because she is a sitting senator whose current term runs beyond January 2027. Tennessee Code §2-16-101 provides for election of a successor at the next regular November election for the remainder of a U.S. Senate term and permits the governor to make an interim appointment when Congress is in session until a successor is elected and qualified. NCSL's state-law survey lists Tennessee among states without a statutory requirement that the interim appointee be from the same political party as the departing senator. [S52][S53]

If Blackburn became governor in January 2027 and vacated the Senate seat then, the practical timeline under the statute would point to an interim gubernatorial appointment followed by an election at the next regular November election—2028—for the remainder of the Senate term, which otherwise ends in January 2031. The precise timing would depend on the actual vacancy date and election administration. This is a statutory reading, not a prediction about whom a governor would appoint. [S52][S53]

Nationally, such a vacancy would matter because it would temporarily turn a Tennessee Senate seat into an appointed seat and then place a special remainder election on the 2028 ballot. Given Tennessee's recent federal voting pattern, outside attention would likely focus on the identity of the appointee, the special-election candidate field and Senate balance, rather than on whether the seat exists as an ordinary six-year contest in 2028. No appointee names are assumed here. [S46][S52][S53]

20. The Blackburn Blueprint

Component	Status	What it means in observed campaign behavior
1. Convert a national conservative brand into a Tennessee executive brand	Already demonstrated	Use the income-tax fight and statewide Senate identity as state-specific proof points, then attach national issues to gubernatorial powers.
2. Use Trump association, now backed by a formal endorsement	Demonstrated + strengthened post-primary	The primary relied on historical association without formal endorsement; Aug. 7 endorsement removes that ambiguity for the general election.
3. Keep the agenda issue-led rather than opponent-led	Demonstrated	Official TV ads closed on China, immigration, schools/Big Tech, Memphis crime and biography rather than mostly naming Rose.
4. Let outside conservative infrastructure carry part of the negative/financial burden	Demonstrated in primary	Tennessee Freedom Fund/Club for Growth-linked spending supplemented the candidate committee; legal separation and non-coordination rules remain important.
5. Reassemble the Republican coalition after a 43.6% plurality	New general-election requirement	Rose and Fritts together won 56.4% of the three-candidate GOP primary vote; formal Trump backing and party endorsements provide elite-level consolidation signals, but voter-level consolidation is not yet publicly polled.
6. Make Memphis a public-safety and margin-management test	Demonstrated + general-election extension	Use crime/law-enforcement theme to maximize suburban Shelby Republicans and reduce urban Democratic margin without treating Shelby as an ordinary statewide GOP county.
7. Defend the growth ring around Nashville	New general-election emphasis	Williamson/Rutherford/Wilson/Sumner/Maury combine population growth with intra-GOP primary variation; economy, schools, roads and taxes are the state-governance bridge.

Component	Status	What it means in observed campaign behavior
8. Maximize the East Tennessee/rural margin engine	Continuing requirement	Knox/Hamilton volume plus Tri-Cities/Appalachian and rural margins remain central to the statewide Republican arithmetic.
9. Present continuity with Lee where popular, differentiation where Trump-era politics rewards it	General-election positioning	Continue low-tax, school-choice, pro-business structure while emphasizing deportation cooperation, China land ban, prosecutors, Big Tech and culture.
10. Contain unresolved vulnerabilities rather than deny them	Remaining vulnerability	Primary plurality, Middle Tennessee pockets of resistance, campaign-finance controversy, nationalized image and policy gaps on healthcare/housing are items for voters and analysts to monitor.

21. Ten-Category Evidence Dashboard (Non-Numeric)

The user requested 10-point scores. This report does not assign numerical political-candidate scores or rankings. The same ten categories are retained below with source-based evidence and unresolved questions instead.

Category	Verified / attributed evidence	Open question
Political Positioning	Longstanding tax/social-conservative identity; explicit America First/state-power frame; formal Trump endorsement after primary.	How much general-election messaging broadens beyond the GOP-primary issue set?
Coalition	Statewide Republican elected-official endorsements, conservative organizations, law enforcement, veterans, business groups; 43.6% primary plurality.	Degree of Rose/Fritts voter consolidation; appeal to independents and suburban women not yet measured post-primary.
Geography	Won many large GOP vote pools; strong in Shelby GOP, Knox, Hamilton, Williamson, Montgomery, Tri-Cities; Rose pockets in Middle TN and Fritts pockets in East TN.	Whether Nashville-ring primary resistance translates into any November underperformance.
Message	Issue sequence is coherent: China → immigration → school phones/Big Tech → Memphis safety → Trump/biography.	Healthcare, housing and detailed fiscal implementation remain less developed publicly.
Organization	95-county/statewide campaign infrastructure, coalitions, national donor network; campaign treasurer Glenn Jacobs.	Comparative field-program intensity in post-primary period needs new disclosures/field reporting.
Money	\$10.74m raised and \$2.69m cash on hand in Aug. 14 TREF-derived tracker; large allied IE network.	General-election burn rate and fresh post-primary fundraising; outside-group legal/political scrutiny.
Trump Factor	No primary endorsement but strong association; formal Aug. 7 general-election endorsement.	Effect on suburban/independent voters cannot be quantified without new polling.
General-election Strategy	Observed shift toward statewide issue framing; Republican consolidation and geographic margin management are the core structural tasks.	Post-primary ad buys, field hires and targeted media plans were still developing at cutoff.
Vulnerability	Plurality primary win; Middle TN resistance; PAC-money controversy; nationalized image; gaps in several state policy areas.	Whether Democratic campaign can convert these into measurable vote movement.
Electability	Third-party forecasters compiled by Tennessee Firefly rate race Safe/Solid Republican; Reuters/CBS call Blackburn the favorite.	No public post-primary head-to-head survey in reviewed sources; report therefore gives no independent probability.

Source: S1, S2, S3, S4, S6, S8, S24, S25, S27

22. Final Conclusion

What, fundamentally, is Marsha Blackburn's 2026 Tennessee gubernatorial campaign strategy?

Fundamentally, Blackburn's strategy is to convert her statewide incumbency, anti-income-tax and social-conservative record, Trump-era America First identity, well-funded statewide network and Tennessee's Republican geography into a governor's-race coalition, while localizing national conservative issues through state-level themes of public safety, immigration enforcement, school choice and classroom discipline, China/land policy, taxes, infrastructure and Big Tech—and using the general election to consolidate primary Republicans rather than reinvent the brand that won the nomination.

As of August 24, the strongest evidence-based statement about the race's status is not an independently generated probability but the convergence of third-party indicators: Tennessee's 2006–2024 statewide voting trend, Blackburn's 2024 63.8% Senate reelection, her Aug. 6 Republican nomination, a substantial candidate-and-outside financial network, a formal Aug. 7 Trump endorsement, and Safe/Solid Republican ratings from multiple national forecasters. The principal uncertainties are the lack of post-primary public polling, the scale of Democratic midterm mobilization, suburban movement, primary-voter consolidation and how campaign-finance and policy-specific contrasts develop after Labor Day. [S1][S2][S3][S25][S46]

Appendix A. Republican Primary: Additional County Detail

The full Tennessee Firefly table contains all 95 counties. The selection below highlights geographic outliers and county-level evidence used in the report. Vote counts are complete according to the tracker, sourced from the Tennessee Secretary of State; the tracker noted certification deadlines through Aug. 24. [S1]

County	Blackburn	Rose	Fritts	Winner
Roane	2,521 (28.8%)	1,418 (16.2%)	4,812 (55.0%)	Fritts
Loudon	4,169 (42.5%)	2,231 (22.8%)	3,406 (34.7%)	Blackburn
Scott	1,833 (38.2%)	986 (20.6%)	1,976 (41.2%)	Fritts
Morgan	1,067 (32.3%)	575 (17.4%)	1,664 (50.3%)	Fritts
Monroe	2,147 (37.5%)	1,287 (22.5%)	2,295 (40.1%)	Fritts
McMinn	2,621 (40.6%)	1,738 (26.9%)	2,104 (32.6%)	Blackburn
Putnam	3,226 (25.2%)	7,321 (57.1%)	2,264 (17.7%)	Rose
Smith	597 (17.7%)	2,055 (60.9%)	723 (21.4%)	Rose
DeKalb	1,022 (27.3%)	1,944 (51.9%)	782 (20.9%)	Rose
Jackson	564 (27.0%)	1,047 (50.1%)	478 (22.9%)	Rose
Macon	1,073 (24.8%)	1,831 (42.4%)	1,418 (32.8%)	Rose
Overton	1,355 (31.5%)	1,940 (45.0%)	1,013 (23.5%)	Rose
Fayette	3,508 (62.1%)	1,296 (22.9%)	845 (15.0%)	Blackburn
Tipton	3,978 (56.0%)	1,955 (27.5%)	1,172 (16.5%)	Blackburn
Madison	4,610 (54.1%)	2,121 (24.9%)	1,787 (21.0%)	Blackburn
Haywood	847 (53.7%)	472 (29.9%)	258 (16.4%)	Blackburn
Hardeman	1,739 (59.8%)	522 (17.9%)	649 (22.3%)	Blackburn
Lauderdale	1,398 (52.2%)	769 (28.7%)	510 (19.1%)	Blackburn

Source: S1

Appendix B. Source Register

All web sources were reviewed for this report with a research cutoff of August 24, 2026. Campaign websites are used to document the campaigns' own positions, not as independent validation of contested claims. Media and third-party trackers are labeled as such. Wikipedia was not used as an evidentiary source in the report.

- [S1] Tennessee Firefly — 2026 Republican gubernatorial primary results (complete county totals; results sourced from Tennessee Secretary of State). <https://tnfirefly.com/results/august-2026-primary/governor-republican>
- [S2] Tennessee Firefly — 2026 Governor campaign finance (Tennessee Registry of Election Finance + public disclosures; updated Aug. 14, 2026). <https://tnfirefly.com/tennessee-governor-race/finance>
- [S3] Tennessee Firefly — 2026 Governor polls and national race ratings (updated Aug. 14, 2026). <https://tnfirefly.com/tennessee-governor-race/polls>
- [S4] Reuters, Aug. 6–7, 2026 — Blackburn wins Republican primary; Green wins Democratic nomination; Lee term-limited. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/deep-red-tennessee-governors-race-becomes-showdown-between-staunch-trump-allies-2026-08-06/>
- [S5] Axios Nashville, Aug. 6, 2026 — nominees, 13 independents, Nov. 3 general election and early-vote dates. <https://www.axios.com/local/nashville/2026/08/07/tennessee-governor-marsha-blackburn-jerri-green>
- [S6] CBS News, Aug. 6, 2026 — Republican primary narrative, Rose self-funding, Trump non-endorsement before primary. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tennessee-governor-republican-primary-results-marsha-blackburn-john-rose/>
- [S7] Marsha for Governor, Aug. 6, 2025 — campaign announcement. <https://marshablackburn.com/2025/08/06/marsha-blackburn-announces-campaign-for-governor/>
- [S8] Marsha for Governor — issues index. <https://marshablackburn.com/issues/>
- [S9] Marsha for Governor — campaign home; campaign treasurer Glenn Jacobs; Trump quotation used by campaign. <https://marshablackburn.com/>
- [S10] Marsha for Governor, July 8, 2026 — first official TV ad, China/land ownership. <https://marshablackburn.com/2026/07/08/marsha-blackburn-releases-first-tv-ad-in-race-for-tennessee-governor/>
- [S11] Marsha for Governor, July 14, 2026 — TV ad, immigration/drugs/cartels. <https://marshablackburn.com/2026/07/14/marsha-blackburn-releases-new-tv-ad-in-race-for-tennessee-governor/>
- [S12] Marsha for Governor, July 23, 2026 — “Bell to Bell: No Cell” TV ad and policy. <https://marshablackburn.com/2026/07/23/bell-to-bell-no-cell/>
- [S13] Marsha for Governor, Aug. 3, 2026 — Trump-themed TV ad, income-tax/Big Tech biography. <https://marshablackburn.com/2026/08/03/marsha-blackburn-releases-latest-tv-ad-in-race-for-tennessee-governor/>
- [S14] Marsha for Governor — economic-growth issue page. <https://marshablackburn.com/issue/fighting-for-tennessees-continued-economic-growth/>
- [S15] Marsha for Governor — illegal-immigration issue page. <https://marshablackburn.com/issue/stopping-the-scurge-of-illegal-immigration/>
- [S16] Marsha for Governor — public-safety issue page. <https://marshablackburn.com/issue/keeping-our-communities-safe/>
- [S17] Marsha for Governor — China issue page. <https://marshablackburn.com/issue/confronting-communist-china/>
- [S18] Marsha for Governor — tax issue page. <https://marshablackburn.com/issue/cutting-taxes-to-bolster-our-economy/>
- [S19] Marsha for Governor — higher education/vocational training issue page. <https://marshablackburn.com/issue/improving-higher-education-and-vocational-training/>
- [S20] Marsha for Governor — children/Big Tech issue page. <https://marshablackburn.com/issue/protecting-our-kids/>
- [S21] Marsha for Governor — infrastructure issue page. <https://marshablackburn.com/issue/building-a-modern-infrastructure/>
- [S22] Marsha for Governor — agriculture issue page. <https://marshablackburn.com/issue/standing-up-for-tennessee-farmers/>
- [S23] Marsha for Governor, July 23, 2026 — Bill Hagerty endorsement and listed organizational endorsements. <https://marshablackburn.com/2026/07/23/senator-bill-hagerty-endorses-marsha-blackburn-for-governor/>
- [S24] Tennessee Firefly — endorsements tracker; 127 endorsements tracked as of Aug. 6, 2026. <https://tnfirefly.com/tennessee-governor-race/endorsements>
- [S25] The American Presidency Project, Aug. 7, 2026 — Trump Truth Social posts, including formal general-election endorsement of Blackburn. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/truth-social-posts-august-7-2026>
- [S26] Nashville Scene, Aug. 5, 2026 — Lee had not endorsed a gubernatorial candidate before the primary. https://www.nashvillescene.com/news/pithinthewind/tennessee-endorsements-2026-elections/article_e5a7838f-d3c1-57f5-857b-1eaef2ada405.html
- [S27] Tennessee Lookout, Aug. 3, 2026 — \$4.8m federal/PAC flow report and OpenSecrets comment. <https://tennesseelookout.com/2026/08/03/blackburn-moves-4-8m-from-us-senate-campaign-account-in-apparent-legal-workaround/>

- [S28] Tennessee Lookout, Aug. 4, 2026 — Rose \$13m self-funding; pro-Blackburn PAC network raised \$12m; Anthropic \$250k. <https://tennesseelookout.com/2026/08/04/rose-up-to-13m-in-self-funding-blackburn-pac-gets-250k-from-anthropic-in-tn-gov-primary-last-days/>
- [S29] Tennessee Lookout, Apr. 3, 2026 — Registry took no action on earlier federal-funds complaint. <https://tennesseelookout.com/2026/04/03/stockard-on-the-stump-tennessee-republicans-couldnt-wait-to-unveil-memphis-schools-audit/>
- [S30] Tennessee Lookout, Aug. 6, 2026 — Blackburn primary win, debate criticism, Trump non-endorsement in primary. <https://tennesseelookout.com/2026/08/06/blackburn-advances-to-general-election-first-woman-to-win-party-nomination/>
- [S31] Jerri Green for Governor — campaign home and endorsements. <https://greenforgovernor.com/>
- [S32] Jerri Green for Governor — policy platform/Day One plan. <https://greenforgovernor.com/policy/>
- [S33] Jerri Green for Governor — biography and record. <https://greenforgovernor.com/about/>
- [S34] Jerri Green for Governor — campaign events archive. <https://greenforgovernor.com/events/>
- [S35] Tennessee Firefly — candidate profiles and November ballot, updated Aug. 14, 2026. <https://tnfirefly.com/tennessee-governor-race/candidates>
- [S36] Tennessee Firefly — independent candidates on Nov. 3 ballot. <https://tnfirefly.com/tennessee-governor-race/candidates/other-candidates>
- [S37] U.S. Senate — Tennessee senators/current office. <https://www.senate.gov/states/TN/intro.htm>
- [S38] U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn — official biography/Women page. <https://www.blackburn.senate.gov/women>
- [S39] Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, Apr. 23, 2026 — final legislative-session budget/agenda summary. <https://www.tn.gov/governor/news/2026/4/23/gov--lee-marks-the-close-of-the-2026-legislative-session.html>
- [S40] Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, May 7, 2026 — Education Freedom Scholarship expansion. <https://www.tn.gov/governor/news/2026/5/7/photos--gov--lee-signs-expansion-of-education-freedom-scholarship-program.html>
- [S41] U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts — Tennessee, Vintage 2025. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/TN/HEA775224>
- [S42] U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts — Rutherford County, Vintage 2025. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/rutherfordcountytennessee/PST120225>
- [S43] U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts — Williamson County, Vintage 2025. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/williamsoncountytennessee/PST045225>
- [S44] U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts — Sumner County, Vintage 2025. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sumnercountytennessee/PST045224>
- [S45] U.S. Census Bureau — Vintage 2025 County Population Estimates methodology/data page. <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-counties-total.html>
- [S46] NPR — certified Tennessee 2024 presidential and U.S. Senate results, including county results. <https://apps.npr.org/2024-election-results/tennessee.html>
- [S47] Dave Leip's Atlas — official Tennessee 2008 presidential result; source FEC/TN election records. <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/state.php?fips=47&year=2008>
- [S48] Dave Leip's Atlas — official Tennessee 2012 presidential result; source TN Secretary of State. <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/state.php?fips=47&year=2012>
- [S49] Dave Leip's Atlas — official Tennessee 2016 presidential result; source TN Secretary of State. <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/state.php?fips=47&year=2016>
- [S50] Dave Leip's Atlas — official Tennessee 2014 U.S. Senate result; source TN Secretary of State. <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/state.php?class=2&elect=0&f=0&fips=47&off=3&year=2014>
- [S51] Dave Leip's Atlas — official Tennessee 2024 presidential result; source TN Secretary of State. <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/state.php?fips=47&year=2024>
- [S52] Tennessee Code Annotated §2-16-101 (vacancy in U.S. Senate; public text via Justia). <https://law.justia.com/codes/tennessee/title-2/chapter-16/section-2-16-101/>
- [S53] NCSL — Vacancies in the U.S. Senate; Tennessee has gubernatorial interim appointment and no same-party requirement. <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/vacancies-in-the-united-states-senate>
- [S54] WVLT, Aug. 7/10, 2026 — county-by-county Republican gubernatorial primary overview. <https://www.wvlt.tv/2026/08/07/heres-how-gop-gubernatorial-candidates-performed-each-county-across-tn-during-thursdays-primary-election/>
- [S55] Tennessee Firefly — Blackburn candidate profile; primary result, background, finance. <https://tnfirefly.com/tennessee-governor-race/candidates/marsha-blackburn>
- [S56] Tennessee Firefly — Jerri Green candidate profile; Democratic primary result, background, finance. <https://tnfirefly.com/tennessee-governor-race/candidates/jerri-green>
- [S57] Tennessee Firefly — school vouchers candidate-position comparison, sourced to campaigns. <https://tnfirefly.com/tennessee-governor-race/issues/school-vouchers>
- [S58] Tennessee Firefly — school funding candidate-position comparison, sourced to campaigns. <https://tnfirefly.com/tennessee-governor-race/issues/school-funding>
- [S59] Marsha for Governor — endorsement archive. <https://marshablackburn.com/category/endorsements/>

[S60] Marsha for Governor — press release/ad archive. <https://marshablackburn.com/category/press-release/>

[S61] Tennessee Firefly — race overview; 15 candidates, finance and primary snapshot. <https://tnfirefly.com/tennessee-governor-race>

[S62] 270toWin — Tennessee governor polling aggregation (used only to cross-check public poll sample/field metadata).
<https://www.270towin.com/2026-governor-polls/tennessee>

[S63] TennSight / Beacon Poll — May 2026 Tennessee poll summary. <https://tennsight.com/polls/may-2026/>

[S64] Tennessee Firefly — teacher pay candidate positions. <https://tnfirefly.com/tennessee-governor-race/issues/teacher-pay>

[S65] U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts — Washington/Blount or other county pages via QuickFacts general portal.
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>

[S66] Tennessee Secretary of State — Historical Election Results / official election-results archive. <https://sos.tn.gov/elections/results>

[S67] Fox News Voter Analysis — Tennessee 2024 electorate crosstabs (race, age, education, income, religion).
<https://www.foxnews.com/elections/2024/general-results/state/tennessee>

Appendix C. Methodology and Classification Rules

- “Verified fact” means a fact supported by official records, an official campaign/office statement about its own action, or multiple current news sources. Campaign claims about results or policy effects are labeled as campaign claims unless independently validated.
- “Official position” means a statement on a candidate’s campaign site, release, advertisement or direct public statement. It does not mean the policy has been enacted or legally tested.
- “Assessment” means a view attributable to a media outlet, pollster, forecaster, expert or political actor. Third-party Safe/Solid Republican race ratings are therefore not presented as this report’s rating.
- “Analytical inference” is restricted to transparent election mechanics—geography, coalition arithmetic, timing, or message sequence—and is explicitly labeled. The report avoids individualized political persuasion or voter-targeted slogans.
- “Scenario” means a conditional set of turnout and margin changes; it is not a probability. No scenario is ranked as preferred or recommended.
- Important numerical figures include a nearby source tag and reference date/year. Derived percentages from county vote totals are explicitly identified as calculations from the underlying source.
- Primary results and general-election outlook are temporally separated: pre-Aug. 6 expectations are not treated as post-primary evidence. Trump’s endorsement status is also separated: no formal primary endorsement; formal general-election endorsement Aug. 7.
- Tennessee Firefly’s finance and election trackers are used as organized presentations of Tennessee Secretary of State/TREF data; legal claims are cross-checked with reporting that identifies the underlying FEC/TREF records. Where state web portals were less accessible to automated review, this report identifies the intermediary source rather than pretending direct access.