

Rep. Elaine Davis: Public health and safety a top priority in 2024

Since being elected to the state House, I've made it my top priority to do what I campaigned on. My colleagues and I have made great strides improving public safety and education while also protecting our freedoms and values. We worked to keep Tennessee the greatest state in the country.

Republicans made significant investments in public safety last year. We voted to stiffen penalties for violent criminals, support victims of human trafficking, strengthen anti-stalking laws, and increase the punishment for people who sell dangerous and illegal drugs such as fentanyl, which is wreaking havoc on streets nationwide.

According to estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 110,000 American lives were [lost](#) in 2022 as a result of drug overdoses. Synthetic opioids, including fentanyl, have been a massive contributor to these numbers. As the border crisis worsens under the Biden administration, fentanyl continues to flood the country. But it's not just a national problem.

Overdose deaths in Knox County [increased](#) by 2% in 2022 – that's on top of a 29% increase in 2021, according to the chief medical examiner of Knox and Anderson counties. Fentanyl was the most common culprit, being present in 463 drug-related deaths in the two counties. CDC [numbers](#) show a devastating 3,854 overdose deaths across Tennessee in 2022.

As the new session begins, one of my top priorities as a member of the Criminal Justice Committee is to continue keeping violent offenders and illicit drugs off our streets to keep our communities safe.

I'm proud of the job Republicans did last year to improve essential institutions in Tennessee, including education. Lawmakers passed the [Teacher Paycheck Protection Act](#), which will give teachers the largest pay increase in state history, and approved \$232 million to enhance school safety in addition to [nearly](#) \$1 billion to expand and improve TCATs.

We provided funding to place an armed school resource officer (SRO) in each public school in the state. I also helped secure grants from the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security for contracted security personnel at several religious institutions statewide.

Since being elected, I reflect daily on the importance of listening to and serving you, my constituents. That's why the General Assembly [approved legislation](#) I sponsored last year codifying a period of public comment for public meetings of governing bodies. The ability of American citizens to petition their government is paramount and I was proud to spearhead this bill.

As part of my commitment to support small businesses and reduce burdensome regulations, I was proud to sponsor legislation that created a state fire permit for mobile food units to obtain

annually. This legislation has given businesses more flexibility by streamlining the process of getting a permit.

Beyond public safety, education and efficiency of government, the health of Tennesseans will be one of my top priorities this session. I am sponsoring legislation to improve access to quality healthcare in rural areas, helping lessen the transportation barrier for care.

It is an honor to serve District 18 in the General Assembly. The health, safety, and success of our community is always at the front of my mind, and, with your help, I look forward to improving this county and state for years to come.

State Rep. Elaine Davis represents House District 18, which includes part of Knox County.