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Friday, September 5, 2025

Page 1

Athens, Tennessee

# Seven Indicted in Death of Monroe County Jail Inmate



Seven people have been criminally charged in connection with the February death of 74-year-old Lester Isbill while in the custody of the Monroe County Sheriff's Office.

Tenth Judicial District Attorney General Stephen Hatchett announced the indictments Wednesday, shortly after the medical examiner amended Isbill's cause of death from natural causes to homicide, citing dehydration and restraint as contributing factors.

According to officials, Isbill was arrested for disorderly conduct on February 6 and placed in a restraint chair at the Monroe County Jail, where he later became unresponsive. His death was initially ruled natural, caused by heart arrhythmia due to underlying cardiovascular disease.

Following a second investigation and review of new evidence, including video from the jail, the case was re-opened and the autopsy amended.

## Those charged include:

**Joshua Duncan** – *Official Misconduct* (terminated Sept. 3, 2025)

**Tommy Reagan** – *Official Misconduct* (terminated Sept. 3, 2025)

**Tyler Finger** – *Official Misconduct* (resigned May 30, 2025)

**Jerron Henry** – *Official Misconduct* (terminated June 5, 2025)

**Elijah Spencer** – *Official Misconduct* (resigned March 19, 2025)

**Courtney Woods (nurse)** – *Criminally Negligent Homicide*

**Greg Mills (nurse)** – *False Reporting*

All seven were arrested, booked, and later released on bond.

*Continued on Page 4 (Monroe Co. Indictment)*

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Friday, Sept. 5, 2025

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2

Athens, Tennessee

## ACS Board Meeting on Monday



The Athens City Board of Education will meet Monday, September 8, at 6:00 p.m. at the Administration Building. The agenda includes recognition of guests, public comments, a Childhood Cancer Awareness Month presentation, approval of minutes, budget amendments, the fixed asset report, and a resolution supporting proposed legislation.

The Board will recognize ACS RISE Award recipients, approve TSBA conference travel and delegates, and hold a first reading of several updated policies. Personnel, enrollment, and financial updates will also be presented. The public is invited to attend. *Source: Missy Boyd, ACS*

## Community News You Can Use

- The McMinn County Board of Education will meet in Regular Session on Tuesday, September 9, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. at the McMinn County Center for Educational Excellence.
- Registration for the Athens Youth Basketball League opens **Monday, October 20, at 8:00 a.m.** Leagues are available for PreK-Kindergarten, 1st-2nd, 3rd-4th, and 5th-6th grades. Games will be played Saturday mornings beginning **January 3, 2026**, at the new Athens City Primary (Yellow) and Intermediate (Blue) gyms. Register online at [secure.rec1.com/TN/athens-tn/catalog](https://secure.rec1.com/TN/athens-tn/catalog).
- Athens Area Council for the Arts (AACA) is pleased to present its annual **Open Exhibit** for residents of McMinn County and the surrounding counties. The extended entry deadline is **Monday, September 15**.

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# UPCOMING CHURCH NEWS & EVENTS

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THIS WEEK  
NEXT WEEK  
EVERY WEEK

Friday, Sept. 5, 2025

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 3

Athens, Tennessee

## Church News and Events

- **Planted In Christ Outreach Fellowship** (317 Maple Street, Athens) holds Outreach Deliverance Classes every Thursday at 7:00pm.
- SRBC Kids begins this Sunday, September 7 from 5:30 pm - 6:45 pm. Children of all ages are invited to enjoy music, food and fun, while rejoicing in God at Solid Rock Baptist Church (4975 Hwy 11, Calhoun).  
(See ad on Page 1)
- Pastor Cullen Conner and the parish of the **First Baptist Church of** Niota will be commemorating 140 Years of ministry this Sunday, September 7 with their praise and worship service beginning at 10:45 am. The church is located at 6 W. Main St., in Niota. (See ad below)
- Christ Community Church will be host to an Indoor Yard Sale **TOMORROW Saturday, Sept. 6**, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the back building at 14 S. Congress Parkway. A bag-a-bargain sale will begin at noon, and all proceeds will benefit the Prom Ministry.
- **Celebrate Recovery** meets every **Tuesday** at 6:00pm at Woodward Ave. Church of God in Athens They also meet every **Thursday** at 6:00pm at Watts Bar Community Church in Decatur.
- Pastor Gertrude "Gertie" Osborne and the congregation of Crossroads Tabernacle in Greenback welcome everyone to their 2025 Revival held on **Sept. 4-6 at 7 p.m. nightly** with different singers and speakers each evening. **Homecoming will be Sunday, Sept. 7**, beginning at 10 a.m. with lunch in the fellowship hall at 12:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome. The church is located at 5728 Old Niles Ferry Pike.
- Mt. Verd Baptist Church invites you to Revival services beginning **Sunday, Sept. 14, at 6 p.m.** and continuing **Monday-Wednesday, Sept. 15-17, at 7 p.m. nightly.** Evangelist Brent Carr will be speaking. The church is located at 252 County Road 249, Athens. For more information, contact Pastor Donnie Dalton at 423-506-4052.

## NIOTA FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH CELEBRATING 140 YEARS SUNDAY, SEPT. 7

EVERYONE IS WELCOME

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Friday, Sept. 5, 2025

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 4

Athens, Tennessee

## Monroe Co. Indictment

Sheriff Tommy Jones released a [lengthy statement](#) on Wednesday, saying he has personally reviewed all available video and stands by his staff, though he acknowledged that some policy violations had occurred and were addressed internally.

Jones questioned why the autopsy was amended, claiming the pathologist admitted to viewing only clips of the incident, most of which were submitted by the media or family, not the full 9.5 hours of video.

*"Did I or do I believe that anyone from my staff is guilty of homicide? The answer is unequivocally no," Jones said. "While I will not speculate on the motives behind the most recent investigation or the timing of these indictments, I remain concerned that the process has been influenced by selective information and external pressures."*

District Attorney Hatchett emphasized that the case will proceed according to the law and be decided "in a court of law, not the court of public opinion."

All individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

## McMinn County Arrest Reports

**9-3-25**

**Elizabeth Knox**, 33 of Niota, charged with violation of probation for theft and restitution, shoplifting, vandalism, evading arrest, and possession of drug paraphernalia, Bond \$2,518.35

**Nixon Sanchez**, 43 of Nashville, charged with driving without a license, Bond \$2,000

**David Taylor**, 44 of Athens, charged with being a fugitive from justice, and parole violations in Arkansas.

**Sandra Murphy**, 61 of Etowah, charged with child abuse and neglect, nonviolent, Bond \$5,000

**Dustin Fairbanks**, 44 of Athens, charged with state violation of probation for forgery, from \$1,000 to \$2,500

**Those accused remain innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.**

**All information was gathered using public sources.**

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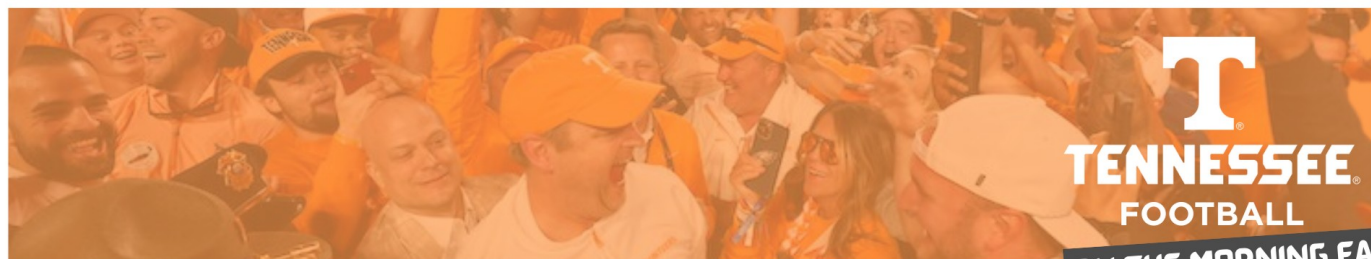
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Friday, Sept. 5, 2025

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Athens, Tennessee

## Vols Stick With Tradition as They Host ETSU in Home Opener



Tennessee football is keeping things classic for its Week 2 home opener. The No. 17 Vols (1-0) will take the field in white helmets, orange jerseys, and white pants when they host in-state rival East Tennessee State (1-0) this Saturday at 3:30 p.m. ET at Neyland Stadium. The game will air on ESPN+ and SEC Network+. Audio will stream online on the Tennessee Athletics app (Download for [Apple](#) or [Android](#)), or [UTSports.com](#). English Commentary will be provided by the “Voice of the Vols” Mike Keith with Spanish Commentary provided by the “[Vamos Vols!](#)” team of [Carlos Lopez \(play-by-play\)](#) and [J.P. Vasquez \(Color Analysis\)](#).

Tennessee opened the 2025 season with a 45-26 victory over Syracuse in Atlanta on Aug. 30, wearing their standard home uniform. This Saturday's game will mark the second consecutive contest in which the Vols sport their signature home combination, a tradition fans have come to embrace before Tennessee switches to Adidas uniforms in 2026.

East Tennessee State enters the matchup with momentum of its own after a 45-17 win against Murray State in Week 1. However, history favors the Vols, who beat the Buccaneers 59-3 in their only previous meeting on Sept. 8, 2018, at Neyland Stadium. Expectations are high for Tennessee this weekend. Predictions have the Vols winning comfortably, with scores ranging from 52-10 to 59-7. ESPN's Football Power Index gives Tennessee a 99% chance to come out on top, with quarterback Joey Aguilar anticipated to have a standout passing performance against the Buccaneers' defense. With a dominant Week 1 behind them and home-field advantage in Knoxville, the Vols are poised to continue their strong start to the 2025 season. Fans can expect a traditional Tennessee performance—fast-paced, high-scoring, and full of energy at Neyland Stadium this Saturday.

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Friday, Sept. 5, 2025

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 6

Athens, Tennessee

## Obituaries

**Frances "Fran" Jenkins**, 82, originally of Central Florida, passed away on Monday, September 1 at her home in Decatur. She was a devout Christian and loved tending to her roses and reading the Bible. A small memorial service will be held this weekend. Decatur Funeral Home & Cremation Services is honored to serve the Jenkins Family.

**David Lamar Bell**, 77, passed away on Tuesday, August 26 at Starr Regional Medical Center in Athens. David was known for his captivating storytelling. He proudly served in the United States Navy for four years, and had a deep love for saltwater sailing and motorcycles. In his later years, he retired to Etowah to enjoy a quieter life. A private family inurnment will take place at a later date at Chattanooga National Cemetery. Companion Funeral & Cremation Service of Athens and the Cody family are honored to assist the Bell family with these arrangements.

**Dr. William Edwin Foree Jr., MD**, 93 of Athens, passed away peacefully on Thursday, August 28. He graduated from TMI, the University of Kentucky, and the University of Tennessee Medical School. Following medical school, he pursued advanced training in surgical pathology at New England Deaconess Hospital and Harvard University, and in urology at The Medical College of Virginia and Kings County Hospital. After returning to Athens in 1965, Bill established a urology practice and raised four children. He also served as McMinn County's Chief Medical Examiner, Chief of Staff at Athens Regional Medical Center, and as a board member for Prime Medical Services. A lifelong member of Keith Memorial United Methodist Church, Bill was deeply committed to his faith and community. Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home in charge of arrangements.

**Les Plunkett**, 71 of Athens, passed away on Thursday, September 4. Funeral arrangements are incomplete and will be announced by Ziegler Funeral Home.

### McMinn County Historical Society & Archives

## Grandparents' Day

Saturday, September 6, 2025 Noon to 2:00 PM

107 W. College Street Athens, TN 37303

Bring your grandchildren to the MCHSA and participate in several activities:

- Build a Family Tree
- Read the Family Histories
- View original 1820s Archival Records
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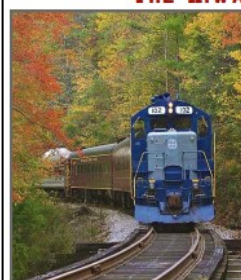


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