

TOGETHER WE RISE

WOMEN'S DAY ON THE HILL



March 19, 2025

8:00 am - 4:00 pm CST

Holland & Knight
Cordell Hull State Office Building

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Holland & Knight

LWW LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF TENNESSEE



TENNESSEE
EQUALITY
PROJECT

Organizing Committee:

Co-Chairs: Councilwoman Brenda Gadd, Ruby Powell
Dennis & Jennifer Watson, PhD

Members: Monchieré Holmes-Jones, Lorean Mays, Alisha
Haddock, Farrah Renfro, Caryn Clopton, Glenda
Whitfield, Teaka Jackson, and Renee Whitehead



AGENDA

TOGETHER WE RISE
WOMEN'S DAY ON THE HILL



REGISTRATION & NETWORKING BREAKFAST

Location: Holland and Knight

Time: 7:45 AM - 9:30 AM CST

- Light Networking Breakfast with Peers and Speakers
-

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Location: Holland and Knight

Time: 8:00 AM - 8:05 AM CST

- Councilmember Brenda Gadd, Co-Chair, Tennessee Women's Political Caucus' Women's Day on the Hill & Metro Nashville Councilwoman
-

WOMEN WHO LEAD PANEL

Location: Holland and Knight

Time: 8:10 AM - 8:40 AM CST

- Moderator:
 - Councilmember Delishia Porterfield, Metro Nashville City Council At-Large
 - Panelists:
 - Representative Gabby Salinas, District 96 - Shelby County
 - Rupa Blackwell, Former Tullahoma Alderman
 - Francie Hunt, Executive Director, Tennessee Advocates for Planned Parenthood
 - Erica Perry, Executive Director, Southern Movement Committee
-

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BREAK & RECOGNITIONS

Location: Holland and Knight

Time: 8:40 AM - 8:55 AM CST

- Jennifer Watson, PhD - Co-Chair, Women's Day on the Hill & President, Tennessee Women's Political Caucus

INTRODUCTION TO ADVOCACY

Location: Holland and Knight

Time: 8:55 AM - 9:30 AM CST

- Melissa Sautter - Campaign Division Head, Tennessee Advocates for Planned Parenthood & Founder, East Nashvivors
- Dahron Johnson - Davidson County Committee Co-Chair, Tennessee Equality Project

BREAKOUT GROUPS BY ADVOCACY AREA

Location: Holland and Knight

Time: 9:30 AM - 9:45 AM CST

- Assigned facilitator

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GROUP PHOTO

Location: Holland and Knight

Time: 9:45 AM - 10:00 AM CST

MEETINGS WITH LEGISLATORS

Location: Cordell Hull

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

MEET AT THE CAFETERIA TO RETURN TO HOLLAND AND KNIGHT

Location: Cordell Hull

Time: 12:00 PM - 12:15 PM CST

KEYNOTE INTRODUCTION

Location: Holland and Knight

Time: 12:15 PM - 12:20 PM CST

- Ruby Powell-Dennis - Executive Director, Elect Black Women Pac
-

KEYNOTE

Location: Holland and Knight

Time: 12:20PM - 12:45 PM CST

- Former Nashville Mayor Megan Barry

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

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Megan Barry

Author, Former Mayor of Nashville

Megan Barry is a former Mayor of Nashville and was the city's first female leader, a role in which she made significant strides in areas like transit, housing, and youth violence. Her tenure was cut short by personal and public challenges, which led to her resignation. After her time as mayor, Barry ran for Congress in Tennessee's 7th Congressional district.

In addition to her political career, Barry recently released her memoir, "It's What You Do Next," which details her complex journey through grief, personal scandal, and political leadership. The book reflects on the five transformative years of her life, exploring her relationship with her son Max, the aftermath of his death, and her efforts to rebuild her marriage with her husband, Bruce.

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THANKS AND CLOSING

Location: Holland and Knight

Time: 12:45 PM - 12:50 PM CST

- Ruby Powell-Dennis, Women's Day on the Hill Co-Chair

BOOK SIGNING AND PHOTOS WITH MEGAN BARRY

Location: Holland and Knight

Time: 12:50 PM - 1:00 PM CST

RETURN TO CAPITOL TO ATTEND COMMITTEE/LEGISLATOR MEETINGS (OPTIONAL)

Location: Cordell Hull

Time: 1:30 PM - 4:00 PM CST

SPEAKERS & FACILITATORS

In order of program appearance:

TOGETHER WE RISE
WOMEN'S DAY ON THE HILL



**Councilwoman
Brenda Gadd**

Nashville Metro Council
District 24



**Councilwoman
Delishia Porterfield**

Nashville Metro Council
At-Large



**Representative
Gabby Salinas**

TN House District 96
Shelby County



Rupa Blackwell

Tullahoma Alderman
2019-2022



Francie Hunt

Executive Director,
Tennessee Advocates for
Planned Parenthood
(TAPP)



Erica Perry, Esq

Executive Director
Southern Committee
Movement



Jennifer Watson, PhD

President, National Women's
Political Caucus - Tennessee



Melissa Sautter

Campaign Division Head,
Tennessee Advocates for
Planned Parenthood



**Chaplain
Dahron Johnson**

Davidson County Co-
Chair, Tennessee
Equality Project



**Ruby
Powell-Dennis**

Executive Director,
Elect Black Women Pac



**Former-Mayor
Megan Barry**

Author & Former Mayor of
Nashville

SPEAKER LIST

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**Councilwoman
Brenda Gadd**

Nashville Metro Council
District 24

Brenda Gadd is a dedicated Metro Councilwoman and community advocate, currently serving as Co-Chair for Women's Day on the Hill and as VP of Public Relations on the Tennessee Women's Political Caucus board. With over two decades of public service, Brenda has championed policies that prioritize women, children, and families, including securing Metro's first family leave policy and advocating for affordable housing, public education, and neighborhood safety.

She is recognized for her leadership and commitment to building inclusive communities, having earned the Athena Award in 2019 and being named one of Nashville Business Journal's Women of Influence in 2020. Brenda's work reflects her belief that a strong community is built when every individual is invested in and supported.



**Councilwoman
Delishia Porterfield**

Nashville Metro
Council At-Large

Delishia Danielle Porterfield, a dedicated mother, educator, and social justice advocate, is serving her second term as Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee for the Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County Council, overseeing a critical \$3.28 billion budget. A lifelong Tennessean raised in Memphis, Delishia's life experiences fueled her passion for public service. After studying at Howard University and Tennessee State University, she transitioned from public education to public office, making history as the first District Councilmember elected At-Large after just one term. Delishia has also served as Chair of the Education Committee, Vice-Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee, and Vice-Chair of the Minority Caucus, where she is the immediate past chair. She empowers progressive local leaders as a trainer with the Progressive Governance Academy and as the Co-Chair of the Black Caucus with Local Progress. A proud mother, Delishia shares her life in Nashville with her daughter and their rescue pets.



**Representative
Gabby Salinas**

Tennessee House of
Representatives
District 96

Gabby is a Representative, a dedicated scientist, and health care advocate with deep roots in Memphis, Tennessee. Her journey began at the age of seven when she and her family moved to Memphis for her cancer treatment at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The city embraced her family during their hardships, including the tragic loss of her father and sister and the paralysis of her mother. This unwavering support left a lasting impression on Gabby, inspiring her to give back to the community that helped her family.

She credits much of her success to Memphis, where she was educated at St. Ann Bartlett, St. Agnes Academy, and Christian Brothers University. Gabby's dream of helping people through science became a reality in 2010 when she joined the St. Jude Department of Chemical Biology and Therapeutics, Gabby's determination, expertise, and resilience make her a dedicated advocate, as she works toward making positive change in her community and beyond.

SPEAKER LIST

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Rupa Blackwell

Tullahoma Alderman

2019-2022

Rupa was born and raised in Tullahoma, TN. Upon graduation, she attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she graduated with a BA in Chemistry and a BA in History. She began her career in non-profit events in Los Angeles where she met her now husband and started her family. Rupa and her husband, Justin, decided to move to Tennessee in 2016 to be able to spend more time with their family. Upon moving back, she became active in local politics and community service. She has served on numerous boards and committees including the Tullahoma Fine Arts Center, Tullahoma Day Care Center, Coffee County Democratic Party, Tullahoma Planning Commission and Coffee County Library Board. In 2019, she was the first woman of color elected to Alderman. She served from 2019- 2022. She later was appointed to the State Executive Committee of the Tennessee Democratic Party, where she served from 2022- 2025. She was also an at-large delegate for President Biden at the 2020 Democratic National Convention as well as an at-large delegate for Vice President Kamala Harris at the 2024 Democratic National Convention. Rupa continues her career as a freelance event producer, but she is most focused on raising the next generation of leaders as she parents 2 strong, willful, and bold children, Avery (12) and Jack (5).



Francie Hunt

Executive Director,

Tennessee Advocates for

Planned Parenthood (TAPP)

Francie Hunt makes good trouble as an activist and organizer for progressive causes. She is the executive director of Tennessee Advocates for Planned Parenthood, which supports community organizing, civic engagement, and electoral programs statewide. She was the previous director of Stand for Children, a child advocacy organization, which helped successfully pass Tennessee's voluntary pre-kindergarten program impacting over 16,000 4-year olds and helped garner Race to the Top funding for Tennessee's public schools. She helped organize Women's Marches in Tennessee in January 2017, 2018, and 2019. After the overturn of Roe v. Wade, Francie walked 538 miles across Tennessee in pilgrimage and protest for bodily autonomy. Francie has served on the Nashville Public library board and Walk Bike Nashville. She is currently training to become a Buddhist meditation facilitator with Wild Heart Meditation Center. She is the mother of two young adults.



Erica Perry, Esq

Executive Director

Southern Committee

Movement

Erica Perry is an organizer and movement lawyer from Nashville, Tennessee, dedicated to fighting for power with Black people and working-class communities in the US South. She has worked with advocates across Tennessee and nationwide, creating alternatives to police and jails, organizing for community-based investments, and building collective power.

A graduate of the University of Tennessee in Political Science and Public Administration, and the University of Memphis School of Law in 2016, Erica is licensed to practice law in Tennessee. In 2019, she co-founded the Black Nashville Assembly and Southern Movement Committee, focusing on participatory democracy, prison abolition, and youth organizing.

Erica co-founded the Black Lives Matter Memphis Chapter in 2015, where she led campaigns against money bail and pretrial detention, co-founded National Bail Out, and was a key figure in the Black Mama's Day Bail Out campaign. As Assistant Partnerships Director at Law for Black Lives, she provided legal and policy support to abolitionist movements and trained lawyers to support base-building organizations. Erica now serves as Executive Director of the Southern Movement Committee and is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

SPEAKER LIST

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Jennifer Watson, PhD

President, National Women's
Political Caucus - Tennessee

Jennifer Watson, PhD, is the CEO, CSO, and Co-Founder of Limuless, LLC, a biotech startup focused on sustainable bacterial contamination tests. From building their first lab in an attic to operating from the Cumberland Emerging Technologies incubator, Jennifer's leadership has propelled Limuless forward, with a patent pending. She also mentors high school students in synthetic biology, leading a project on reducing livestock carbon emissions. In addition to her work in biotech, Jennifer advocates for women's representation through the Tennessee Women's Political Caucus and Elect Black Women PAC, focusing on voter registration, endorsements, and political training. Jennifer's commitment to leadership extends beyond science and into public service, working to ensure equal representation and inclusivity in every field. Jennifer earned her PhD in Neuroscience from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and a B.S. in Biomedical Engineering from the University of Tennessee. A Nashville native with a deep connection to local history, she enjoys gardening, theater, and fantasy novels.



Melissa Sautter

Campaign Division Head,
Tennessee Advocates for
Planned Parenthood

Melissa Sautter is the Campaign Division Head for Tennessee Advocates for Planned Parenthood and the Founder of the East Nashtivists, a grassroots organization focused on voter education and activism in East Nashville. With extensive experience in sales, business development, and data strategy, she is a results-driven leader skilled in scaling teams and optimizing sales through data analysis. Melissa has a strong background in SaaS and startups, specializing in CRM administration, sales operations, and marketing automation tools like Salesforce, Gong.io, HubSpot, and Marketo. Her expertise includes campaign strategy, sales coaching, and data analytics, all aimed at driving growth and performance. Melissa is a high-energy, driven individual, always seeking to challenge herself while making a positive impact through her advocacy, leadership, and professional work.



Chaplain Dahron Johnson

Davidson County Co-Chair,
Tennessee Equality Project

Dahron Anneliese Johnson, a clinically-trained chaplain, is the Davidson County Committee co-chair for the Tennessee Equality Project—a statewide legislative advocacy organization for LGBTQIA+ Tennesseans. She serves on the advisory subcommittee for the federal Secretary's Advisory Committee on Human Research Protections; the board of the community leadership development organization, Neighbor 2 Neighbor; and community advisory councils for the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center; the Program for LGBTQ+ Health at VUMC; and the IRB for the VA's middle-TN health system. Recipient of HRC Nashville's Equality Award, co-recipient of the Marisa Richmond Civic Advocacy Award from MTSU's LGBT-Plus Conference, & a Nashville Pride Festival Grand Marshal. Dahron also works closely with the Southern Christian Coalition and East Nashtivists. In January 2024, when she offered the day's invocation on invitation from her state Representative Aftyn Behn, Chaplain Johnson became the first openly trans person to speak from the floor of the Tennessee House during session.

SPEAKER LIST

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**Ruby
Powell-Dennis**

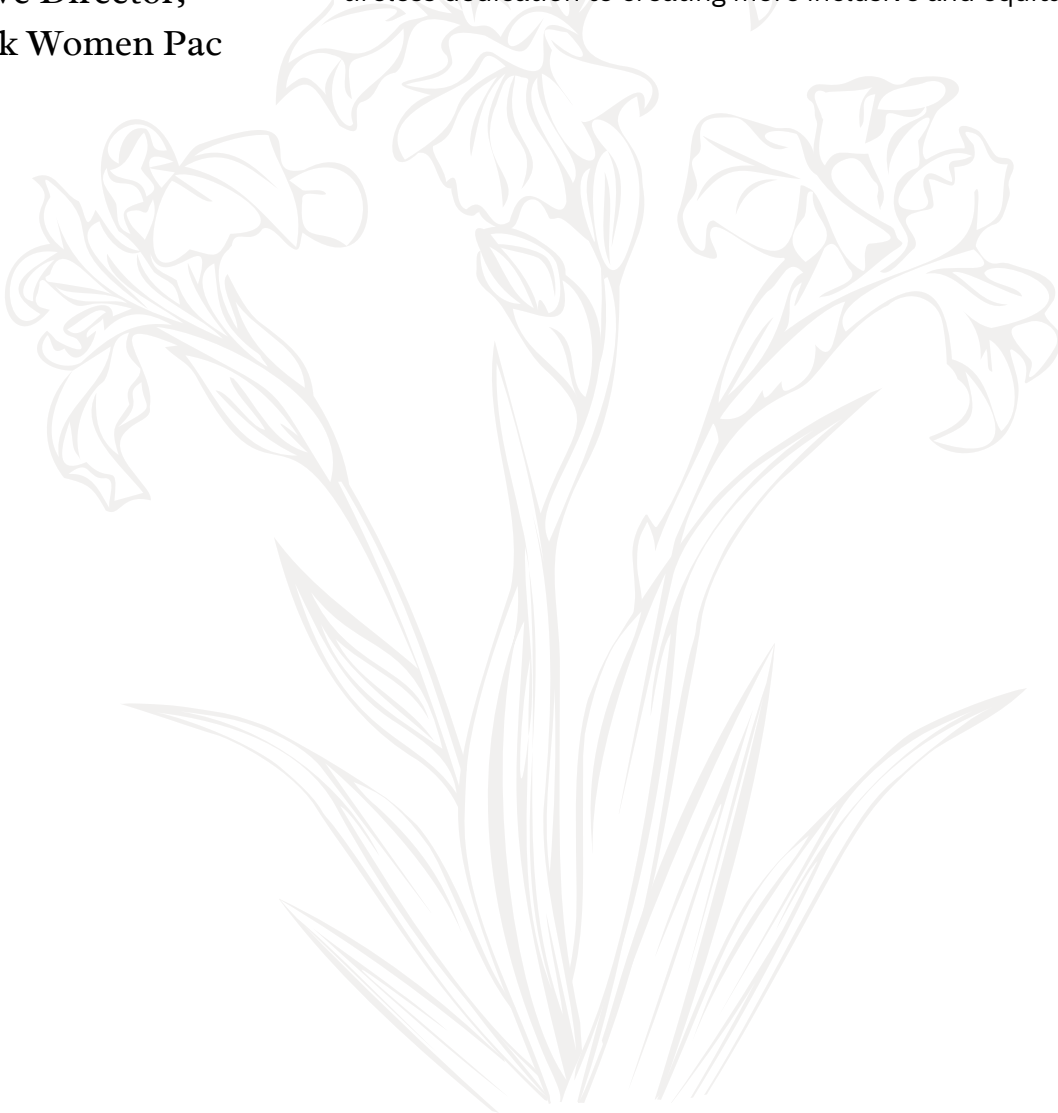
Executive Director,

Elect Black Women Pac

Ruby Powell-Dennis is a dedicated community leader, former elementary school administrator, and founder of Elect Black Women, an organization focused on increasing Black women's representation in government.

A Memphis resident for over a decade, Ruby has served on the Board of Directors for the Junior League of Memphis, Leadership Preparatory Charter School, and the Census 2020 Complete Count subcommittee. Her leadership has earned her recognition as a Memphis Business Journal "40 Under 40" honoree and an Outstanding Young Alumnus of the University of Memphis.

Ruby holds a Bachelor's from the University of Florida, a Master of Arts in Organizational Communication from Southeastern Louisiana University, and an MBA from the University of Memphis. She continues to drive positive change by empowering women in leadership and strengthening communities through her tireless dedication to creating more inclusive and equitable spaces for all.

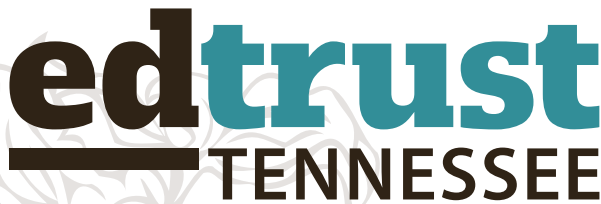


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