



## Guilty plea for Flynn

Michael Flynn, the former national security adviser to President Donald Trump who met with a Russian ambassador during the transition, has pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI. Flynn is cooperating with special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian election meddling and possible ties between the Trump campaign and the Kremlin.

Story, Page 6A

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2017 ■ KNOXNEWS.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

# CHAOS AT UT DEEPENS

## Currie out as AD; Fulmer takes over

**Blake Toppmeyer**  
Knoxville News Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

John Currie's first football coaching search ended with the football job still vacant and with Currie removed from his post as Tennessee's athletic director.



Currie

Chancellor Beverly Davenport announced Friday afternoon that former Vols coach Phillip Fulmer was appointed as the new athletic director. Currie is suspended with pay, pending an investigation or decision relating to termination of his employment agreement for cause, according to a letter from Davenport to Fulmer on Friday.

"When there are high expectations about a great place," Davenport said Friday, "those high expectations come with challenges. And challenges require tough decisions. Today required one of those decisions."

See **CURRIE**, Page 12A

## Congrats, UT: You're the biggest joke in sports



**Joe Rexrode**  
Columnist  
Nashville Tennessean  
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENN.

Congratulations, Tennessee. You've set a new standard this week for college athletics dysfunction.

That's saying something on the day the NCAA hit Ole Miss with another year of bowl ban and show-cause penalties for all coaches named in that investigation. But Ole Miss is a picture of harmony and prosperity compared with Tennessee. Tennessee is the biggest joke in sports.

The hopeless Cleveland Browns, owned by powerful Tennessee booster Jimmy Haslam, can take heart today that at least they aren't the Tennessee Volunteers.

The joke is unfairly on long-suffering Vols fans, even as some of them celebrated the latest bizarre twist: John Currie is out as athletic direc-

See **CHAOS**, Page 11A



USA TODAY NETWORK ILLUSTRATION; GETTY AND USA TODAY IMAGES

# Sources: FBI asks questions about Knox County mayor

## He denies any knowledge about an investigation

**Joel Ebert and Dave Boucher**  
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

Four people tell the USA TODAY NETWORK - Tennessee federal agents have asked them questions about Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett.

It is not clear what the FBI is investigating and whether Burchett, a Republican running for Congress in East Tennessee, is the target of a federal investigation. The people interviewed said FBI agents asked about issues ranging from possible tax evasion to potential bribery and a county contract.

When reached Thursday, Burchett said, "No truth to any of it." On Friday, after this story's publication, the mayor issued a lengthy statement casting doubt on the reporting and stating he does not believe there is an FBI inquiry.

The USA TODAY NETWORK - Tennessee obtained a copy of a document



**FBI agents have asked questions about Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett, four sources tell the USA TODAY NETWORK - Tennessee. Burchett says there's no truth to it.**

BRIANNA PACIORKA / NEWS SENTINEL

drafted by an attorney that states Burchett's ex-wife, Allison, was a confidential informant for the FBI, with the code name "Carbon," since 2012.

Allison Burchett said she began working with the FBI in 2012 but declined further comment.

"I'm sorry I cannot comment on an ongoing FBI investigation," she said.

The three other sources requested anonymity for fear of reprisals.

Federal investigators conducted several interviews this year, including as recently as October, sources said. The

interviews were conducted in various locations, including the FBI's Knoxville headquarters.

One source said an IRS agent also has been involved in the inquiry.

The USA TODAY NETWORK - Tennessee obtained copies of a 2017 email exchange between an FBI agent and the attorney of one of the sources questioned this year. The attorney provided the agent documents and other records, according to the email.

The sources would not elaborate on what other issues the agents asked about for fear of jeopardizing the investigation.

Burchett said Friday he was not aware of any "alleged inquiry" until contacted Thursday by a reporter. He called the story and the motives behind it a "smear campaign" by his political enemies and said his integrity is being questioned.

"I've never been contacted by the FBI concerning any of this stuff. I really

See **FBI**, Page 7A

### Maryville routs Cane Ridge

The Rebels claim the Class 6A football championship with a 42-7 victory. **1B**

### Enjoy the season's sparkle

Check our list of local Christmas light displays that are worth a look. **1C**

### Weather

High 65° ■ Low 43°  
Some sun. Forecast, **2A**

Volume 92 | No. 12  
Home delivery pricing inside  
Subscribe 800-237-5821  
©2017

Daily \$1.50  
7 49377 10030 1

# Currie

Continued from Page 1A

Currie was uprooted on the eight-month anniversary of his first day on the job.

"It has indeed been a difficult week," Davenport said. "It has been a difficult road to get to where we are. This has not been an easy process for any of us, and I want you to know that I regret deeply any hurt that has been caused."

If it is determined Currie was fired without cause, he would be owed \$5.5 million in buyout, according to his contract. If Currie is fired with cause, he is not due a buyout.

Attempts to reach Currie were unsuccessful.

Davenport hired Currie out a candidate pool that included former UT administrator David Blackburn and Fulmer. Currie previously was an administrator at Tennessee before serving eight years as Kansas State's athletic director.

Fulmer was hired in June as a special adviser to UT President Joe DiPietro.

Currie fired coach Butch Jones on Nov. 12. That evening, he vowed to spearhead "an exhaustive search" that would produce a coach who would "propel Tennessee to championships."

The first-year UT athletic director said he didn't plan to use a search firm to aid him in the process.

Currie had never hired a football coach before. He still hasn't.

"Several weeks ago, I asked him to lead the search for our next football search. He was given full authority to find the best coach for Tennessee," Davenport said. "But we are here today to begin a new era and a new opportunity to move the University of Tennessee forward."

Tennessee's coaching search became a national punchline.

The Vols were close to finalizing a deal with Ohio State defensive coordinator Greg Schiano on Sunday. News of the pending hire leaked, and it was met by a wave of backlash from some fans, state politicians, local business owners and donors. The deal unraveled.

The backlash centered, in part, around testimony released in 2016 regarding Jerry Sandusky, the former Penn State defensive coordinator who was convicted in 2012 of 45 counts of sexual abuse of boys.

Schiano was on staff at Penn State



Phillip Fulmer looks over University of Tennessee Chancellor Beverly Davenport during a news conference on Friday, Dec. 1, after being named acting athletic director at the University of Tennessee. CALVIN MATTHEIS / NEWS SENTINEL

from 1990-95. Former Penn State staffer Mike McQueary testified that fellow assistant Tom Bradley told McQueary that Schiano was aware of a child sexual abuse incident by Sandusky.

Schiano and Bradley denied having knowledge or witnessing any of Sandusky's abuse. McQueary's hearsay claim remains unsubstantiated.

Currie said in a statement Monday that Tennessee "carefully interviewed and vetted" Schiano, including his Penn State background, and that Schiano "received the highest recommendations."

Also that day, Davenport released a statement saying she deeply regretted the events of (Sunday) for everyone involved." She added that Currie would continue the search.

Sunday's fiasco with Schiano put the heat on Currie. There were chants of "Fire Currie!" at Tennessee's men's basketball game on Wednesday night.

Meanwhile, Tennessee's coaching search limped along.

After Tennessee backed away from its deal with Schiano, the Vols were

spurned by Oklahoma State's Mike Gundy, Purdue's Jeff Brohm and North Carolina State's Dave Doeren in consecutive days. There was also an ESPN.com report that Duke's David Cutcliffe turned away an overture from UT.

Fulmer became involved in the search this week, at Currie's request, and was part of the interview of one candidate, Doeren, a source with knowledge of the situation told USA TODAY Network - Tennessee. Fulmer was not present for Currie's interview Thursday with Washington State coach Mike Leach, the source said.

Davenport said she asked Currie to return to Knoxville "early Thursday afternoon." Shortly before 1 p.m. Thursday, news broke that Doeren was staying at North Carolina State, turning down the Vols.

"I wanted to talk with John yesterday," Davenport said, "but as I said, I don't want to talk about coaches. I don't want to talk about the process. It's been a long and arduous week. I talked with Phillip Fulmer this morning and asked

him to step in, and he agreed to do that."

As the search sank to new depths, news broke late Thursday night that Currie had met with Leach that day in Los Angeles.

Bruce Feldman of FOX Sports and SI.com, citing a source, reported Thursday that Currie's meeting with Leach on Thursday "went very well." Feldman wrote a book with Leach, "Swing Your Sword," which published in 2011.

Leach has posted 13 winning seasons in 16 years as a head coach. Nabbing a coach of his caliber would have been viewed by some as a Hail Mary save of the search.

Sports Illustrated's Andy Staples reported Friday that Currie and Leach agreed to terms Thursday that would have made Leach the Vols' next coach, but no paperwork was signed.

Currie returned to Knoxville and was removed from his post Friday.

Another deal stalled, and now Tennessee enters the weekend still without a football coach and with a former coach in the AD chair.

## CONVERT YOUR BATHTUB TO A SAFE WALK-IN SHOWER OR WALK-IN BATHTUB



American Home Design is combining their 40 years of remodeling experience with Jacuzzi's 102 years of great quality products to bring you comfort, safety and confidence that you deserve.

**SAVE UP TO \$750**  
**NO PAYMENTS - NO INTEREST**  
**FOR 12 MONTHS\*** \*with approved credit

### BATH & SHOWER REMODEL

- Update your outdated bathroom
- Convert bathtub to walk-in shower
- Replace fiberglass showers
- Variety of styles, features and prices

**SAVE \$500 OFF**  
 ON BATH AND SHOWER REMODEL

**Can be done in 1 or 2 days. OTHERS TAKE WEEKS!**

Cannot be combined with any other offer. Offer not good on previous purchases.

### WALK-IN TUB

- Offers more independence for those with disabilities or limited mobility
- Lifetime warranty from Jacuzzi-
- 1 - 2 day installation

**SAVE \$750 OFF**  
 WALK-IN TUBS

**MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TODAY!**

Cannot be combined with any other offer. Offer not good on previous purchases.

[www.americanhomedesign.com/bathroom-remodel-knoxville](http://www.americanhomedesign.com/bathroom-remodel-knoxville)

Call **865-321-8456** **HURRY OFFER ENDS SOON!**