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Pricey new Tennessee logo source of ridicule, angst on social media

By [Chris Butler](#) / May 25, 2015 / News / [11 Comments](#)



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By Chris Butler | Tennessee Watchdog

NASHVILLE — Some taxpayers in Tennessee saw the new official state logo and said they cackled with laughter.

Others took to social media to vent their anger after learning state officials paid \$46,000 for a Nashville-based firm to create a new state logo they say a 5-year-old could design.

Someone made a [parody website \(https://twitter.com/TnLogo\)](https://twitter.com/TnLogo), while other people (<https://www.change.org/p/bill-haslam-change-the-tennessee-logo-to-our-tri-star>) created [online petitions begging Republican Gov. Bill Haslam not to go through with the change \(https://www.change.org/p/tennessee-state-officials-answer-to-who-sanctioned-the-new-state-logo-why-they-did-it-without-notice-to-the-taxpayers-who-designed-it-why-the-cost-is-so-high-and-to-change-it-back-to-the-original-logo?recruiter=8578342&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=share_facebook_responsive&utm_term=mob-xs-no_src-custom_msg\)](https://www.change.org/p/tennessee-state-officials-answer-to-who-sanctioned-the-new-state-logo-why-they-did-it-without-notice-to-the-taxpayers-who-designed-it-why-the-cost-is-so-high-and-to-change-it-back-to-the-original-logo?recruiter=8578342&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=share_facebook_responsive&utm_term=mob-xs-no_src-custom_msg). Another person created a [protest Facebook page \(https://www.facebook.com/pages/Stop-Tennessees-New-Logo-Lunacy/988738374492519?pnref=story\)](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Stop-Tennessees-New-Logo-Lunacy/988738374492519?pnref=story) that so far has more than 5,000 followers. And then there's a [YouTube parody video \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Au7hnWA9AOM\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Au7hnWA9AOM) making fun of the logo.

Of the thousands of people who took to social media this week, perhaps no one was as direct as Nashville resident Ekim

Fitzgerald.

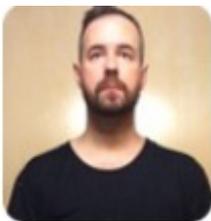
 **Ekim Fitzgerald**
 I can appreciate wanting a simple icon in the modern age of smart phones and what not... I can also appreciate 10 versions and pairing it down and a 2 day debate discussing pros and cons... So maybe \$2,000... ok... Throw in catered lunch and movie passes with popcorn for the whole company with limo service and full unlimited bar \$5,000.. Ad another \$1500 for a rockin 4 piece band for the company party celebrating your winfall. Maybe some massages all around ad another \$2000 - OK Im up to \$10,500 Wait... Did you get hookers and drugs? Ok... ad another \$10,000... Now were up to \$20,500.
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([http://watchdog.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-](http://watchdog.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2015/05/Hookers.png)

[content/blogs.dir/1/files/2015/05/Hookers.png](http://watchdog.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2015/05/Hookers.png))

On the other side are people in the graphic design industry who argue that residents should appreciate the fine amount of detail and nuance that went into the new logo.

Drew Pickard, of Seattle, Washington, said the state got a great deal.



Drew Pickard @DrewPickard 3m
 @TennWatchdog While all residents have a say in how their local government spends their tax money, a 46K logo is a drop in the bucket.



(<http://watchdog.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2015/05/Drew-Pickard.jpg>)

Tennessee Watchdog broke the news this week (<http://watchdog.org/219733/tennessee-2/>) about the new logo, which went viral statewide, and was later picked up by national outlets such as Ad Week (<http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/tennessee-wanted-consistency-elicited-mockery-its-new-logo-164941>) , FOX News Special Report (<http://www.foxnews.com/transcript/2015/05/22/grapevine-tennessee-pays-46000-for-new-state-logo/>) and FOX Sports (<http://www.foxsports.com/college-football/outkick-the-coverage/tennessee-paid-46k-for-this-new-state-logo-052115>) .

But when Beacon Center of Tennessee President Justin Owen first learned of the logo he assumed he was reading another publication, he said.

“I think I’ve seen something like this on the Onion,” said Owen, one of many people who made an exact replica of the logo with his computer.

Owen used the initials of his think tank in lieu of the state’s abbreviation and slapped it on his think tank’s official Facebook page.

“I actually created it, out of curiosity, to see if I could do it,” Owen said. “I’m pretty computer illiterate, for the most part. It took me longer to find the Paintbrush software on my computer than to actually create the logo. Once I got the app open it took me about a minute and 40 seconds to create it.”

No private company, Owen said, would spend \$46,000 on any logo, regardless of appearance.

“This is a prime example of government spending someone else’s money, and there not being any accountability there,” Owen said.

“I will say that there is certainly a case to be made for simplicity. Think about Nike and certain other brands. Simplicity is key. But there is a difference between simplicity and stupidity. If you immediately cause an uproar then you’ve done a poor job as an ad agency. You can’t just tell people ‘Well, you’re just too stupid to understand it.’”

Officials with the firm that created the logo, GS&F, directed all questions to Haslam’s office.

RELATED: Taxpayers pay \$30,000 so out-of-state artist can glue shovels, rakes, pickaxes (<http://watchdog.org/145676/nashville-tool-fire/>)

Haslam’s office has not responded to Tennessee Watchdog’s repeated attempts for comment this week.

On its official Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/gsandf?fref=ts>), GS&F said it stands by the final product.

Chris Jones, association director for the Emerging Designers of Houston, said in an email Friday that the \$46,000 probably didn’t pay for the logo alone.

“I know many designers who are paid considerably more than that to research an industry, provide multiple solutions to a problem, and ultimately navigate the minefield of egos and committees as required to gain consensus and approval on a design solution,” Jones said.

“It is also worth noting that when designing for government it is often a requirement to dumb it down and keep it simple so as not to step on anyone’s toes. Often, only the logos with the least amount of character make it throughout the approval process.”

Can your child, 12 and under, design or draw a better state logo?



([http://watchdog.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-](http://watchdog.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2015/05/Darrell.png)

[content/blogs.dir/1/files/2015/05/Darrell.png](http://watchdog.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2015/05/Darrell.png))

Photo courtesy of Twitter.

THIS IS MY BROTHER DARRELL: One of the many parodies people have created in response to the new state logo.

If so, please have him or her submit an entry before 4 p.m. Central, Wednesday, May 27. The best entry will receive a \$50 Amazon gift card. Participants must be 12 or younger and reside in Tennessee.

Email your entries to [Tennessee Watchdog](https://www.facebook.com/Tennessee-Watchdog) (<https://www.facebook.com/Tennessee-Watchdog>) reporter Chris Butler at chris@tennesseewatchdog.org

Contact Christopher Butler at chris@tennesseewatchdog.org (<mailto:chris@tennesseewatchdog.org>)

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(<http://watchdog.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2015/05/TN-Logo1.png>)

Photo courtesy of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's website.

TN: According to the federal government, this is the new logo that Tennessee officials want to trademark as the state's official new logo.



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[Chris Butler](#)

Chris formerly served as staff reporter for Watchdog.org.

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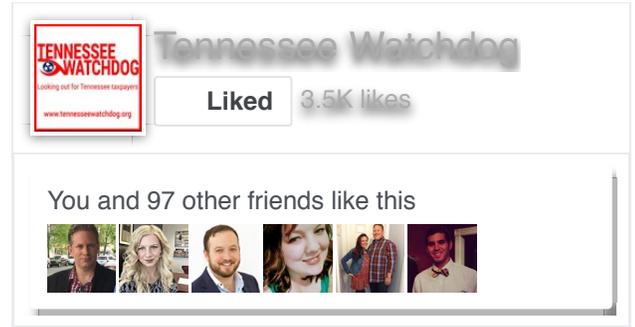
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The image shows a Facebook post for 'Tennessee Watchdog'. On the left is a red and white logo with the text 'TENNESSEE WATCHDOG' and 'Looking out for Tennessee taxpayers' and the website 'www.tennesseewatchdog.org'. To the right of the logo, the text 'Tennessee Watchdog' is displayed in a large, grey font. Below this, a white button says 'Liked' and next to it, '3.5K likes' is shown in a grey font. Underneath the like button, the text 'You and 97 other friends like this' is displayed. Below this text is a horizontal row of six small profile pictures of people who liked the post.