



**SENATOR RICHARD M. BRIGGS, MD**

Dr. Richard Briggs was appointed to the Knox County Commission in February 2008 and won the general election for the District 5 seat in August 2008. After serving nearly seven years on the Knox County Commission, he was elected to the Tennessee State Senate in 2014, serving Knox County's 7<sup>th</sup> District. Senator Briggs is completing his second 4-year term and serves as the Chairman of the Senate State and Local Government Committee and holds membership on the Rules and Transportation & Safety Committees.

Senator Briggs attend high school in Chamonix, France before receiving his B. S. degree from Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. He graduated from the University of Kentucky, College of Medicine in 1978 with Highest Honors and immediately entered active military service with the U. S. Army. He served in combat in the 807<sup>th</sup> MASH with the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division in Operation Desert Storm where he was awarded the Bronze Star. With over 30 years of active and reserve military service, Colonel Briggs also served in Korea, Central and South America, and in Egypt during the Somalia crisis. Following the attacks on September 11, 2001, Colonel Briggs volunteered to return to active duty for service in Afghanistan. In 2005-2006, he was called back to active duty and was deployed to the Green Zone in Baghdad as the Senior Trauma Surgeon at the main U. S. Army Combat Support Hospital in Iraq, commonly known as "Baghdad ER." Colonel Briggs has commanded U. S. Army Reserve units in Nashville, Chattanooga and Johnson City.

Dr. Briggs retired from cardiothoracic surgery (heart and lung surgery) where he practiced at Tennova Regional Medical Center in north Knoxville and has held academic appointments at the University of Texas-San Antonio, the University of Louisville and the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. He is past President of the Knoxville Academy of Medicine and sits on the Board of Trustees of the Tennessee Medical Association. The COVID pandemic over the past two years has allowed Senator Briggs the opportunity to utilize his medical expertise and experience to accomplish the following:

- In the fall of 2020 Senator Briggs was asked to serve on the Knox County COVID Advisory Group. This influential and effective group consisted of 10 other local leaders whose goal was to serve as a **"bridge of trust"** between a community of more than 460,000 Knox County citizens struggling to comprehend the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and local officials charged with making difficult decisions to mitigate the spread of the virus. The primary function of this group was to communicate honest, accurate information that residents and businesses could trust, thus eliminating the fear, anger and misinformation that characterized the early weeks of the pandemic. Other members of this influential COVID Advisory Group included: both Knoxville Mayors; University of Tennessee President and Knoxville Chancellor; University of Tennessee Medical Center Chief Medical Officer; Knox County Schools Chief of Staff; and CEO's of the Knoxville Area Urban League and Knoxville Chamber;
- Dr. Briggs was a strong advocate for Tennesseans obtaining the COVID vaccination and booster shots, especially Senior Citizens and persons suffering with respiratory issues and diabetes. Also, Dr. Briggs is a proponent of providing relevant pandemic information to elderly citizens residing in inner-city neighborhoods who may be apprehensive about receiving the COVID vaccination; and
- Over the past two years Dr. Briggs frequently communicated with the Medical Directors of hospitals in Knox County regarding infection rates; best of care policies; and public communication. Dr. Briggs firmly demonstrated a bias for relying on science and proven research for combatting the COVID virus as opposed to political arguments, civil liberties and theoretical arguments;

Since 2010, Dr. Briggs has pressed the Senate to expand Medicare coverage in Tennessee to allow more low income persons and persons of color to receive affordable health care coverage. Another public health accomplishment for Dr. Briggs was spearheading legislation to mitigate the opioid epidemic. Dr. Briggs understood the medical and human consequences of the opiate crisis, particularly when over 90% of the crime relates back to opiate addiction. He drafted legislation that closed over two-thirds of the "pill mills" in Tennessee by requiring strict pain medicine specialty certification for medical directors. Senator Briggs is an accomplished medical professional, skilled legislator and a genuine servant leader who is dedicated to improving health and health outcomes in Knox County. The Beta Theta Boulè Foundation is honored to present the **2022 Fatherhood Excellence Award** to Senator Richard Briggs.