

# advocate for SCHOOLS



TO SEE A LIST OF BILLS TRACKED BY AASB DURING THE 2020 REGULAR SESSION, CLICK BELOW.



## 21st Century Workforce

K-12 public education has never been more aligned and engaged with state efforts to prepare students for the workforce. Here are some resources about the state's efforts.

Federal funds for Alabama [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#)

The Lt. Governor's Commission released its report [Accelerating the Transformation to Excellence](#)

Alabama Workforce Council's [2020 Annual Report](#)

The Business Education Alliance published ["Education Matters: Measuring Alabama's Progress toward 500,000 Highly Skilled Workers."](#)

## Advocacy Days

Spend a day in Montgomery with AASB staff to experience the legislative process, interact with lawmakers and earn two training hours. Register today!  
**Feb. 25** - Districts 7,8,9  
**March 10** - Districts 1,2,3  
**April 7** - Districts 4,5,6

## 2020 Regular Legislative Session

26  
days remain

## Critical Infrastructure: Investing in the Education Workforce

Recognizing that K-12 public schools provides the foundation for the state's economic development, viability for businesses and quality of life, the House Ways and Means Education Committee Wednesday unanimously approved the Education Workforce Investment Act.

**[H.76 \(Baker\)](#) would revise the education employee retirement benefit to increase the state's competitiveness in recruiting and retaining education employees.** The proposal would modify the aggressive 2012 cut in benefits while continuing to reduce the retirement system's unfunded liability. That projected cost to fund future retiree benefits ballooned after the 2008 recession and federal accounting rule change. The resulting savings are nine years ahead of projections but have created unintended negative consequences on the education workforce. [Learn more about this worthy investment.](#)

**Public K-12 school systems, one of the state's largest employers, are struggling to attract and retain the qualified educators, administrators and support personnel that keep schools open and operating.** H.76 proposes new employees would contribute more to earn an increased retirement benefit. Unused sick leave would accrue to retirement service instead of being forfeited upon retirement. And employees would be able to retire at age 62 or after 30 years of service. The Act would be one strategy to address what has become a national shortage of educators. The Education Workforce Investment Act will next be considered on the

House floor. School leaders urge lawmakers to vote **YES** to H.76 (Baker).

### Governor's Education Budget

**While no action on the education budget is scheduled, additional resources are available that outline the governor's proposal for public education.** The ETF budget proposal increases from \$7.2 billion to \$7.5 billion for FY21 and includes a \$158 million increase for the state Foundation Program.

The [FY20 to FY 21 ETF Budget Spreadsheet](#) provides an item-by-item listing of the Education Trust Fund (ETF) budget appropriations outlined in the governor's proposal. It includes the current FY20 fiscal year appropriations, budget requests submitted for each line item and the governor's FY21 actual recommendations. The year to year dollar amount and percentage increase or decrease is also provided.

The state Department of Education has run [K-12 Foundation Program & State Totals](#) for key funding items in the proposed ETF budget. These items include the grade divisors or multiplier to determine the number of teachers/administrators earned for each grade; instructional support; transportation and more.

### Little Activity for Education So Far

In only the second week of the 2020 legislative session, there are few education bills in position to be debated on either the House or Senate floor. The following bills of inter-

est to education were approved this week by the House or Senate.

**State Approval for Local Occupational Tax**

By a 73-27 vote, the House Tuesday approved **H.147 (Sells)** to require permission from the state legislature for a municipality to pass an occupational tax. Extended debate on the House floor included suggestions that the law is a reaction to the proposed Montgomery occupational tax effort. If a municipality already had a law in place by Feb. 1, 2020, the proposed law would not apply. **The bill goes to Senate committee.**

**Competitive Bid law**

By a 100-3 vote, the House approved **H.38 (Collins)** to help local school boards participate in cost-saving programs. The bill would add leases to the law that exempts purchases from the competitive bid law if participating in a national or regional governmental cooperative purchasing program. **H.38 goes to Senate committee.**

**Slow Down in School Zones**

By a 33-0 vote, the Senate approved **S.71 (Ward)** to strengthen the law requiring reduced speed school zones. The bill clarifies that speed zones apply to schools located in a county or municipality and adds private schools. It also specifies municipalities must maintain the signage on municipal roads. **The bill goes to House committee.**

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

**H.153 (Hollis) - School dress codes** - Would prohibit a local board or employer from establishing a dress code or grooming policy prohibiting the wearing of a protected hairstyle. **Approved by House committee.**  
**S.143 (Chesteen) - Virtual education for military** - would provide that military dependents, upon relocation to

the state, shall be considered residents for the purposes of virtual school option eligibility in K-12 public schools. **Approved by Senate committee.**

**H.35 (Pringle) - Gender Is Real Legislative Act (GIRL)** - Among other limitations, it would prohibit public K-12 schools from hosting/sponsoring or otherwise allowing students to participate as athletes in competitions against different biological birth genders, unless a co-ed team. A public hearing was held and the bill failed for lack of a motion for passage. **The bill is again on the committee agenda Feb. 19.**

**EDUCATION-RELATED BILLS INTRODUCED**

**H.205 (Robertson) - Firearms on school property** - would make it unlawful to discharge a firearm on school property during/after school hours. Discharging a firearm in a school building or school bus is already a felony.  
**H.214 (Rich) - Teacher Bill of Rights** - would create a Teacher Bill of Rights that local school boards must post and distribute at the beginning of each school year. AASB is reviewing this bill to provide additional details.  
**H.235 (Gray) - Yoga in schools** - would allow K-12 public schools to offer yoga instruction as an elective activity  
**H.237 (Hollis) - Feminine hygiene products** - would require local school boards to provide feminine hygiene products in women’s restrooms, for schools with grades five -12, at no cost to students.  
**S.168 (Whatley)/H.71 (Hall) - Sex education** - would revise content, materials and instruction regarding sex education or the human reproductive process.  
**S.189 (Smitherman) - Student discipline** - would require school boards to provide independent hearing officers to conduct disciplinary hearings for suspensions or expulsions; prohibit students in pre-K through grade five from being suspended/expelled unless a safety issue and prohibit students from being expelled or suspended solely for truancy or tardiness violations.

**Does your Representative or Senator serve on a key education committee?**

| House Ways & Means Education | House Education Policy    | Senate Finance & Taxation Ed | Senate Education Policy     |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bill Poole, Chair            | Terri Collins, Chair      | Arthur Orr, Chair            | Tim Melson, Chair           |
| Danny Garrett, Vice Chair    | Danny Garrett, Vice Chair | Tim Melson, Vice Chair       | Donnie Chesteen, Vice Chair |
| Rod Scott*                   | Rod Scott*                | Rodger Smitherman*           | Chair                       |
| Alan Baker                   | Anthony Daniels           | Greg Albritton               | Vivian Davis Figures*       |
| Prince Chestnut              | Will Dismukes             | Gerald Allen                 | David Burkette              |
| Terri Collins                | Barbara Drummond          | Donnie Chesteen              | Tom Butler                  |
| Barbara Drummond             | Brett Easterbrook         | Vivian Davis Figures         | Chris Elliott               |
| Corley Ellis                 | Corley Ellis              | Garlan Gudger                | Jim McClendon               |
| David Faulkner               | Tracy Estes               | Jim McClendon                | Randy Price                 |
| Dexter Grimsley              | Bob Fincher               | Malika Sanders-Fortier       | Shay Shelnett               |
| Jamie Kiel                   | Charlotte Meadows         | Clay Scofield                | Rodger Smitherman           |
| Nathaniel Ledbetter          | Tashina Morris            | David Sessions               |                             |
| Joe Lovvorn                  | Kerry Rich                | Bobby Singleton              |                             |
| Steve McMillan               | Proncey Robertson         | Jabo Waggoner                |                             |
| Debbie Wood                  | Shane Stringer            | Tom Whatley                  |                             |