

advocate for SCHOOLS



TO SEE A LIST OF BILLS TRACKED BY AASB
DURING THE 2020 REGULAR SESSION,
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Education Budget Update

The Education Trust Fund budget will begin its legislative journey in the House. Chairman Bill Poole said he expects to move the budget in mid- to -late March.

Please use the next few weeks to discuss local school budget priorities with lawmakers. Your insights help legislators make informed decisions about funding needs for local students, educators, parents and school communities.

Your [School System Snapshot](#) can help tell your story.

School Calendar

No school calendar bill has been filed. Already, many school systems have adopted their local 2020-2021 school year calendars. Legislation is expected that would require schools to begin no sooner than Labor Day and end no later than Memorial Day. [See the latest update.](#)

2020 Regular Legislative Session

24
days remain

House Unanimous: Revise Education Retirement Benefit

By a 105-0 vote, the House Tuesday approved the Education Workforce Investment Act, demonstrating 100 percent support. The House approved the Tier 3 proposal last year, but the bill died after a Senate amendment on the final day of the 2019 Legislative Session.

Rep. Alan Baker, sponsor of [H.76](#), said the bill would help retain teachers who may find managing today's classrooms far more stressful and challenging. He said the 2012 cut to benefits was a slight over-correction. The proposed revision, while not as costly as the Tier 1 benefit, restores competitiveness. The cost to the Education Trust Fund would be \$15 million next year. Participating employees will be contributing more as will employers. The cost is less than half of a one percent education pay raise. The new benefits would apply to new hires and would become an option for current Tier 2 employees (hired since 2013). See [Alabama Daily News coverage](#).

In addition to an increased benefit, the plan would allow unused sick leave to accrue and apply to retirement service. It also would allow employees to draw retirement after 30 years of service instead of having to reach 62 years of age. The bill faces challenges in the Senate. Last year, the Senate amended the bill to limit application to classroom teachers. All educators and personnel are members of the retirement systems. School leaders should share their school staffing challenges with their senators and urge support for [H.76 \(Baker\)](#), the Education Workforce Improvement Act.

Education Options for Military

The Senate Tuesday approved four bills specifically to address military families who receive orders assigning them to military bases in Alabama. The bills provide an alternative teaching certificate for qualified military personnel, allow dependents of families with transfer orders to relocate in Alabama to apply to magnet and virtual schools, and authorize the formation of charter schools near or on military bases.

Magnet school applications for military families - [S.105 \(Barfoot\)](#) would require K-12 magnet schools to accept applications for dependents when a military family receives transfer orders to relocate, provided the family will reside in the state before the first day of school. The student would not be guaranteed acceptance and would be subject to the same enrollment process as other students.

Virtual education enrollment for military - [S.143 \(Chesteen\)](#) would provide that military families, upon receiving orders to relocate to Alabama, shall be considered residents of the state and eligible to enroll in a virtual school. Meanwhile, its companion, [H.100 \(Shedd\)](#) is pending House passage.

Charter schools for military bases - [S.106 \(Barfoot\)](#) would amend the Alabama School Choice & Opportunity Act to allow a charter school on or near military installations to serve military family dependents. A Senate floor amendment provides that once enrollment reaches 400 students, the school shall limit enrollment to children of military families or DOD civilian employees permanently assigned to the military base.

Alternative teaching certificates for military - [S.88 \(Jones\)](#) would authorize the

State Board of Education to establish an alternative teaching certificate for qualified members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

School Dress Code

The House Thursday carried over [H.153 \(Hollis\)](#) regarding school dress codes. The bill would prohibit a local board /employer from establishing a dress code or grooming policy prohibiting a protected hairstyle.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Restriction for Future City School Boards

The House Education Policy Committee Wednesday carried over [H.182 \(Harbison\)](#) after committee members voiced concern about cities' ability to start their own school system. The bill would require all costs for a school system's central administrative office be paid from municipal funds if that school system is established on or after July 1, 2020. While the superintendent salary and most central office costs are paid by local funds, the prohibition of state funding support sparked lively discussion. Committee members questioned the purpose of prohibiting citizens from voting to raise resources to create and fund their own system. While concerned about the viability of smaller systems and duplication of services, the committee showed no appetite to prohibit municipalities from exercising that option in the future.

State vs Municipality Occupational Tax Authority

Currently, municipalities have the authority to impose an occupational tax or license tax that applies to any taxpayers commuting and working within that municipality. [H.147 \(Sells\)](#) would prohibit a municipality from imposing such a tax unless authorized by the Alabama Legislature. The legislation would apply only to municipalities that had not approved the tax by Feb. 1, 2020. Debate has focused on a one-percent Montgomery occupational tax. The House approved the bill Tuesday. That evening, the Montgomery City Council adopted the occupational tax to take effect in 2021. [H.147 \(Sells\)](#) is pending Senate consideration for final passage.

Gender is Real Act (GIRL)

The House State Government Committee Wednesday approved [H.35 \(Pringle\)](#) following public hearings with passionate testimony from opponents and proponents. Among limitations, the bill would prohibit public

K-12 schools from hosting, sponsoring or otherwise allowing students to participate as athletes in competitions against different biological genders. The prohibition would not apply to co-ed teams. The bill goes to the full House for consideration.

[H.183 \(Shaver\)](#) - **Soliciting Obscene Materials** - would create a Class A misdemeanor for a teacher that solicits obscene materials from a student.

EDUCATION-RELATED BILLS INTRODUCED

[H.270 \(Sells\)](#) - **Signature Graduation Requirement** - would add the requirement that each public school senior must be able to legibly print and sign his or her own name in cursive writing to graduate from high school.

[H.271 \(Sells\)](#) - **Early Investment Retirement Plan (EIRP)** - would create an Early Investment Retirement Plan to allow TRS and ERS members to continue working and defer their retirement benefit three to five years.

[H.293 \(Collins/Baker\)](#) - **Alabama STEM Council** - would create the Alabama STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) Council as a separate state entity to advise, and provide guidance and recommendations on ways to improve STEM-related education, career awareness and workforce development.

[H.294 \(Kiel\)](#) - **ELL exemption** - would exempt the academic performance of ELL (English Language Learner) students on the English proficiency assessment from the academic achievement grade to a school or school system. ELL student scores would remain a factor for academic growth/proficiency measures.

[H.299 \(Robertson\)](#) - **Student evacuation** - would require schools to delay evacuation of students in the event of an unplanned fire alarm activation in order to investigate the possible presence of an active shooter on school property.

[S.203 \(Stutts\)](#) - **Alabama Teacher Initiative** - would provide scholarships for teacher preparation program students who are enrolled in and attending any college in Alabama provided they agree to teach for five years in rural areas of the state with the greatest need for STEM and special education teachers in grades 7 to 12.

[S.223 \(Smitherman\)](#) - **Mental health coordinator** - would establish and provide for qualifications and duties of a mental health service coordinator to be employed by local boards of education, subject to appropriation by the legislature.

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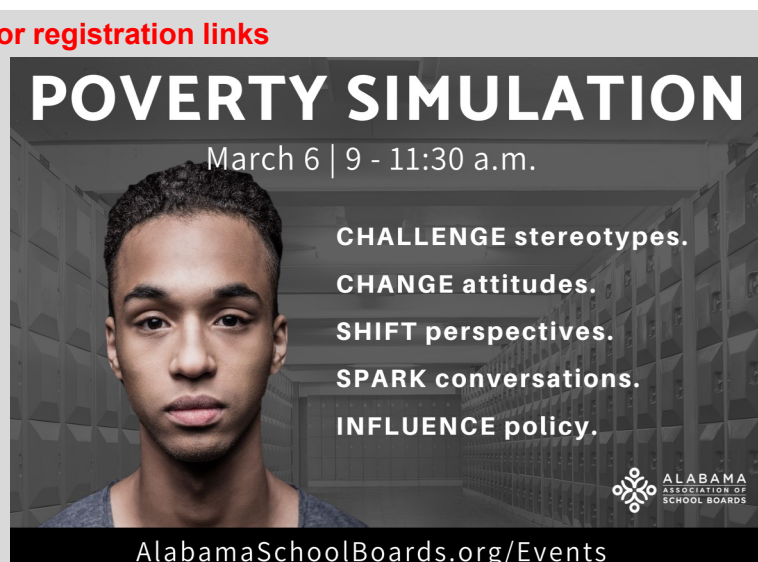
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ALABAMA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

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