

advocate for SCHOOLS



TO SEE A LIST OF BILLS BEING TRACKED BY AASB DURING THE 2019 REGULAR SESSION, CLICK BELOW.



Tick Tock

More and more bills compete for final passage in the House and Senate. Your asking for action determines whether appointed superintendents, tier 3 retirement, and other K-12 bills cross the finish line. Lawmakers expect to finish the session by the end of this week.

Will you make the calls?

State Lottery

The House failed to take action on a proposed lottery constitutional amendment. Sponsors say the effort is dead for the session.

Advocacy Days Your Voices Matter!

A huge thanks to the more than 100 members in all who registered to attend one or more of our four Advocacy Days this session. If you participated, we would appreciate your feedback by taking this [brief survey](#).

2019 Regular Legislative Session

6

possible days remaining

Just One Week Likely to Pass Remaining Legislation

It's crunch time and bills to appoint school superintendents, revise teacher retirement benefits and put a constitutional amendment for K-12 state governance await final passage. In addition, both the Education and General Fund budgets are pending so that's a heavy lift for lawmakers if the goal is to finish the session by June.

Education Budget Details

The House expects to vote Tuesday on its version of the education budget, [S.199 \(Orr\)](#). The House Ways & Means Education Committee adopted a substitute and once approved by the House, a joint conference committee will work out differences in the \$7.1 billion education budget. There were no substantial changes in the K-12 allocations from the Senate passed versions.

Committee Chairman Bill Poole said he was pleased to present a very positive budget for K-12. The budget represents a \$492M increase in direct appropriations with \$322M directly to K-12. However, higher education allocations remain a hot topic for universities because of a new funding formula. Negotiations to reconcile the House and Senate versions will be intense.

Travelling with the budget are two other funding bills. [S.192 \(Orr\)](#) is the 4 percent pay raise for education employees. [S.196 \(Orr\)](#) is the \$128.7M Advancement & Technology Fund supplemental appropriation to be used for K-12 in the current fiscal year.

It's Time: Appointed Superintendents

[S.222 \(Butler\)/\(McMillan\)](#) would transition the 37 remaining elected superintendent positions to appointed offices. It would bring Alabama in line with the widely recognized best local school governance model and leave only Florida with the outdated practice. The proposal would allow currently elected superintendents to either accept a contract offered by their school board or to finish their current term and then run for another four-year term. [Talking points /transition plan](#).

Upon enactment, superintendents would no longer be forced to fundraise and campaign for the job as chief school executive. Local school boards would be able to recruit candidates within the system, from other systems or even out of state to execute the community's vision for its K-12 schools. Alabama has talented school chiefs and moving them to the appointed model allows them to focus time and energy where it matters most. It removes the intrinsic conflict with political elections. **Ask House members to VOTE YES to [S.222 \(Butler\)](#) for final passage.**

Tier 3 Committee Vote Scheduled

The Senate Finance & Taxation Education Committee Tuesday will vote on [H.77 \(Baker\)](#), a bill to help recruit and retain teachers. Many lawmakers now agree that the 20 percent cut to benefits in 2012 to address the teacher retirement system's unfunded liability was as an overcorrection. Local school leaders [requested changes](#) to help them be competitive in recruiting teachers to stay in Alabama.



H.77 (Baker) would also tackle teacher absenteeism and the high cost of substitutes. New teachers would pay the greatest share for higher benefits, have an option to retire after 30 years (or age 62) and recover the ability to apply accrued sick leave toward retirement service credit. With so few days remaining, an amendment at this point can kill bills. Ask Senators in committee and again on the Senate floor to vote YES to the bill with no amendments.

Mandatory Kindergarten at Age 5

H.423 (Warren) would require children who turn age 5 by Sept. 1 to enroll in kindergarten beginning in the 2020 school year. The House approved the bill by a 91-11 vote after sponsor Rep. Pebblin Warren passionately advocated for children to begin their education early enough to get and stay on course for success. The bill now goes to Senate committee.

Emergency Teacher Certificates a Go

The House is expected to concur with the Senate substitute for the bill extending the duration of an emergency teaching certificate and send it to the governor for signature Tuesday. **H.506 (Estes)** would provide a two-year emergency certificate that could be renewed once for a maximum of four years. Currently, the emergency certificate only is available for one year and may not be renewed. Kudos to Rep. Tracy Estes for his tenacity to pass this K-12 priority bill as his first legislative success! Thanks to **Senate Rules Chairman Sen. Jabo Waggoner** for making the bill a high priority for final passage and **Sen. Clyde Chambliss** for handling it on the floor.

K-12 State Governance

Expect the House to vote on the proposed constitutional amendment, **S.397 (Marsh)**, to allow voters to create a governor-appointed commission of Elementary and Secondary Education. If approved by voters in the March 2020 primary election, the governor would appoint nine commissioners to serve staggered six-year terms for a maximum of two terms. The Commission would appoint a Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education. All positions would be subject to confirmation by the Senate. **The proposal calls for education standards that accomplish the goals but are “in lieu of” the original common core standards.** The state is already updating its Alabama College & Career Readiness Standards for Math & English Language Arts which meets the proposal’s “ask.” **S.398 (Marsh)** would require the governor to consult with minority caucuses when appointing minority commission members. The bills are pending final passage in the House.

Alabama Literacy Act

H.388 (Collins) is a foundational proposal to require an intensive state investment in grade level reading proficiency by 3rd grade. Immediately upon enactment, the process would begin to invest in professional development, additional reading specialists and require colleges of education to increase rigor/requirements in the science of reading. Schools would identify students in

grades K-3 who struggle with reading challenges such as dyslexia and provide targeted interventions, extra time with reading specialists and opportunities for summer learning. Schools would notify parents to be partners in the effort to master reading by 3rd grade.

By the 2022-23 school year, 3rd grade students who have gone through the Alabama Reading Initiative “on steroids” must meet minimum reading sufficiency to be promoted to 4th grade. The sponsor acknowledged concern about students being retained but said the decision would not be based on a single assessment and exceptions are included. The proposal would use ARI funding and earmarked funds in the pending ETF budget to begin implementation. The bill is pending final passage in the Senate.

Sent to Governor

H.21 (Baker) - PLOP - would provide a 5th retirement option for education retirees who could choose a two-year payment up front followed by a proportionately reduced benefit thereafter.

H.291 (Garrett) - Religious Release Time - would enable school board policies to allow students to receive religious instruction off campus. School boards are not required to adopt the policy nor award credit.

H.339 (Ledbetter) - Pledge of Allegiance - would require the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of each K-12 public school day.

H.400 (Shedd) - Rural Broadband Access - would authorize electric providers to use existing infrastructure to expand high speed internet connectivity and access.

Pending Final Passage

H.159 (Lee) - Stadium Bathrooms - would reduce stringent code requirements and prohibitive costs for number of bathrooms in K-12 athletic facilities. In Senate.

H.209 (Pettus)/S.255 (Melson) – School Security - would allow retired law enforcement to serve as school security; may be armed if APOST certified.

H.216 (Faulkner) - Computer Science - would phase-in K-12 computer science courses. In Senate.

H.462 (Easterbrook) – CTE Facilities – would authorize local school boards to use better-suited facilities, notwithstanding building codes. In Senate.

S.14 (Melson) - Bible Electives - allows bible elective for grades 6-12. Awaits concurrence.

S.153 (Melson) - SSUT - would make a technical fix to the simplified sellers use tax; also provides 25% of local county revenue flows to its schools. ***Prohibits future local acts to change distribution.** Awaits concurrence.

Pending in Committee

H.385 (Robertson) - School Safety Plans - would provide four security alert levels and comprehensive protocol for school emergency operations.

H.566 (Kitchens) - Donate Food - would allow schools to donate unexpired food for redistribution to students.

S.411 (Reed) - Advertising on School Buses - would allow sale of advertising on school buses.