

advocate for SCHOOLS



TO SEE A LIST OF BILLS TRACKED BY AASB
DURING THE 2026 REGULAR SESSION,
CLICK ON BILL TRACKER BELOW:



BILL TRACKER

Checking Off Legislative Days

The 2026 regular legislative session is more than one-third complete. The legislature is expected to meet three days a week through the end of February, putting it past the halfway point of the session. While the legislature has moved at a quick pace, neither the Education Trust Fund (ETF) nor General Fund budget packages have begun to move. The pressure is on and the clock is ticking...

AASB Advocacy Days

Our first Advocacy Day of the year was a huge success. Don't miss out! Join us in Montgomery for one or both of the two remaining AASB Advocacy Days. The dates listed are open to board members, superintendents and CSFOs. If you are unable to make your district's Advocacy Day, feel free to sign up for the date that works for you.

Tuesday, Feb. 24
Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
[REGISTER NOW](#)

Wednesday, March 18
Committee Day
All Districts
[REGISTER NOW](#)

**2026 Regular
Legislative Session**

18 Days Remain



Religion, Records, Reproductive Education

From religious release time and mandatory displays of the Ten Commandments to a stricter approach to sex education, Senate Education Policy Committee members advanced a familiar slate of bills Wednesday.

This week's committee action moves these bills one step closer to Senate floor action.

Religious Release Time

S.248 (Shelnutt) would require the State Board of Education (SBOE) and each local school board to allow a parent or guardian to "choose for his or her student to attend a religious release time program conducted by a sponsoring entity." **To be clear, this bill is a mandate to allow such programs. Adoption of a policy is optional.** Local board policy may require certain conditions be met:

- Parents would have to complete a check-out authorization form allowing their child to participate in a religious release program;
- Sponsoring entity may conduct criminal background checks for all employees or contractors of the entity who are "likely to have direct, ongoing contact with a student participating in a religious release time program";
- Student assumes responsibility for any missed school work;
- No student may be excused from the minimum instructional time for any SBOE-required course or subject, nor from any student intervention required under federal or state law to participate in a religious release time program.

AASB remains opposed to efforts to revise current law dealing with religious release time but acknowledges the recent constructive dialogue with Lt. Gov. Will Ainsworth and representatives of **LifeWise** (the out-of-state entity backing this bill).

Ten Commandments

S.99 (Kelley) would require local boards to display a poster or framed document, no smaller than 11 x 14, of the Ten Commandments and a context statement in every 5th through 12th grade history classroom and in a common area of a school with grades five and above, subject to private funding. If enacted, the State Department of Education (SDE) would be required to identify appropriate resources for local boards to comply free of charge.

NOTE: While this is the second consecutive session the bill has been filed in Alabama, similar laws in other states recently have been challenged and overturned in court.

Sex Education

S.209 (Shelnutt) would require any public K-12 sex education or human reproductive curriculum/program to exclusively teach sexual risk avoidance and encourage abstinence. It also would require the adoption process and how to surrender a newborn be taught and also would prevent providing information about obtaining abortion services.

NOTE: Sex education is not mandatory in Alabama schools.

Protecting Public Records

An AASB priority bill to address public records requested from local boards by companies seeking school procurement and employee data, with the intent to use this information for solicitation or financial fraud, received a favorable report from the **Senate Finance and Taxation Education (SFTE) Committee** Wednesday.

S.272, sponsored by **SFTE Committee Chair Sen. Arthur Orr**, would require the requested public records redact certain sensitive information that could be used to initiate a financial transaction. It also would prohibit public records requested from local boards, such as employee names and ad-

dress, from being used for solicitation. A local board could require the requestor to certify they're not going to sell or misuse information provided in a public records request. The attorney general would be authorized to impose civil penalties for violations of this prohibition. The bill would authorize the SBOE to adopt rules, provide guidance and a model certification form.

Online Sales Tax Distributions

A bill to change the state and local distribution of proceeds from the Simplified Seller Use Tax (SSUT) and include local school boards in the revenue share was introduced Thursday. [H.434](#), sponsored by **Rep. Chris England**, would reduce the state share of online sales tax revenue to the ETF by 10% and reallocate those funds to local boards of education based on average daily membership (ADM). It also would reduce the county share of state revenue and increase the city share, respectively.

This bill was filed in response to a recent lawsuit over the state's collection and distribution of sales tax revenue from online purchases. The lawsuit was voluntarily dismissed Wednesday, with the intent to find a legislative solution that would more equitably distribute online sales tax revenue. SSUT annually generates close to \$1 billion in revenue, which has become an integral part of the state's budgets, specifically the General Fund, and funding streams for cities and counties. The legislative formula for distribution of SSUT revenue allocates 50% to the state - with 75% of that to the General Fund and 25% to the ETF - and 50% to local governments. Of the local government share, 40% goes to counties and 60% to cities based on population. Under the current law, local school boards do not receive any portion of SSUT revenue at the local level unless by local agreement with their city or county. Out of 139 school boards, only 25 have reported a local or in-kind agreement.

House Committee Action

The **House Ways and Means Education Policy Committee** approved a "Second Amendment Sales Tax Holiday". [H.360 \(Sells\)](#) would establish an annual weekend-long sales tax holiday for ammunition, firearms and hunting supplies. Beginning fiscal year 2026, if enacted, this bill would decrease annual sales tax receipts to the ETF by an estimated \$386,000 and locally up to \$506,000.

NOTE: This bill was among other tax credit and exemption bills approved by the committee, despite a gloomy forecast for the ETF.

The **House Insurance Committee** approved [H.361 \(Daniels\)](#) that would require public employers provide up to 30 days of paid medical leave to employees donating an organ or bone marrow. A **bill substitute** was approved limiting its application to state, county and city employers and excluding local boards of education.

House Floor Passage

➤ **Computer Science**, [H.329 \(Faulkner\)](#), would require all public school students complete an approved high school or college-level computer science course, beginning with the graduating class of 2032.

Senate Committee Action

The **Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee** approved [H.138 \(Paschal\)](#) that would authorize retired state employees to return to work as full-time school bus drivers without suspension of their retirement benefits. The bill was substituted to merge with another bill already passed by the Senate, [S.28 \(Elliott\)](#), that would authorize eligible retired state employees to return to work in certain law enforcement and assistant district attorney positions.

The **Senate Veterans, Military Affairs and Public Safety Committee** approved the following:

➤ [S.201 \(Givhan\)](#) - would require public high schools with a Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) to allow homeschool students who are dependents of active duty military parents to participate in the JROTC program. An [AASB amendment](#) to the bill was approved to require any participating homeschool student to enroll as a nontraditional public school student.

➤ [H.33 \(Bolton\)](#) - would lower the age requirement from under age 19 to under age 17 for when the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) must deny a driver's license or learner's permit to students who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent and are not enrolled in an approved educational program.

Senate Floor Passage

➤ **Competitive Bid/Playground Equipment**, [S.196 \(Livingston\)](#), would exempt public K-12 school contracts from the public works law for the purchase and installation of playground equipment.

Bills Introduced This Week

➤ **Discharging Firearm/School Bus**, [H.420 \(Butler\)](#), would increase the penalty for discharging a firearm into an occupied school bus or school building to a Class A felony.

➤ **TRS/ERS Service Credit**, [S.280 \(Waggoner\)](#), would allow teachers and state employees to purchase credit in the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) or Employees' Retirement System (ERS) for public service performed for the federal government.

In Other News...

Alabama is pursuing a federal waiver to add the ACT WorkKeys assessment to its high school accountability measure required under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The SDE announced its proposal for a federal waiver to capture both college and career readiness in the state's accountability system. If granted, high school juniors would take both the ACT and the WorkKeys assessments beginning in the 2026-27 school year. While not required, Alabama high school students may already take the WorkKeys assessment. A qualifying WorkKeys score can satisfy the state's high school graduation requirement of earning at least one College and Career Readiness Indicator (CCRI). The SDE also is proposing to use students' overall ACT composite scores for its federal report card.

[View the SDE federal waiver application.](#)

A A S B L E G I S L A T I V E T E A M



Sally Smith, J.D.
Executive Director

ssmith@AlabamaSchoolBoards.org



Ada Katherine van Wyhe, MPA
Director of Governmental Relations

akwyhe@AlabamaSchoolBoards.org



Tracey Meyer
Governmental Relations Coordinator

tmeyer@AlabamaSchoolBoards.org