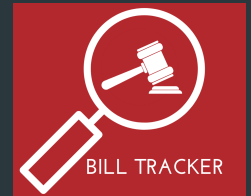


# advocate for SCHOOLS



TO SEE A LIST OF BILLS TRACKED BY AASB  
DURING THE 2023 REGULAR SESSION,  
CLICK ON BILL TRACKER BELOW:



## Coming Up...

While lawmakers are on Spring Break, look for a special edition Advocate that will take a deeper dive into budget and other funding issues.

## Advocacy Days

You're invited to join us in Montgomery for \*AASB Advocacy Days. This year we have expanded participation to include CSFOs as well. All attendees will receive 2 hrs. of training credit for participating in this free event.

**Apr. 4 - REGISTER NOW**  
Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & CSFOs

**Apr. 18 - REGISTER NOW**  
Districts 6, 7, 8, 9 & CSFOs

**May 2 - REGISTER NOW**  
New Board Members & First-time Attendees

*\*You may sign up to participate for any of the dates if unable to attend on your designated district day. For more information or any questions, please contact AASB.*

## 2023 Regular Legislative Session

26 Days Remain

## Spring Break

The Legislature will be on Spring Break March 27-31 and return Tuesday April 4.

## Another Record ETF Budget on the Horizon

**Lawmakers reconvened Tuesday for the 2023 regular legislative session with another round of healthy budget proposals. Gov. Kay Ivey introduced an \$8.8 million education budget and a 2% pay increase for educators. Ivey also introduced a supplemental appropriation (for FY 23) allocating \$2.8 billion the state received in excess ETF receipts from 2022.** Traditionally, the governor's recommendations serve as a placeholder while the House and Senate ETF budget committees hash out their changes and appropriations are finalized. The budget ([S.88 Orr](#)), pay raise ([S.85 Orr](#)) and supplemental appropriation ([S.87 Orr](#)) will begin in the Senate this year.

**Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee Chair Sen. Arthur Orr** told committee members Wednesday he anticipates moving the budget mid- to late April.

## Governor's ETF budget

The governor unveiled her FY 24 ETF budget proposal with a \$537 million (6.5%) increase over last year.

Increases include:

- 2% pay raise for education employees estimated to cost - **\$88 million**
- Transportation - **\$26.6 million**
- Alabama Numeracy Act - **\$25 million**
- Afterschool/Summer Learning Program Grants - **\$2.8 million**
- Computer Science - **\$3 million**
- Student Growth - **\$15.6 million**
- Career Tech Initiative (focusing on middle school grades) - **\$4.5 million**
- Unmet Capital Needs Grants - **\$510,000**
- Career Coaches - **\$6.5 million**
- Jobs for AL Graduates (JAG) - **\$1.5 million**
- Student Information Management System - **\$4 million**
- Bullying Prevention - **\$1 million**
- Arts Education - **\$300,000**

Also included in the governor's budget is a new line item - **\$15 million**:

- College and Career Readiness (CCR) grants to be made available for all public high schools to apply. These grants are aimed at helping to increase the number of students graduating with CCR credentials as determined by the State Board of Education.

## Governor's ETF Spreadsheet

*While school boards are enthusiastic about additional dollars being allocated for capital outlay in the supplemental appropriation, the governor's budget proposal does not address adjusting divisors to help decrease the teacher-to-student ratio or lowering ADM requirement for assistant principal and counselor earned units.*

## Supplemental Appropriation

**Gov. Ivey** submitted her recommendation this week for a **\$2.8 billion** supplemental appropriation ([S.87 Orr](#)) allocating excess ETF receipts. Of that total, **\$604 million** would go to the State Department of Education for one-time K-12 expenditures:

- **\$360 million** to cover inflationary costs of construction initiated with the 2020 Public School and College Authority (PSCA) bond issue
- **\$150 million** for rural school systems in most need of capital improvements
- **\$24 million** for summer math camps required under the Alabama Numeracy Act
- **\$10 million** for existing charter schools
- **\$10 million** for College and Career Readiness (CCR) grants,
- **\$10 million** for school safety grants
- **\$10 million** for the Teacher's Liability Trust Fund

- **\$25 million** for the Saban Discovery Center - a science, technology, engineering, arts and design, mathematics (STEAM) educational hub for students
- **\$5 million** for capital needs of Junior Achievement of Alabama (located in Birmingham)

The supplemental appropriation also includes **\$58.9 million** for local boards of education:

- **\$18.9 million** to fully fund the Foundation Program Salary Matrix (FY 23)
- **\$40 million** for school systems with highest need for school bus fleet renewal

## Missing in Action: EAT Appropriations

Despite a record \$2.9 billion ETF ending balance which in part funnels to the Education Advancement and Technology (EAT) Fund, a bill to appropriate EAT funds to local boards has not been introduced.

School systems rely on EAT funds to help cover/defray costs for permissible expenditures such as: classroom instructional support; insurance for facilities; transportation; acquisition and purchase of education technology; school security; and capital outlay. Stay tuned...

## Rolling Reserve Act Revisions

In 2011, the Legislature enacted the Rolling Reserve Act, which imposed an annual cap on Education Trust Fund (ETF) appropriations based on a 15-year revenue history. Despite having the option to allocate funds up to the cap, lawmakers have refrained from doing so in recent years, citing concerns that reaching the cap may be imprudent given the historic growth witnessed in the past few years. This cautious approach has led to the current push to amend the Rolling Reserve Act, to better reflect the evolving financial landscape.

**S.101**, introduced this week by **Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee Chair Sen. Arthur Orr**, would amend current provisions in the Rolling Reserve Act. A key component of the bill is the establishment of the Educational Opportunities Reserve Fund, a savings account designed to allocate 20% of excess revenues to address revenue reductions, cover unanticipated obligations, and support educational enhancement initiatives.

**Orr** highlighted the importance of having a mechanism in place to manage revenues during economic stagnation and emphasized the need to maintain commitments to Alabama's Literacy and Numeracy acts in the event of an economic slowdown.

## Open Enrollment

**H.73** sponsored by **Rep. Danny Garrett**, requires each local board to adopt and implement an intra- and inter-district enrollment policy to be posted on a school system's website. "This serves as a starting point for addressing school choice by promoting transparency and informed decision-making for parents," said **Garrett**.

Under the bill, approved Wednesday by the **House Education Policy Committee**, the sponsor said school boards can have any policy they choose – including a policy prohibiting these transfers. However, the definitions

of intra- and inter-district transfers currently in the bill have been interpreted by many attorneys and officials to mean the policies adopted by school boards must allow these transfers. **Rep. Garrett** told AASB it was not his intent to change any policy. To help clarify this intent, the lawmaker and former school board member has pledged to add an amendment on the house floor. AASB believes it is important the law be as clear as possible to avoid challenges and miscommunication and appreciate **Rep. Garrett's** willingness to work with school boards on our concerns.

## Cameras in Special Ed Classrooms

Aimed at improving safety and well-being for nonverbal special education students, the **Senate Education Policy Committee** approved an amended version of **S.56** by **Sen. Arthur Orr**. Named "Tyler's Law", the bill focuses on placing cameras in select self-contained classrooms to monitor accidents, violent incidents and possible abuse. It also requires installation in common areas.

The **amendment** adopted by the committee requires schools to install cameras, if funding is available. Additionally, the amendment language mandates that a local board must comply with camera installation upon parental request with provided funding to the school system. **Orr** mentioned that funds may be available in the FY 24 ETF Budget for school systems wanting to move forward with camera installation to apply for grants.

Advocates at the meeting argued that cameras are essential for ensuring the safety of vulnerable or nonverbal students, who may have difficulty communicating their experiences. Continuous monitoring of the cameras is not required, but they can be accessed in case of alleged incidents. Opponents, however, raised concerns about privacy, potential legal liabilities, and the cost of implementation. Technical limitations also need consideration to ensure cameras are properly installed, function correctly when not monitored and remain secure.

The amended bill moved quickly and passed the full Senate 33 to 1 on Thursday. It now heads to the House committee.

## Floor Action

**S.52 (Orr) - Alabama Safe at Schools Act** - would amend the act to provide comparable care for students with adrenal insufficiency as those with diabetes. It also would require training for certain school personnel to administer injectable adrenal medication. **PASSED Senate. Goes to House committee.**

## Select Committee Action

**H.65 (Collins) - Competitive Bid Increase** - would increase the minimum amount from \$15,000 to \$25,000 for contracts subject to competitive bid for city and county boards of education. **The bill was amended to increase the minimum to \$40,000. Approved as amended by House committee.**

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