

advocate for SCHOOLS



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



Budget Timeline

The Education Trust Fund (ETF) budget package originates in the House this session and will begin moving next week. The Senate plans to pick up the ETF budget package the week after legislative spring break, which will be the last week of March, after it passes the House. This means the next and final three weeks of session will be devoted to the budgets. The last day lawmakers can meet for this session is April 27, however, lawmakers are aiming to complete their work by April 8.

AASB Advocacy Committee Day

Don't miss out! AASB's final Advocacy Day for the year is on a legislative committee day, offering an insider's glimpse of this key phase of the legislative process. It is open to all board members, superintendents and CSFOs. If you have already attended one of the first two Advocacy Days this year, you may still register for the Committee Day although no additional credit will be awarded.

Wednesday, March 18

Committee Day
All Districts

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Legislative Session
11 Days Remain

Commandments in Classrooms, Pledge and Prayer in Policy

The push for religion in Alabama's public schools has picked up steam this legislative session, bringing with it a few "simple" bill additions: Ten Commandments posters, pledge and prayer requirements, volunteer school chaplains and religious release time.

Two such bills were approved Wednesday — one that would require the display of the Ten Commandments in classrooms and one to mandate the Pledge of Allegiance and permit voluntary prayer in schools, with a financial punishment for any school boards not in compliance. **H.216** by **Rep. Mark Gidley** would require local boards to display a poster or framed document, no smaller than 11 x 14, of the Ten Commandments and a historical context statement in every fifth 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.

Seeing Double on Pledge and Prayer

Carefully orchestrated committee action took place Wednesday on two identical bills sponsored by **Rep. Reed Ingram** regarding the daily Pledge of Allegiance and prayer in public K-12 schools. Although the bills began as duplicates, the **House Education Policy** and **House State Government Committees** amended each, resulting in two distinctly different versions.

BACKGROUND: As originally introduced, both bills would propose a constitutional amendment that, if approved by voters, would require local school boards to vote within 90 days of the amendment's ratification on adopting a policy to permit voluntary prayer in schools. The original bill versions also would mandate all public K-12 schools adopt a policy requiring each school day

begin with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The **House Education Policy Committee** approved changes as a substitute to **H.43** that removed required consent forms for participation in voluntary prayer and reduced the financial penalty for noncompliance. As **substituted**, the bill would direct the State Superintendent of Education to withhold up to 12.5% of state funding allocated for administrative or central office expenditures. Although withheld funds could be released once compliance is achieved, the inclusion of a financial penalty as a punitive measure still is problematic for school boards.

In another meeting room, the **House State Government Committee** adopted a substitute version of **H.511** that would require all local school boards to adopt a policy mandating both the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer be conducted at the start of each school day in every public K-12 school. Rather than permitting school boards to decide whether to allow voluntary prayer, this version would now mandate it. The bill also retains the original provision directing the State Superintendent to withhold 25% of a local school board's state funding if the board is found to be noncompliant. **H.511 is the first bill on the House Special Order Calendar for Tuesday.**

Holding Pattern on State Report Card

After meeting Tuesday with the **House Education Policy Committee** and education stakeholders to discuss sweeping changes to the A-F state report card proposed in **H.396**, **Chair Rep. Terri Collins** moved to carry the bill over in committee for another week while awaiting a substitute version of the bill. There have been multiple versions of bill substitutes drafted since it was introduced last month, with no consensus on what version will be brought before the committee next week for a vote. AASB supports raising the bar and hopes through a collabo-

orative and inclusive process this can be accomplished. Flexibility in negotiations and legislation are needed.

Public Records Bill Clears Committee

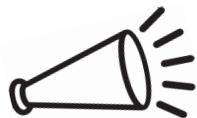
S.272 (Orr), carried by **Rep. Frances Holk-Jones**, is an **AASB priority bill** that would protect public records requested from local school boards from being misused for wire fraud or solicitation of employee data. The bill received a unanimous favorable report by the **House Judiciary Committee**. The bill now awaits final passage in the House before heading to the Senate for concurrence.

Senate Committee Action

Senate Finance & Taxation Education

➤ **H.183 (DuBose)** - **CTE for Homeschool** - would authorize homeschool students to attend public school career technical education (CTE) programs, and schools would receive Average Daily Membership (ADM) for these students beginning in the 2027-28 school year.

AMENDED to clarify the homeschool student must live in the public school's attendance zone to enroll. It also clarified a local board may allow enrollment of a home-schooled student from outside the attendance zone, after prioritizing zoned students.



WORTH MENTIONING: The committee also approved several tax credit and exemption bills, prompting **Sen. Vivian Davis Figures** to say, "That's right at \$4 million in less than ten minutes that we've [approved to be] taken from the Education Trust Fund."

Senate County & Municipal Government

➤ **H.2 (Standridge)** - **Gulf of America** - would rename the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America and require all state and local entities to implement the name change unless compliance would impose an operational or financial burden on the entity or employees.

House Floor Passage

➤ **H.75 (Robertson)** - **High School Signing Day** - would require high schools to excuse students from class who participate in organized National Signing Day activities.

➤ **H.380 (Collins)** - **County BOE Consolidation** - would propose a constitutional amendment, which, if approved by voters, would allow two or more contiguous county boards of education to consolidate.

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

➤ **H.517 (Lomax)** - **TRAIN Act** - would create the Talent Readiness and Industry Needs (TRAIN) Act allowing schools to partner directly with businesses for CTE instruction. It would also create a workforce teaching certificate for skilled professionals to provide classroom instruction, and businesses could temporarily loan qualified employees to teach CTE courses.

➤ **H.520 (Paramore)** - **CTE Certification Reciprocity** - would require the State Board of Education (SBOE) to

establish an expedited certification pathway for CTE teachers relocating to Alabama.

Senate Floor Passage

➤ **S.5 (Allen)** - **Star-Spangled Banner** - would amend Alabama's Constitution, if approved by voters, to require local boards to adopt policies ensuring every public K-12 school broadcasts or formally presents the first stanza of "The Star-Spangled Banner" at least once each week during school hours.

➤ **S.201 (Givhan)** - **JROTC for Homeschool** - would require public school Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) programs be available to home school and private school students who are the dependents of active duty military parents residing within the local school system's attendance zone.

➤ **H.138 (Paschal)** - **Return to Work** - would allow TRS/ERS retirees to return to work as full-time school bus drivers, school resource officers, and other law enforcement positions. The bill now returns to the House for concurrence.

Introduced This Week

➤ **H.540 (Mooney)/S.335 (Allen)** - **Civics Excellence Initiative** - would create the American History and Civics Excellence Initiative within the SDE. It would also provide an online American history and civics course that high school teachers could complete to earn a Seal of Excellence and, if funded, a one-time stipend.

➤ **H.562 (Garrett)** - **Bonding Authority [C/A]** - would amend Alabama's Constitution, if approved by voters, to provide full legislative participation on any bonding authority in order to limit the issuance of bonds or incurrence of other debt.

➤ **H.563 (Garrett)** - **CHOOSE Act Athletic Eligibility** - would create enforcement mechanisms for the CHOOSE Act's athletic eligibility nondiscrimination rules and would allow participating students to seek damages or injunctive relief if an athletic association acts against them solely because of their CHOOSE Act status.

➤ **H.584 (Ross)** - **Screen Time Limits in K-5** - would build upon the newly-enacted Healthy Early Development and Screen Time Act of 2026 (**Act 2026-169**) and require the SBOE to adopt standards for the use of screen-based instruction in kindergarten through fifth grade. It also would establish the Elementary Instructional Technology Task Force within the SDE to provide recommendations to the SBOE relating to screen-based instruction which must be included in its standards.

Signed Into Law

✓ **Act No: 2026-166** - **Veterans Teaching Certificate** - Authorizes the SBOE to grant temporary teaching certificates to eligible military veterans.

✓ **Act No: 2026-169** - **Screen Time Limits** - Requires the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education to develop guidelines for limited screen time for children from birth to age five in licensed child care, First Class Pre-K and public school kindergarten classrooms. Each local board is required to adopt a policy on screen time limitations in kindergarten classrooms.

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