

# advocate for SCHOOLS



TO SEE A LIST OF BILLS TRACKED BY AASB  
DURING THE 2024 REGULAR SESSION,  
CLICK ON BILL TRACKER BELOW:



## View Legislature In Session

AASB is your boots on the ground in Montgomery when lawmakers are in town, but did you know you can watch what is going on at the State House also?

The League of Women Voters of Alabama Education Fund, a nonpartisan advocacy group, hosts [The Alabama Channel](#), an online resource library that allows you to search and view live and recorded video footage of the Alabama Legislature including committee meetings and floor action.

## Session End: Sooner Rather Than Later?

We're hearing lawmakers may wrap up the legislative session before Mother's Day. Stay tuned...

**2024 Regular  
Legislative Session**  
**5 Days Remain**



## Budget Slated for Senate Committee; Tax Credit Concerns

With remaining legislative session days dwindling and the 2023-24 school year coming to a close, local school boards are eagerly awaiting final budget numbers as they prepare for next year. Senate Finance and Taxation Education (SFTE) Chair Sen. Arthur Orr told lawmakers to anticipate the FY25 Education Trust Fund (ETF) budget being in committee April 30.

Typically, the House and Senate make tweaks to the budget as it moves through the process. This year the budget started in the House where changes were made to Governor Kay Ivey's recommendations and has now moved to the Senate where a substitute bill is being prepared for SFTE Committee members to consider. Ahead of next week's committee meeting, a public hearing was held Wednesday giving parties an opportunity to advocate for funding, with speakers testifying in support of more monies for public libraries and to include an allocation for the summer food program for children.

AASB wants lawmakers to be aware that local school boards still have issues needing to be addressed in the proposed FY25 ETF budget, including: fully funding the Alabama Literacy Act (\$24.8 million) and funding assistant principals at the requested 1:250 ratio (\$31.6 million). Two legislative proposals being considered will also require funding: education employee worker's compensation program (\$14.9 million) and paid parental leave (\$28 million).

☛ **NOTE:** A recently introduced budget-related bill, ([H.456 Garrett](#)), was approved Wednesday by the House Ways and Means Education (HWME) Committee. The legislation specifies any monetary interest accrued in the Education Advancement and Technology (EAT) Fund shall be retained in that fund from year to year. Currently, EAT interest reverts to the General Fund. **The bill now goes to the full House for vote.**

### **\*\* WARNING: TAX CREDITS \*\***

- A pressing issue with serious long-term implications for the ETF is a multitude of tax credit bills being considered by the legislature - currently estimated to divert at least \$300 million from the ETF and possibly millions more.
- Two proposed tax credit bills (child care and housing) which are part of Gov. Ivey's "Working for Alabama" package, would have a combined annual hit to the ETF of \$45 million.
- AASB and education partners **URGE LAWMAKERS** to consider the risks to public education programs and services if priority is given to legislation that reduces ETF dollars.

### Workers' Comp for Educators

The HWME Committee held a public hearing Wednesday on a bill that would create a new workers' compensation benefit program specifically for education employees, ([S.278 Givhan](#)). When reviewed, the benefits proposed in the bill are more generous than any currently afforded to public or private employees. AASB shared concerns about the size, scope and potential uncontrolled cost measures associated with the proposed program and recommended the committee include education employees in the existing [State Employee Injury Compensation Trust Fund](#). After the public hearing, House Speaker **Rep. Nathaniel Ledbetter** and HWME Chairman **Rep. Danny Garrett** gathered education groups and the **State Finance Department** to discuss a potential substitute bill that addresses controlling program costs. **While the estimated fiscal cost to the ETF is \$14.9 million, both Garrett and the Finance Department ex-**

pressed serious concern with the accuracy of this estimate.

Teachers’ Bill of Rights

The HWME Committee Wednesday approved a bill, ([S.157 Orr](#)), that would make it easier for a teacher to remove a student from the classroom for disorderly conduct and creates an appeal process for teachers to the local board if they do not agree with their principal's course of disciplinary action for a student. After much work with the bill's sponsor, **Sen. Arthur Orr**, and **Rep. Danny Garrett**, who is handling in the House, agreed to an amendment to ensure local school boards are not required to pay reimbursement for legal claims arising from this bill and includes provisions to align with local policy and codes of conduct. *The bill now goes to the full House for vote.*

FLOOR ACTION

The following bills passed the House Thursday:

Don’t Say Gay...Not All The Way

The House approved expansion of the state's "Don't Say Gay" law, prohibiting any classroom discussion or instruction of sexual orientation or gender identity. [H.130](#), sponsored by **Rep. Mack Butler**, would also prevent K-12 employees from displaying a flag or other insignia relating to sexual orientation or gender identity. The bill was amended on the House floor to apply to students in grades K-8 rather than students in grades K-12 (as originally introduced this session) to ensure high school courses that cover topics such as A.P. psychology, as part of the state-approved course of study, are not impacted by this bill. *Bill has been assigned to Senate committee.*

CTE for Homeschoolers

An AASB-supported bill, ([H.278 DuBose](#)), would authorize homeschool students to enroll in public school career and technical education (CTE) programs. **AASB worked closely with the bill's sponsor, Rep. Susan DuBose**, to ensure alignment with Alabama's existing process for enrolling non-traditional students in public school programs and counting them in a school's average daily membership (ADM) which already is being done for homeschool students participating in public school athletics. *Bill now goes to Senate committee.*

Information Technology Directors

[H.439 Baker](#), a bill endorsed by the Alabama Leaders in Educational Technology (ALET), would rename K-12 public school technology coordinators to technology directors and provide minimum qualifications of those directors. The bill also would require individuals serving in that role to complete a training program and continuing education instruction to be provided by ALET. *Bill now goes to Senate committee.*

HOUSE COMMITTEE ACTION

House Education Policy

► *Asst. Superintendent Contracts, Private School Transfers/State Report Card, Virtual Testing*

*These bills will now go to the full House for vote:*  
**([S.33 Elliott](#)) - Assistant Administrator Accountability Act** - would authorize a local board of education to employ assistant superintendents, assistant CSFOs and assistant principals on a contract basis on or after July 1, 2024. Of concern was a [committee amendment added](#) that would expand the rights and timelines currently afforded principals. After agreement by the bill's sponsor and interested parties, a House floor amendment has been prepared to address AASB's concerns and restore the bill's original provisions.  
**([H.331 Woods](#)) - Private School Transfers/State Report Card** - would exempt private school transfer students from being included in school report card data for academic achievement for the first three years after enrollment.  
**([S.183 Hatcher](#)) - Virtual Testing** - would authorize remote testing of full-time virtual students for state assessments.

SENATE COMMITTEE ACTION

Senate Finance & Taxation Education

► ***Paid Parental Leave***  
**[S.305 Figures](#)**, a bill to create 12 weeks of paid parental leave for education employees was heard during Wednesday's SFTE Committee meeting. [After heated discussion](#), the bill was substituted by SFTE Committee Chair **Sen. Arthur Orr** to match the structure provided in another bill in the House for state employees, ([H.309 Shaver](#)), that would create six weeks of paid maternity (not parental) leave. The ETF cost estimate for six weeks' paid parental leave for education employees, plus a corresponding substitute teacher where necessary, is an estimated \$28 million. *The bill now goes to full Senate for vote.*

GONE TO GOVERNOR

Student Discipline Due Process

After years of work on a bill to create a uniform system of due process for student discipline in long-term suspension, expulsion and alternative school placements, **Sen. Rodger Smitherman** substituted the House companion bill ([H.188 Collins](#)) in place of his own ([S.165](#)) which then unanimously passed the Senate Thursday.  
Under the bill, the principal would consider additional factors such as the student's age, disciplinary history and seriousness of the violation before recommending or initiating disciplinary action. The local board would provide for a disciplinary hearing before a student is recommended for serious disciplinary action. At this hearing, the student and the school would be afforded an opportunity to present their case to the local board, with evidence such as audio or video recordings, documents and written statements. Following the hearing, the local board would issue a written decision citing the code of student conduct or state law and the appropriate appeals process. AASB and partner education groups have collaborated on this bill for almost a decade. *The bill is awaiting the Governor's signature and enactment.*

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