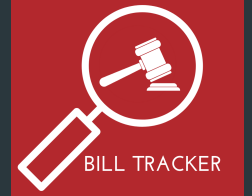


advocate for SCHOOLS



TO SEE A LIST OF BILLS TRACKED BY AASB
DURING THE 2025 REGULAR SESSION,
CLICK ON BILL TRACKER BELOW:



One Advocacy Day Still Open

As numerous bills impacting public education work their way through the Legislature, AASB's first two Advocacy Days (April 9 & 16) have already reached capacity. Limited spots remain for the third and final Advocacy Day, **Wednesday, April 30**.

This year's Advocacy Days are being held on legislative committee days, offering an insider's glimpse of this key phase of the legislative process.

This all-day event (8 a.m. to 3 p.m.) is open to board members, superintendents and CSFOs from all districts. Lunch will be provided. Claim your spot before capacity is reached.

REGISTER NOW

Gambling Legislation: Game Over

Senate President Pro Tem Garlan Gudger announced Thursday that gaming legislation will not advance this legislative session. "It's simply too little, too late and has too few votes to pass," Gudger said.

2025 Regular Legislative Session

12 Days Remain



Parental Leave Enacted, Religious Release Time Rejected

Lawmakers reconvened the 2025 regular legislative session Tuesday after a week-long spring break. With only 12 legislative days remaining, legislators will be focused on passing the FY26 Education Trust Fund (ETF) budget, education-related appropriation bills and other priority legislation.

Paid Parental Leave Signed Into Law

Commending the Legislature for passing one of her top priorities this session, Gov. Kay Ivey officially signed the paid parental leave bill for educators and state employees into law (**Act 2025-81**) Wednesday.

The Alabama Public Employee Paid Leave Act of 2025, sponsored by **Sen. Vivian Figures** and **Rep. Ginny Shaver**, will provide up to eight weeks of paid leave for female employees and up to two weeks for male employees in connection with the birth, stillbirth or miscarriage of their child. Adoptive parents of a child under the age of three also will be provided parental leave, with eight weeks for one parent and two weeks for the other, if both are eligible employees. The law includes a provision requiring employees to return to work for at least eight weeks after taking leave, with certain health exceptions.

Employees must have been employed by a local board or eligible entity for at least 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the occurrence of a qualifying event. The law goes into effect July 1.

Religious Release Time Voted Down

The **House Education Policy Committee** voted 9 to 4 against **H.342** by **Rep. Susan DuBose** that would have mandated all school boards adopt a policy for off-site religious release time.

Since 2019, state law has already allowed school boards to adopt local policy for religious release time and to determine if elective course credit will be granted. This bill would have added another unnecessary statewide mandate and removed school

boards' ability to make these decisions locally. Several lawmakers agreed.

"It's important that local school boards retain local control over whether they adopt policies about religious release time," said **Committee Vice Chair Rep. Alan Baker**.

The bill sponsor argued there was demand for making religious release time mandatory, citing a 4,000-signature petition sponsored by **LifeWise Academy**, the multi-million-dollar, out-of-state vendor backing the bill. The number of signatures belonging to parents of students in Alabama public schools could not be verified.

After several weeks of committee discussion and AASB testifying in opposition, school board members and superintendents contacted lawmakers asking them to vote no.

Voting No: Representatives Alan Baker; Terri Collins; Anthony Daniels; Tracy Estes; Jeremy Gray; TaShina Morris; Marcus Paramore; Jeana Ross and Van Smith.

Voting Yes: Representatives Susan DuBose, Bob Fincher; Mark Gidey and Kenneth Paschal.

Abstaining: Representatives Barbara Drummond and Matt Woods

THANK YOU to AASB members who contacted lawmakers and advocated against this bill, and THANK YOU to lawmakers whose NO votes demonstrated support for local school board control.

An identical Senate bill, **S.278** by **Sen. Shay Shelnutt**, was introduced Tuesday and assigned to the Senate Education Policy Committee. A public hearing is scheduled for next week. **AASB continues to oppose mandating religious release time for local boards.**

Cell Phone Ban Clears House

The Freeing our Classrooms of Unnecessary Screens for Safety (FOCUS) Act that would prohibit student cell phone use during the

instructional day passed the House and now moves to the Senate for consideration. **H.166** sponsored by **Rep. Leigh Hulsey** was amended on the House floor to remove a financial penalty provision that would have deducted common purchase funding from a school for non-compliance with the device ban.

A top legislative priority of Gov. Ivey, the FOCUS Act would prohibit student use, operation and possession of wireless communication devices such as cell phones during the instructional day. Students' devices would be turned off and stored off their person in a locker, car or similar storage location. The bill does not specify any particular product or item to be used for device storage. The Act would allow exceptions for the authorized use of devices for specific educational purposes, health reasons or during an emergency threatening an individual's life or safety.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ACTION

House Education Policy

► **Ten Commandments, School Chaplains**

H.178 (Gidley) - Ten Commandments - would require each local board to display the Ten Commandments in a common area of every public K-12 school under its jurisdiction. **Favorable Report**

H.179 (Gidley) - School Chaplains - would authorize local boards to vote on whether to allow schools to accept as a volunteer a chaplain to provide support, services and programs at the request of any teacher in the school system. **Favorable Report**

House Ways and Means Education

► **ETF Tax Credit**

H.86 (Collins) - Rural Hospital Tax Credit - would incentivize donations to rural hospitals through a new tax credit, which could decrease revenues to both the ETF and General Fund by a cumulative maximum of \$20 million for FY27, \$25 million for FY 28 and \$30 million for FY29. The bill will sunset at the end of 2028. **Favorable Report as substituted.**

SENATE COMMITTEE ACTION

Senate Finance & Taxation Education

► **Charter Schools, Paperwork Reduction Act**

S.267 (Orr) - Charter School Finance Authority - would establish the Alabama Charter School Finance Authority to issue bonds to make financing loans for charter school capital projects. **Favorable Report as amended**

S.280 (Orr) - Teacher Paperwork Reduction Act - would require the State Department of Education (SDE) to develop a unified digital platform for consolidating and sharing documentation related to Alabama's Literacy and Numeracy Acts and other educational programs. **Favorable Report**

Senate Education Policy

► **Signing Day, Star Spangled Banner, School Bus Crimes, State Intervention**

H.96 (Robertson) - High School Signing Day - would require high schools excuse students from class who par-

ticipate in organized National Signing Day activities related to the acceptance of athletic scholarships, postsecondary school commitments, apprenticeship programs and military enlistments. **Favorable Report**

S.13 (Allen) - Star Spangled Banner [C/A] - proposes a statewide constitutional amendment, which if approved by voters, would require K-12 schools to broadcast/perform "The Star Spangled Banner" at least once during the school week and at school-sanctioned sporting events. **Favorable Report**

S.211 (Hatcher) - School Bus Crimes - would require the local school superintendent or designee to report and pursue appropriate legal action through law enforcement relating to alleged school bus crimes and violations.

Favorable Report

S.215 (Chesteen) - State Intervention of Local Boards - would authorize the state superintendent to summon witnesses and subpoena records during an educational intervention and return a local board to intervention within five years after a provisional release if determined that the local board has not satisfied the conditions of its release or is unable to properly oversee local school system operations. **Favorable Report**

HOUSE FLOOR ACTION

The House passed the following:

H.332 (Faulkner) - Computer Science Requirements - would expand current law by adding more course offerings to earn the existing high school graduation requirement of an approved computer science course.

SENATE FLOOR ACTION

The Senate passed the following:

S.85 (Orr) - Child Vaccination Exemption - would specify a parent or guardian's written declaration to the local board is sufficient documentation for religious exemption from vaccine requirements. **AMENDMENT: A written statement is to be accompanied by a board-approved physical evaluation form.**

SELECT BILL INTRODUCTIONS

H.489 (Gray) - High School NIL - would allow high school student athletes to receive compensation for the use of their name, image or likeness (NIL).

H.491 (Ingram) - Prohibit Food Items/K-12 Schools - would prohibit public K-12 schools from selling, permitting the sale of or serving any food item that contains certain additives.

S.277 (Shelnutt) - Sex Education Curriculum - would require any sex education or human reproductive curriculum in public K-12 schools to exclusively teach sexual risk avoidance and encourage abstinence.

S.289 (Orr) - Success Sequence Curriculum - would require the State Board of Education to develop a success sequence curriculum for local boards to implement for all grades which focuses on sequential milestones to help students achieve economic prosperity.

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