

advocate for SCHOOLS



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



Ethics Rewrite

The House passed a bill Tuesday, [H.227](#) by Rep. Matt Simpson, that would amend the state's ethics laws. Current law applies to elected officials and approximately 300,000 state employees and their families. The bill now goes to Senate committee for consideration.

Advocacy Day Committee Hearings

Join us Wednesday, April 17 for AASB's final Advocacy Day experience of the 2024 legislative session.

You'll get an up-close view of the action during the legislative committee hearings process as lawmakers hear from proponents and opponents of proposed education-related legislation.

[REGISTER NOW](#)

2024 Regular
Legislative Session

11 Days Remain



House Committee Briefed on ETF Budget

House Ways and Means Education (HWME) Committee Chair Rep. Danny Garrett shared an overview with committee members Thursday of proposed changes to the \$9.3 billion Education Trust Fund (ETF) Budget for FY25 as well as changes to other education-related appropriations bills.

Garrett said revenues are tapering off despite the large amount of ETF dollars available for FY25. However, he gave assurances that state leaders have been planning for this revenue slow down for quite some time. Garrett also explained budget line items are still being moved around while funds are also being "freed up" in Governor Kay Ivey's recommendations. His plan is to have a substitute budget package ready for committee approval Tuesday.

Along with the **FY25 ETF Budget (H.145)**, the education appropriations package contains a **2% educator pay raise (H.146)**, **ETF Supplemental (H.144)** and **Education Advancement and Technology (EAT) Supplemental (H.147)**.

Of note, the HWME budget chair is proposing to move \$135 million of the \$651 million in the ETF Supplemental for school safety and technology devices earmarked in Ivey's version of the bill to the EAT Supplemental. The rationale for the shift is school safety and technology are approved uses of EAT dollars.

Local boards did not receive any EAT allocations last year - a first since 2018. This year, Garrett is proposing a \$1 billion EAT allocation, which is \$300 million more than Ivey's recommendation.

Another highlight is funding for 200 more assistant principals in middle and high schools with 300 or more students. Currently, an assistant principal unit is earned for 500 or more students.

The proposed ETF supplemental contains \$7.8 million available for the FY24 fiscal year

to enable school systems to fill these positions prior to the beginning of next school year. An additional \$10.8 million in the substitute ETF Budget will bring the total amount to \$18.6 million.

One of [AASB's 2024 Legislative and Policy Agenda](#) priorities addresses lowering ADM for assistant principal earned units.

Balancing Act

A two-bill linked package was discussed in the **HWME Committee** which has a negative fiscal impact to the ETF and positive impact to cities, counties and potentially local boards.

The Alabama Adventure Awaits bill, [H.257](#) sponsored by Rep. Joe Lovvorn, would create a sales tax holiday on outdoor items and equipment, with an estimated hit of up to **\$28.5 million from the ETF** and up to **\$37.8 million from local revenue**. Addressing concerns about the bill's potential negative fiscal impact, the sponsor discussed amendments to the bill to reduce the impact to the ETF, including lowering the cost threshold on boats and decreasing the sales tax holiday from two weekends per year to one.

The second bill in the package, [H.258](#) sponsored by Rep. Chris England, would increase the simplified sellers use tax (SSUT) from 8% to 9.5%. As currently written, school boards would miss out on these local revenues replacing sales tax, as they have since 2015.

AASB Executive Director Sally Smith testified in opposition to the package, "Every time you take money out of the ETF you're making a values decision because there are things in the ETF that we're not funding." Smith noted just a small number of Alabama cities and counties distribute SSUT revenue locally to school boards. Only 15 school systems out of 139 statewide receive any share of SSUT revenue from their cities

or counties. AASB has consistently and strongly supported school boards receiving a proportional share of local SSUT revenue. **Rep. Lovvorn** has been discussing with AASB and other education groups a possible share for local school boards. **We are hopeful a proposed amendment will include this local share when the bills are back for consideration in the HWME Committee next week.**

AASB Priority Bill Passes

► **Compensation Increase for School Boards H.83**, sponsored by **Rep. Tracy Estes**, was unanimously passed Thursday in the House. This bill would increase the maximum monthly compensation rate from \$600 up to \$900 (with board approval) and incent individual board members' compliance with annual training requirements established in the School Board Governance Improvement Act of 2012. The companion bill, **S. 175**, sponsored by **Sen. Donnie Chesteen**, also passed unanimously in the Senate. Both bills are in now in posture for committee action in opposite houses.

Workforce Pathways Act

The House version of the Workforce Pathways Act, **H.373** sponsored by **Rep. Kelvin Lawrence** and part of the Governor's 'Working for Alabama' legislative package, was extensively discussed by committee members and **State Superintendent of Education Eric Mackey** during an informal public hearing Wednesday in the **House Education Policy Committee**. This bill would create a new high school diploma pathway for students who intend to go directly into the workforce after graduation. The legislation, if enacted, would lower the number of math and science credits required from four each to two each for graduation. **Mackey** noted students already have flexibility in the types of courses they can take to fulfill the current math and science credit requirements, including some career tech and computer science courses. The bill was carried over to allow time for revisions before next week's committee meeting.

The Senate companion, **S.253**, sponsored by **Sen. Donnie Chesteen**, was approved by the **Senate Education Policy Committee** with an **amendment** exempting students participating in this pathway from their school and school system's academic achievement grade for the state report card.

SENATE FLOOR ACTION

► **Credit for Paraprofessionals/Aides**
The Senate passed **S.217 (Chesteen)**, a bill that would allow certified teachers to apply their previous experience as a paraprofessional or classroom aide towards their service credit. Certified teachers hired after June 1, 2024, would be able to apply for one year of experience credit on the local teacher salary schedule for every two years they previously worked as a paraprofessional or classroom aide. **The bill now goes to House committee for consideration.**

► **School Security Inspection Grants S.98 (Orr)**, a bill that would create a new school security inspection grant program passed unanimously in the Sen-

ate Tuesday. The **bill was amended** on the Senate floor to address concerns raised by the education community. However, one provision remained in the bill requiring schools to be evaluated and assigned an A-F letter grade on school safety and security compliance. AASB and education partners will work to replace this provision with another type of scoring mechanism and an amendment will be offered when it gets to the House committee.

► Teachers' Bill of Rights

Another bill, **S.157**, also sponsored by **Sen. Arthur Orr** and unanimously passed Thursday in the Senate, would create an alternate, expedited, but problematic pathway for teachers to remove students from the classroom for disorderly conduct, under certain circumstances. While **substituted** in the Senate, AASB and other education groups still have major concerns about its implications on policies and procedures for students and teachers and alignment with existing codes of conduct. **The bill now goes to House committee. AASB has called a public hearing on this bill.**

HOUSE FLOOR ACTION

► Student Discipline

The House passed **H.188 (Collins)**, a bill which would establish a uniform process for the long-term suspension and expulsion of students, now moves to the Senate where its companion, **S.165 (Smitherman)**, is expected to be substituted in the Senate Education Policy committee to match the House engrossed version, helping to expedite the legislation for final passage. **AASB has worked on both bills extensively with partner education groups.**

** CALL TO ACTION **

Property Tax Assessment Cap

The House version of the property tax assessment cap bill, **H.73 (Pettus)**, is first on the House Special Order Calendar for floor action when legislators return on Tuesday.

AASB and partner groups continue to have major concerns with this bill and its Senate companion, **S.110 (Sessions)**, because it would limit local revenue available to schools, cities, and counties. We are advocating increasing the cap from 3% to 7% and adding a three-year sunset provision to the bill, during which time the state Ad Valorem Tax Advisory Committee would gather data and review the tax assessment process and report to the Legislature.

Contact your House members this weekend and ask them to support these two provisions to lessen the negative impacts on local property tax revenue!

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