

advocate for SCHOOLS



TO SEE A LIST OF BILLS TRACKED BY AASB
DURING THE 2023 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 too?

The League of Women Voters of Alabama Education Fund, a nonpartisan advocacy group, launched *The Alabama Channel* at the beginning of this legislative session. The online resource library allows you to search and view live and recorded video footage of the Alabama Legislature including committee meetings and floor action.

➤ [CLICK HERE](#) ◀

Upcoming Legislative Schedule

May 23: Three-day week
May 29: Memorial Day
May 30: Two-day week

2023 Regular Legislative Session

7 Days Remain

ETF Budget Package To Take Center Stage in House

With remaining days of the legislative session dwindling, **House Ways and Means Education (HWME) Committee Chair Rep. Danny Garrett** told committee members the **FY24 Education Trust Fund (ETF) Budget** and related bills will be up for consideration next week. While it seems Chairman Garrett and **Senate Finance and Taxation Education (SFTE) Committee Chair Sen. Arthur Orr** have had open lines of communication regarding the budget, it remains to be seen what changes, if any, will happen once House members give their input.

Budget bills up for consideration:

- FY24 ETF Budget ([S.88 Orr](#))
- [FY24 ETF Spreadsheet](#)
- ETF Supplemental Appropriation ([S.87 Orr](#))
- Rolling Reserve Act Revisions ([S.101 Orr](#))
- K-12 Capital Grant Program ([S.269 Orr](#))

Supplemental Still Needs Work

The budget package the **HWME Committee** will be taking up includes the \$2.8 billion ETF supplemental appropriation. While changes were made in the Senate to eliminate some “non-education” items, K-12 did not get the boost anticipated. Additionally, the absence of an Education Advancement and Technology (EAT) supplemental this fiscal year has left local boards needing extra funds to complete capital improvement projects to ensure schools have safe learning environments for students.

AASB believes the lack of an EAT supplemental, coupled with the urgent needs of local boards struggling to complete essential school projects in this inflationary environment, warrants appropriating more than the \$360 million currently allocated for K-12 capital improvements in the ETF supplemental.

AASB urges lawmakers to redirect \$140 million from the \$500 million proposed for the

Rolling Reserve Act savings account for K-12 capital needs. This adjustment, when added to the current ETF supplemental allocation of \$360 million, would give school boards \$500 million immediately to address capital projects.

Numerous entities also are vying for a portion of the proposed \$500 million Rolling Reserve savings account allocation for non-education purposes.

CALL TO ACTION

Contact your **House members** and urge them to increase funding for vital K-12 capital needs. Remind lawmakers school boards are counting on **THEM** to ensure public education dollars are used for education purposes.

ETF Revenue Projections

With a robust ETF and surplus dollars on the table, many lawmakers have seen this as a good time to offer tax incentives, tax cuts and school choice voucher programs. The proposals currently before the Legislature total nearly \$2 billion in ETF dollars. However, according to [state receipts as of May 1](#), the ETF showed negative growth. This decline follows 7% growth the prior month. For the past three years, economists have warned of a potential fiscal cliff and an economic slowdown. These warnings, coupled with last month’s ETF downturn, cast doubt on the prudence of passing legislation with such a large price tag or that would diminish ETF revenue. **Stay tuned...**

Student Discipline Discussion

The **House Education Policy Committee** held a public hearing Wednesday on [H.269](#), sponsored by **Rep. Terri Collins**. This bill would create a statewide standard procedur-

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School Choice Bills Still Lurking

This week has been relatively quiet on the school choice front, but school boards should not need to be lulled by the calm. These bills can come to life at any time during the remaining days of the session. A quick look at this comparison chart shows just how detrimental these bills are to the ETF and public education. **Don't let up...lawmakers need to hear from YOU!** Contact your [House and Senate members](#) and ask them to **VOTE NO** on any school choice bill. Public education dollars should not be used to fund private school vouchers! [To download this chart click here.](#)

SCHOOL CHOICE BILLS - 2023 Legislative Session

Specifics	PRICE	SUN	Alabama Fits All	AAA
Bill Number/Sponsor	S.202 (Stutts)	H.334 (Garrett)	H.442 (Garrett)	S.263 (Chesteen)
Committee Amendment	Senate Ed Policy Committee AMD			
House Bill Companion	H.295 (Yarbrough)	No House Bill	No House Bill	No House Bill
Per Student Voucher/Scholarship	\$6,900/per student	\$5,600/per student	\$6,900/initial year, thereafter \$6,900 plus percentage increase equal to 5 yr. rolling inflationary average	\$10,000/per student
Permissible Uses	Tuition and fees; textbooks; curriculum; services purchased from public schools; extracurricular activities; tutoring; career tech/GED fees; educational services and therapies; CLEP; dual enrollment fees; post secondary classes; computer/software; uniforms; test prep courses; transportation; AP courses	Tuition and fees, including online required textbook; private tutoring ; curriculum; etc., testing fees including AP and college entrance; specialized services to disabled students; contracted services from public school	Determined by program manager and also: tuition and fees for community college; fees for after school and summer programs; textbooks and curriculum; computer hardware/software; supplies; testing; college admission testing; services for students with disabilities; transportation; extracurricular activities; field trips	Tuition and fees for private and religious schools; textbooks; licensed tutor; curriculum materials; contracted services or activities from public schools; specified services from licensed/accrued practioners
ETF Impact	\$50 million/per year for first 3 years (total \$150 million) (<i>Senate version only</i>) Up to \$650 million thereafter	\$3 million w/ \$3 million increase per year	\$45 million-cap/initial year Unknown amount thereafter	\$40 million in tax credits (less ETF revenue), up to \$60 million
How it works	State puts funds into an account for parents use for qualified expenses	State puts funds into an account on behalf of a student and makes payments for qualified providers/expenses	Scholarship amount placed in an account for student and administered by program provider	1. Parents with students leaving priority public school get tax credit 2. Individuals/businesses get tax credit for contributions to scholarship granting organizations (SGO) and parent of eligible students apply for scholarship
Required Assessment	No	Either National or State Assessment	Must provide portfolio	Either State or National
Comprehensive Financial Audits	No - random	No - random	No - random	No - random review or audits of SGO
Rollover Dollars	Unlimited to age 21	No	No	N/A
Receive AAA Scholarship in addition to Voucher	Yes	No	No	N/A
Eligibility	Starting in 2024-25 eligible students are: K, 3rd, 6th, 9th 12th grades or zoned for lowest 30% of public schools based on state standardized assessment in reading and math; thereafter, phased in until all students eligible in 2026-27	Limited 500 first year and each year after; student qualifies for Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of IDEA; fostered children; homeless children; students whose parents are in the military or killed in active service	1. Eligible to attend school in Alabama 2. Random allocation if demand exceeds reserve	1. Family income 250% of federal poverty level 2. Student qualifies for Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act or IDEA 3. Zoned for priority school 4. Public school students not zoned for a priority school 5. Priority given to students in private schools
Responsibility for Special Education and other services	Public schools <i>may</i> provide	No requirement - rests with parent's choice of school/program	No requirement - rests with parent's choice of school/program	Local public schools provide upon request but SGO will reimburse for cost
Homeschooling applicable	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Siblings of eligible students	Yes	No	No	N/A
Required Accreditation for programs	None	None	None	Accredited by regional accrediting agencies (6) or meet statutory standards and be accredited in 3 years
Administrator	Dept. of Revenue	Dept. of Education	Program Manager via RFP process	Dept. of Revenue
Commencement Date	2024-2025 school year	2024-2025 school year	2024-2025 school year	Already in place - new provisions would take effect upon effective date of Act

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al due process system for students on the verge of suspension or expulsion due to violation of the student code of conduct or state law.

AASB General Counsel Jayne Harrell Williams

voiced school boards' opposition, specifically in reference to the bill's provisions allowing student cross-examination (irrespective of age) and the appointment of a neutral designee which would require agreement from both school system and parents of the accused. While AASB is open to further dialogue with the sponsor, both of these provisions are non-negotiable for local boards. During the hearing, committee members raised concerns that enacting such a law could weaken local school board authority and further undermine enforcement of student discipline policies. Collins told members she would take under consideration all points raised.

It is worth noting the Senate Tuesday voted down the [amended](#) companion bill ([S.181](#)), sponsored by **Sen. Rodger Smitherman**. It failed 20 to 11. The vote appeared to surprise **Smitherman** who has sponsored and ushered this legislation through the Senate for several years. School leaders have consistently opposed the bill and have attempted to work with the sponsor.

Principal Bill Clears House Committee

The **House Ways and Means Education Committee** approved [S.300](#), a bill focused on enhancing principal leadership sponsored by **Sen. Arthur Orr**. The legislation is being handled in the House by **Rep. Alan Baker** who told committee members the bill aims to strengthen principal leadership by requiring principals to participate in a professional learning plan. This plan would focus on academic growth and/or achievement and school climate. Elementary principals would be required to complete professional development focused on literacy and numeracy. The legislation also includes a principal mentorship program and provides a stipend upon completion similar to what is provided for teachers completing National Board

Certification. **The bill is on the House Special Order Calendar for Tuesday**

Literacy Task Force Revamp

A bill that proposes changes to the Literacy Task Force's structure and function under the Alabama Literacy Act was approved by the **House Ways and Means Education Committee** Wednesday. The week before, committee members voiced concerns about proposed changes diminishing the act's effectiveness.

According to the bill's sponsor, **Rep. Danny Garrett**, the proposed changes in [H.430](#) would not compromise the act. Instead, the changes would ensure the thorough review of content and expand assessments that can be used. Currently, the Literacy Task Force is responsible for vetting assessments and core reading and intervention materials to ensure they incorporate the Science of Reading. The bill tasks the Literacy Task Force with evaluating content for age appropriateness. The bill also reshuffles task force roles, naming the director of the Alabama Reading Initiative as the chair of the Literacy Task Force, with a vice chair to be elected by task force members. This reorganization brings the Literacy Task Force under the purview of the State Superintendent of Education. **The bill is on the House Special Order Calendar for Tuesday**

Social Media Bill Introduced

[H.489 \(Robbins\)](#) - **K-12 Social Media Curriculum** - Beginning with the 2024-25 school year, would require students entering 9th grade to complete one semester of age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate instruction on the risks of social media and how to use social media safely. **Assigned to the House Education Policy Committee**