

advocate for SCHOOLS



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



Legislative Conference Committee

According to joint rules of the Alabama Legislature, a six member Conference Committee consisting of three House members and three Senate members shall be appointed to reconcile differences on pending legislation between the two houses.

A Conference Committee on an appropriation bill can only address differences in monetary amounts or language differences between the House- and Senate-passed versions of the legislation.

Sine Die in Sight

To adjourn Sine Die translates to adjourning indefinitely or “without a day” for future action or meeting.

Lawmakers are planning to meet three days next week and wrap up the legislative session May 9.

2024 Regular Legislative Session

3 Days Remain



Budget Goes to Conference; Board Compensation Goes to Governor

Final passage of the FY25 ETF budget package took a slight detour Thursday after Senate floor substitutes were adopted which differed from House passed versions as well as those approved by the Senate Finance and Taxation Education (SFTE) Committee earlier in the week. After senators were given a brief summary by **SFTE Committee Chair Sen. Arthur Orr**, the full Senate agreed with his recommended changes to the FY25 ETF budget ([H.145 Garrett](#)); the ETF supplemental appropriation ([H.144 Garrett](#)); and the Education Advancement and Technology (EAT) supplemental appropriation ([H.147 Garrett](#)). No changes were made to the 2% education employee pay raise ([H.146 Garrett](#)).

ETF BUDGET

Senate changes include a new item of \$14.9 million to fund the proposed education employees' worker's compensation program that would be created by [S.278](#), sponsored by **Sen. Sam Givhan**, as well as \$10 million to fund the state match portion of the federal summer feeding program for low-income children, known as Summer EBT. If [S.278](#) does not pass, those funds revert to the Foundation Program for other current expense (OCE). A new line item of \$2.9 million also was added for Math Nation, an education vendor.

ETF SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION

Among the Senate changes were the removal of \$7.78 million for assistant principal funding and a decrease from \$20 million to \$15 million for the purchase of new school buses. There was the addition of \$150,000 for the hire of a consultant to assist with a study to modernize K-12 education school funding. Monies to help fund a future cost-of living increase for education retirees also was added at \$5 million, although these funds cannot

be accessed until the corresponding Education Retirees' Trust Fund is fully funded at \$100 million.

Of note: AASB advocated for flexibility to allow amendment of an original grant proposal, if not fully funded, for schools previously awarded funds in 2023 under the Lt. Governor's [K-12 Capital Grant Program](#). This flexibility language was added to both the **ETF supplemental appropriation** bill as well as another education-related bill, ([H.439 Baker](#)), which establishes qualifications and training for K-12 technology directors.

EAT SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION

The Senate removed an allocation of \$2 million for teacher professional development.

When the budget package was returned to the House for agreement with the actions taken in the Senate, **House Ways and Means Education (HWME) Chair Rep. Danny Garrett** moved to non-concur with the Senate changes which sent the bills to conference committee. “I want to get a close look at the changes before moving forward,” **Garrett** told fellow lawmakers. **Rep. Danny Garrett, Rep. Joe Lovvorn** and **Rep. Barbara Drummond** were appointed as House conferees, but because the upper chamber already had adjourned, Senate conferees cannot be appointed until the legislature reconvenes Tuesday.

Final Passage for School Board Compensation Increase

An AASB priority bill is awaiting the governor's signature and enactment. The House Thursday unanimously passed the school board compensation bill, [S.175](#), sponsored by **Sen. Donnie Chesteen**. In the House, the companion bill ([H.83](#)) was sponsored by **Rep. Tracy Estes**. This bill will allow school boards to increase the maximum compensa-

tion rate from \$600 to \$900 per month, pending a board vote, which would go into effect for the following board term. **AASB thanks Sen. Chesteen and Rep. Estes for their coordinated efforts and leadership in carrying this important bill for Alabama's school boards!**

Worker's Comp for Educators

Following last week's public hearing and meeting with legislative leadership on changes to the education employees' worker's compensation bill, ([S.278 Givhan](#)), a substitute bill was approved by the HWME Committee Wednesday. **Significant changes to the bill include:** restructuring the oversight Public Education Employee Injury Compensation Board to ensure no conflict of interest among education associations or employers; modifying paid injury leave to better align with public and private sector employee coverage; and allowing for a yearlong phased-in implementation approach. The proposed worker's compensation benefit program and administration would look similar to the [State Employee Injury Compensation Trust Fund](#). The fiscal note is estimated to be \$14.9 million annually, but is expected to cost more once implemented. **Bill now goes to full House for vote.**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ACTION

House Education Policy

► **School Safety Inspections, School Chaplains**

- ([S.98 Orr](#)) - **School Safety & Security Inspections** - would create a school security inspection program fund where local boards would be able to apply for grants based on their inspection score. An **AASB-supported amendment** removed a component from the bill that would assign schools an A-F letter grade based on their score and would ensure local boards receive a copy of each individual schools' inspection score and recommendations for improvement. The amendment would also require each local school board to designate an employee as a district safety coordinator and details training requirements and responsibilities for this role.
- ([S.294 Smitherman](#)) - **School Chaplains** - would allow local boards of education to employ volunteer chaplains that may provide services to teachers, upon the teacher's request. An **AASB-supported amendment** protects local school board control and authority, ensuring boards are not required to vote on allowing volunteer chaplain services.

SENATE COMMITTEE ACTION

Senate Finance & Taxation Education

► **Tax Credit Bonanza**

The SFTE Committee heard multiple tax credit and exemption bills Wednesday, with a public hearing featuring all four education associations speaking in opposition to any proposals that would divert critical revenue from public education funding. "We see a devastating financial vortex forming for public education based on the combined impact of revenue flattening and efforts to cap local revenues; the addition and expansion of impactful ETF programs like the Numeracy and Literacy Acts and sala-

ries; the phase-out of federal relief funds and the looming fiscal cliff; and the long-term tax implications of already enacted programs like the CHOOSE Act, grocery tax reduction, and overtime tax exemption," said **AASB Executive Director Sally Smith.**

"Due to inflation, school board spending power has plummeted \$700 per pupil since 2008," Smith added.

A well-intended attempt to lessen a projected \$45 million annual hit to the ETF fell by the wayside when substitutes offered by **SFTE Chair Sen. Arthur Orr** for the child care tax credit ([H.358 Daniels](#)) and the housing tax credit ([H.346 Almond](#)) failed to be adopted by committee members. These two bills, which are part of Governor Kay Ivey's "Working for Alabama" package, now will go to the full Senate for vote.

Senate Education Policy

► **License Revocation, CTE for Homeschoolers, Three-Cueing, Info Tech Directors and Sex Ed**

- ([S.143 Shelnett](#)) - **Teacher License Revocation** - would include student-teacher sex act to the list of crimes for revocation of a teaching certificate, if convicted. An **AASB-supported amendment** was approved to align the reporting process with existing requirements in the mandatory reporter law.
- ([H.278 DuBose](#)) - **CTE for Homeschoolers** - would allow homeschoolers to enroll in a public school career technical education (CTE) program as a non-traditional student. This **AASB-supported bill** would enable schools to receive average daily membership (ADM) for these students.
- ([H.173 Hulsey](#)) - **Three-Cueing Literacy Instruction** - would prohibit the use of the three-cueing teaching model that teaches students to read based on visual cues. This teaching model is not aligned with the science of reading requirements in the Alabama Literacy Act.
- ([H.439 Baker](#)) - **Information Technology Directors** - this Alabama Leaders in Educational Technology (ALET) endorsed bill would rename K-12 public school technology coordinators to technology directors and provide minimum qualifications.
- ([H.195 DuBose](#)) - **Sex Education** - would prohibit any form of sex education curriculum in K-12 public schools that is not solely abstinence-based. **This bill only had a public hearing and will be voted on by the committee next week.**

GONE TO GOVERNOR

Credit for Paraprofessionals/Aides

[S.217 Chesteen](#), a bill to allow certified teachers hired after June 1, 2024, to receive one year of service credit for every two years previous experience as a paraprofessional or classroom aide (if they have four years or more of such experience), received final passage and now heads to the Governor's desk for signature.

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