

advocate for SCHOOLS



TO SEE A LIST OF BILLS TRACKED BY AASB
DURING THE 2022 REGULAR SESSION,
CLICK ON BILL TRACKER BELOW:



Legislative & Policy Agenda

AASB helps local education leaders improve student achievement through advocacy for Alabama's public schools.

The association's more than 800 school board members represent every public school board in the state. AASB's [policy agenda](#) represents their collective voice.

AASB Advocacy Days

We're looking forward to our first Advocacy Day on February 8. If you haven't registered for one of the remaining dates, don't delay...register today!

Feb. 22 | Districts 1, 2, 3
[REGISTER NOW](#)

Mar. 8 | Districts 4, 5, 6
[REGISTER NOW](#)

**You may sign up for any of the dates if unable to attend on your designated district day.*

2022 Regular Legislative Session

24 days remain

Parents Choice Act Would Divert Half-Billion from ETF

A bill that would create education savings accounts for parents to pay for private school, home school, after-school programs or summer school sprinted in and out of committee in less than 24 hours. Sen. Del Marsh introduced the **Parents Choice Act (S.140)** Tuesday. Despite an annual Education Trust Fund (ETF) price tag of \$537 million and a public hearing with only the sponsor speaking in favor of the bill, members of the Senate Education Policy Committee approved the bill on a voice vote (no roll call taken) the next morning.

What Does the Bill Do?

Ultimately, the PCA sets up a second state-funded school system for approximately 70,000 private and home school students. It would give parents of students choosing private or homeschooling an estimated \$6,500 voucher for education expenses with virtually no rules or regulations. If enacted, the PCA will allow for a different set of rules and "maximum freedom" without governmental control to provide for the educational needs of participating students. Public schools do not operate with this freedom; they are required to have annual financial and compliance audits, state assessments, a minimum number of instructional days and much more.

Latest Update on the PCA

While indications earlier this week were the PCA would be fast-tracked for Senate approval Thursday, the bill was not brought up for consideration, leading to speculation the bill was "dead." Technically, the bill can be resurrected in a new form. The current grapevine indicates Sen. Marsh is coming back with a scaled back version. Meanwhile, [\(H.245\)](#), the house companion by Rep. Charlotte Meadows, has been introduced.

School leaders need to contact both Senate and House members this weekend

and let them know the PCA would spend more than \$500 million annually and not result in any education improvements, and in fact, hurt traditional public schools. These ESAs are a half-billion-dollar financial handout to citizens who already have the resources to home-school or send their children to private schools. **This financial windfall at state expense** provides loosely defined enrichment and extracurricular activities to middle class students -- the same activities public school parents must pay for -- and would push public schools off the financial cliff state leaders warn is coming.

Ask legislators the following questions:

- How will the Parents Choice Act improve public education?
- How will this impact the Education Trust Fund?
- Will all students be treated fairly?

Tier 2 Passes in House

TRS members under the Tier 2 retirement plan are one step closer to being able to retire after 30 years of creditable service, thanks to Rep. Alan Baker (R-Brewton). "We must remove the disparity as much as we can between Tier 2 and Tier 1 employees," Baker said.

Currently, Tier 2 members are retirement-eligible at age 62 with a 6.2 percent employee contribution. [H.134](#) would allow members to retire with 30 creditable service and increase employee contribution to 6.5 percent. The House unanimously passed the bill Thursday.

Education Advancement and Technology Fund for Capital Needs

Sen. Arthur Orr introduced [S.175](#) which would add another qualified expenditure -- capital outlay -- to the Education Advancement Technology Fund (EAT), giving school systems more flexibility on where to direct

these funds. Currently, the funds can only be expended on repairs or deferred maintenance, classroom instructional support, insuring facilities, transportation, security measures and technology. AASB has been working with Sen. Orr and others on this bill which will help supplement local funds used for capital improvement needs and help offset increasing inflation cost on building materials.

AL Literacy Act Revisions – One Year Delay

H.220 by Rep. Terri Collins would delay third grade retention for one year for students not reading at grade level, if approved. Commencing in 2022-23, third grade students will be required to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade.

The one-year delay is not the only change being considered under the Alabama Literacy Act. The bill also calls for students to not be retained more than once in the third grade. Schools performing in the lowest five percent in reading proficiency will be required to purchase core reading programs recommended by the task force that fully align to the science of reading.

The bill further defines the duties for the Literacy Task Force and the Alabama Committee on Grade Level Reading. It gives the committee authority to approve professional learning in collaboration with Early Childhood Education and Alabama Reading Initiative staff, access State Department of Education (SDE) annual reading reports, establish annual reading growth and proficiency targets and dedicate Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) funds based on measurable performance growth. Comprehensive reading and intervention programs currently vetted by the State Superintendent of Education would now be vetted and approved by the Literacy Task Force in this bill. Over in the senate, Sen. Smitherman's **S.78** is proposing a three year retention delay to the Alabama Literacy Act.

Numeracy Act Aims to Increase Math Proficiency in K-5

Sen. Arthur Orr introduced his long-awaited Numeracy Act **S.171** aimed at improving math proficiency in grades K-5, and did not, contrary to earlier media reports, include mandatory retention for students not meeting standards. The prescriptive, wide-ranging bill is aggressive in its approach and would mandate specific actions to improve students' math performance with penalties for schools that don't show sufficient progress, including state intervention ranging from oversight by a management team to mandated personnel changes, school restructuring or conversion to a charter school. Schools targeted for intervention would be elementary schools falling in bottom 10 percent on the state's summative assessment.

To assist schools in improving math education, staffing provided under the bill include 11 regional math coordinators and expansion of math coaches, teachers in residence and regional, math specialists in addition to extensive professional development for teachers and principals. Other provisions create the Office for Mathematics Improvement to oversee implementation, developing a principal evaluation system, a training program and review of mathematics teacher education program.

AASB is still reviewing this bill so stay tuned for more analysis.

Conceal Carry: No Gun Permit Required

A public hearing was held on **S.12 (Melson)** Wednesday with no action taken. As introduced, SB12, and a companion to **H.66 (Stringer)**, are being tracked by AASB because it will remove restrictions on bringing guns to school sponsored events held off campus. Melson and Stringer announced in committee they are working on revisions to address school official's concerns. Melson announced SB12 will be discussed in committee next week.

Floor Action

H.46 (Collins) - State Seal of Biliteracy - would recognize graduates with a seal on their diploma who demonstrate specified proficiency of English and at least one other language, including sign language. **PASSED** House - goes to Senate committee.

S.72 (Williams) - CNP Programs - would allow local boards during an emergency or unanticipated event affecting public health or safety or causing supply chain disruptions to purchase goods or services related to the program without advertisement or bidding. **PASSED** Senate - Assigned to House committee.

S.77 (Givhan) - Prohibit purchase of flags - would prohibit any state agency or institution from purchasing a United States flag or Alabama flag not manufactured in the United States of America. **PASSED** Senate - Assigned to House committee.

Committee Action

S.15 (Melson) - Statewide Textbook Committee - would revise current statute and specify criteria for textbook selection. Approved as **substituted** by Senate committee.

S.40 (Smitherman) - K-12 mental health program - would require the SDE to develop a program to address the mental health of public K-12 students who are considered at-risk for developing inadequate social-behavioral skills such as ADHD or anger management issues in the classroom. Approved as **substituted** by Senate committee.

S.127 (Allen) - Star-Spangled Banner (C/A) - proposes a constitutional amendment to require K-12 local boards to adopt policies for the broadcast or sanctioned performance of the first stanza of the Star-Spangled Banner at the beginning of each school-sanctioned sporting event and at least once per week during school hours at every school. **Approved** by Senate committee.

Select Bill Introductions

H.188 (Sorrell) - Mask Opt-out - would require State Board of Education, in consultation with the Alabama Department of Public Health, to adopt rules for all K-12 schools to ensure there are safety protocols for controlling the spread of Covid-19 that do not require the wearing of masks by school children or otherwise violate the ability of a parent to make health care decisions for his or her child.

H.241 (Collins) - Alabama Credential Quality and Transparency Act - would provide for full, free, open, public, and interoperable essential data about all educational and occupational credentials and competencies available to the residents of the state.

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