

advocate for SCHOOLS



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



'What is a Woman' Bill Enacted

Gov. Kay Ivey signed [S.79](#) into law. The bill, sponsored by Sen. April Weaver, requires public schools and other keepers of vital statistics to document an individual's sex as either male or female and defines the terms "woman" and "man" in state law.

Revised High School Grad Requirements

The State Board of Education approved revisions in December to Alabama's High School graduation requirements. The State Department of Education's guidelines for implementing the new requirements and other important information can be found [HERE](#).

Kids Count Data Book Released

The annual Kids Count Data Book produced by the Annie E. Casey Foundation ranks all 50 states using 16 metrics such as reading proficiency and child poverty. In its latest report, Alabama is ranked 39th in overall child well-being.

[Kids Count Data Book](#)

2025 Regular Legislative Session

21 Days Remain

Worthwhile Ideas, But Where's the Money?

Although it's still early in the 2025 legislative session, several education-related bills already are under consideration, including proposals for new programs such as workers' compensation and paid maternity leave for educators, as well as requiring the purchase of "panic buttons" and installing adult changing tables in public K-12 schools. While these are sound ideas, the proposed bills carry price tags which currently are unaccounted for in the governor's recommended FY26 Education Trust Fund (ETF) budget ([S.112 Orr](#)), potentially creating unfunded mandates.

Can You Put a Price on Safety?

[H.234](#), sponsored by Rep. Alan Baker, is a bill that would require all school boards and charter schools to equip school personnel with a "mobile emergency rapid response system." As approved by the House Ways and Means Education Committee Wednesday, by 2030 school systems would be required to purchase and maintain specific technology, known in other states as "panic buttons" or "silent alert technology." The bill would allow systems to use the Lt. Governor's K-12 Capital Grant Program and the School Safety and Security Fund - neither of which are funded by the Legislature at this time - and the Educational Advancement and Technology Fund (EAT), an ETF supplemental appropriation, to comply with this bill. Systems currently are allowed to use EAT funds for capital outlay, deferred maintenance, insurance, technology, transportation and school safety.

Some Alabama systems already have purchased "panic button" technology, with costs ranging from \$10,000 per school to approximately \$2 million per system, depending on size. This involves both the one-time costs of purchasing the technology plus ongoing costs to update devices, software and licensing. A less costly alternative was also discussed.

A Costly Public Accommodation?

Another bill, [S.83](#) sponsored by Sen. Arthur Orr, would require the installation of powered, height-adjustable adult changing tables that cost between \$1,000 to \$3 million per unit in all public building restrooms, including K-12 public schools. The bill would require these units be installed in renovation or new construction projects over \$500,000. However, the bill would create a ETF grant program to provide some funding to comply with this requirement. Public schools must already provide appropriate accommodations and services required for any student with special needs through age 21.

Who Pays for Teacher Substitutes?

Gov. Kay Ivey's priority of providing paid maternity leave for education and state employees could positively impact education workforce recruitment and retention efforts. AASB estimates a minimum cost of \$10 million annually for eight weeks of paid leave for female education employees.

Teachers can use their accrued sick leave for maternity leave, but school boards only receive state funding for five substitute days. Local boards must cover the costs of leave beyond what the state funds and teachers will likely take longer leave with this provision.

How Much Will New Program Cost?

This week the Senate passed [S.1](#), sponsored by Sen. Sam Givhan, a bill that would create a new on-the-job injury benefit program, compensation fund and administrative board for education employees. Givhan estimated a new workers' compensation program would cost the state between \$18 and \$19 million annually.

Shrinking the ETF?

Lawmakers are once again entertaining legislation that would reduce ETF revenue by proposing tax credits and exemptions. Despite flattening revenue projections, estimat-

ed to grow just 1.82% next year, the appetite for these credits and exemptions continues to grow.

A bill to create a tax credit to help fund rural hospitals has been re-introduced this session in the House and Senate. Companion bills by **Rep. Terri Collins (H.86)** and **Sen. April Weaver (S.105)** would potentially reduce revenues by up to \$30 million combined in both the ETF and General Fund budgets by creating a tax credit for individuals and corporations to offset their tax liability.

H.277, sponsored by **Rep. Ernie Yarbrough**, would negatively impact both state and local education revenues. With 21 co-sponsors, this popular, but potentially costly tax exemption bill, dubbed as the "2A Sales Tax Holiday", would eliminate sales tax on the purchase of ammunition, firearms and hunting supplies between Memorial Day and the Fourth of July with an opt-in for participation by cities and counties. This is identical to legislation being considered in Florida with an estimated annual \$115 million budget hit. **AASB opposes tax credits and exemptions until public education is fully funded.**

Are We Robbing Peter AND Paul?

Possibly enacting new state initiatives with no clear funding commitments for these new and/or increased costs, while at the same time entertaining a slew of tax credits and exemptions, could mean local school boards have to pick up the tab. While legislative budget committees have to reconcile the dual objectives of new programs versus tax policy, the current dynamic is particularly challenging due to anemic revenue growth and higher costs of existing programs against a pre-election backdrop. In addition, state leaders seem poised to commit a much-needed \$100 million in additional revenue to weighted student funding as part of a hybrid approach to modernizing the school funding formula, with dollars coming from the Educational Opportunities Reserve Fund (a one-time source). Other funding concerns include the cost of private school vouchers in the yet-to-be fully implemented CHOOSE Act program.

Even the best ideas can be bad policy when the fiscal impact on public schools is negative.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ACTION

House Education Policy

► **Nontraditional High School Diploma**
H.266 (Woods) - REACH Act - would codify an existing program between the SDE and the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) to offer a nontraditional high school diploma as an additional pathway for students who withdraw/drop out. **AMENDMENT: Diploma option would apply to students 18 years or older. Favorable Report as amended**

House Health

► **Immunization Proof for Schools**
S.59 (Chesteen) - Military Records for Proof of Immunization - would allow active duty military personnel to substitute military medical records of dependents as

evidence of age-appropriate immunizations instead of the "Blue Card" at a public or private school. **Favorable Report**

House Ports, Waterways & Intermodal Transit

► **Gulf of Mexico Renamed**
H.247 (Standridge) - Gulf of America Act - would rename the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America" and require all state and local entities and all employees of those entities to observe and implement the name change where practicable. **AMENDMENT: Public K-12 schools would be allowed to use the term "Gulf of Mexico" within course of instruction, when reasonable, for historical purposes. Favorable Report as amended**

House County & Municipal Government

► **School Land Acquisition**
H.57 (Hulsey) - City BOE Land Purchase - would prohibit a city board from purchasing land outside the municipality without an agreement from the governing body where the land is located. **Favorable Report**

SENATE COMMITTEE ACTION

Senate Education Policy

► **Conflict Resolution Course Requirement**
S.34 (Smitherman) - Conflict Resolution - would require students receive instruction in violence prevention, conflict resolution and mediation before graduation from high school. The SDE would develop standards for this course or program. **AMENDMENT: Would be required before promotion to high school. Favorable Report as amended**

HOUSE FLOOR ACTION

This bill received passage in the House:

H.9 (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 model is not aligned with the science of reading requirements in the Alabama Literacy Act. The State Board of Education adopted Administrative Code rule changes prohibiting this practice last May. **Bill has been assigned to Senate committee**

Select Bill Introductions

H.297 (Fidler) - Immigration Assimilation Fund - would create a fund within the state treasury and allocate to county commissions amounts to be distributed as follows: 75% to public K-12 schools in proportion to the number of English Language Learner (ELL) students to be used for English language instruction and 25% to regional hospitals.

H.298 (Colvin) - High School Athletics and ELL - would restrict certain ELL students from being included in the average daily membership (ADM) of public K-12 schools for purposes of classifying a school for athletic competition.

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