



Legislative Update #3 2023 Legislative Session

A Brief Recap of the Week

It was a busy week in Tallahassee:

The second-to-last week of interim committee meetings wrapped up this week, with educators continuing to stand up and speak out for themselves and their students.

The voucher bills are moving quickly.

Passing in the first committee meeting were two bills which could cause even more instability in school boards.

Educators in St. Johns County came out in force to advocate for themselves and their students.

Activists from across the state gathered in Tallahassee to defend the freedom to learn.

Read below to find out more.

Universal Vouchers

[Senate Bill 202/HB1](#) opens the current voucher program to all children in Florida, and the bills are moving quickly. HB 1 has already passed its first committee stop and will be heard in its second committee next week. This means the bill is poised to be passed by the House within the first week or two of the 2023 session, which officially starts March 7.

These bills would transfer taxpayer funds to private and religious schools and corporations who are not held to the same accountability as public schools. If this bill becomes law, it could [transfer up to \\$4 billion](#) away from public schools in the first year alone. The money taken from our public schools would be used to subsidize private school tuition. Meanwhile public schools will have even fewer resources for students and less money for salaries and healthcare.

SB 202 will be heard in the Senate PreK-12 Education Committee on Tuesday, February 21. HB 1 will be heard in the House PreK-12 Appropriations Committee on Thursday, Feb. 23. [Click here to tell the members of the committees to keep public funds in public schools.](#)

[Tell legislators public money belongs in public school!](#)

School Board Chaos

On Tuesday, the [House Choice and Innovation Subcommittee](#) passed two bills related to school boards. The first bill, [HB 477](#), would place an eight-year term limit on school board members instead of the current 12-year limit. When asked why he was sponsoring a bill to impose an eight-year limit, Representative Alex Rizo (R-Hialeah) gave a surprisingly honest answer, “**Term limits will regularly sever relationships** that grow between special interests and incumbent board incumbents.”

Teachers and education staff professionals work hard to develop relationships with school board members so that we can work together to provide the best education possible for every child. The bill [passed 14-4](#) with Representative Kevin Chambliss (D-Homestead) joining all the Republicans on the committee to vote for the bill. As of the writing of this Frontline, there is no Senate companion to HB 477.

Next up, the committee heard a bill which would propose an amendment to Florida's Constitution requiring school board members be elected in partisan elections. Representatives from Florida PTA, Florida AFL-CIO, Fund Education Now, League of Women Voters and Pastors for Florida's Children all spoke in opposition to the bill. They expressed concern that this would inject politics into our schools and that this bill is more about pushing a political agenda than about doing what is right for Florida's children. The bill passed along a [party line vote of 13-5](#). The Senate companion to the bill, Senate Joint Resolution 94, has not been heard in its first committee.

Northeast Florida Education Shows What Solidarity Looks Like

Hundreds of educators, parents and students packed the St. Johns County School Board meeting on Valentine's Day and asked the Board to [show their teachers some love](#) by paying them a living wage. This is part of an ongoing campaign since the teachers voted down their proposed contract in November due to the proposed raises.

How You Can Take Action Today

Visit the [FEA website](#) to learn more about session and sign up for FEA Action Alert texts by texting "edactivist" to 22394.

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