# **2015 Legislative Session LAWS**

## ACT# Synopsis

[2015-3](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0010545.PDF) **Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act**: Authorizes public charter schools. *Effective March 19, 2015.* (H.45)

[2015-28](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0010660.PDF) **Emergency Missing Child Alert System**: Creates the statewide system to be activated when local law enforcement confirms the whereabouts of a child under the age of 18 are unknown after contacting relatives and caregivers, including teachers in a school system. *Effective July 1, 2015.* (S.108)

[2015-82](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0010715.PDF) **Truth in Salary Act:** Requires the state and local boards of education to provide an individualized annual itemized statement of benefits and total employer contributions for retirement and health insurance to public employees. *Effective April 24, 2015.* (H.39)

[2015-89](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0010722.PDF) **Virtual Education**: Requires each school board to craft a policy to provide a virtual education option for eligible students by the 2016-17 school year for, at a minimum, grades 9-12 inclusive. A virtual school student is counted as a full-time enrolled student in the average daily membership of the local school and is eligible to participate in athletic/extracurricular programs subject to the same rules as a traditional student. Creates a task force to make recommendations about the state ACCESS program to aid in the implementation of the act. *Effective July 1, 2015.* (S.72)

[2015-125](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0010758.PDF) **Dissolve the Department of Postsecondary Education:** Makes the two-year colleges an independent Alabama Community College System governed by the chancellor and newly established board of trustees instead of the state Board of Education. *Effective May 12, 2015.* (S.191)

[2015-129](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0010762.PDF) **Alabama Student Religious Liberties Act of 2015:** Restates federal law regarding U.S. constitutional protection for freedom of religious expression and requires local boards of education to adopt a policy regarding voluntary religious expression in schools by the 2015-16 school year. *Effective August 1, 2015.* (H.1)

[2015-160](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0010763.PDF) **Renames the Department of Children’s Affairs** the Department of Early Childhood Education. *Effective August 1, 2015.* (H.233)

[2015-237](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0010873.PDF) Requires the Legislative Fiscal Office to annually submit a **tax expenditure report** to the legislature. The report will include each tax exemption and correlated estimated loss of state revenue. *Effective May 27, 2015.* (S.119)

[2015-238](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0010874.PDF) Appropriates $632,997 from the Education Trust Fund to **Talladega College** for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016. *Effective October 1, 2015.* (S.180)

[2015-281](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0010917.PDF) **FY16 ETF Budget:** Appropriates $5.99 billion from the Education Trust Fund for the support, maintenance and development of public education in Alabama, for debt service and for the capital out-lay for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015. *Effective October 1, 2015.* (S.179)

[2015-282](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0010918.PDF) Appropriates $9,921,227 from the Education Trust Fund to **Tuskegee University** for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, a $200,000 increase. *Effective October 1, 2015.* (S.183)

[2015-283](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0010919.PDF) Appropriates $273,276 from the Education Trust Fund to **Lyman Ward Military Academy** for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016. *Effective October 1, 2015.* (S.184)

[2015-340](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0010977.PDF)  **Open Meetings Act**: Defines and prohibits “serial meetings” conducted to circumvent the Open Meetings Act. Expressly covers committees and subcommittees within the act. Excludes from the definition of a “meeting” when two members talk without deliberation and excludes participation in association meetings/events. Sets the minimum penalty for violations at $1 payable to the plaintiff. Specifies that if an Alabama citizen files an action, the complaint must specify how the individual is impacted greater than the public at large. Provides that multiple lawsuits for the same action will be consolidated and limits liability for the same violation. *Effective September 1, 2015.* (S.21)

[2015-386](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0011023.PDF) **Textbook Depository:** Requires textbook publishers to participate in a state depository. Allows local boards of education to use the depository as a centralized distribution center for textbook purchases. Establishes a Digital Depository Study Commission.
*Effective June 5, 2015.* (S.383)

[2015-410](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0011048.PDF) **Working Retiree Income Increased**: Increases the maximum compensation a retiree may earn from an employer participating in the Teachers’ Retirement System or Employees’ Retirement System from $24,000 to $30,000 annually. Establishes an automatic Consumer Price Index adjustment beginning in year 2017. *Effective September 1, 2015.* (H.562)

[2015-430](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0011068.PDF) **Flexible Calendar**: Authorizes local boards of education to use 180 student instructional days or the equivalent 1,080 hours in setting the school calendar. *Effective September 1, 2015.* (S.22)

[2015-434](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0011072.PDF) **AAA Revised**: Revises the Alabama Accountability Act. Increases the state tax credit cap for scholarships from $25 million to $30 million annually and increases the annual tax credit limit for individuals from $7,500 to $50,000. Defines failing schools as the lowest performing 6 percent on reading and math assessments. Imposes accountability measures on scholarship granting organizations requiring test scores and specified data in quarterly reports; allows audits by the Alabama Department of Revenue; raises the income limit for student eligibility from 150 percent to 185 percent of the federal poverty level. Retroactively allows scholarship granting organizations the use up to 5 percent of donations for administrative and operation expenses and retroactively grants students continued eligibility once awarded a scholarship. *Effective June 9, 2015.* (S.71)

[2015-435](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0011073.PDF) **Dissolves the State Building Commission** and transfers operations to a newly created Division of Construction Management within the Department of Finance. *Effective October 1, 2015.* (S.76)

[2015-450](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0011088.PDF) **Workforce Development Council** Transfers the Alabama Community College System (formerly Department of Postsecondary Education), Alabama Workforce Council and regional workforce councils into the newly created Workforce Development Division within the Department of Commerce. *Effective June 11, 2015.* (H.554)

[2015-453](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0011091.PDF) **Unemployment Compensation** Clarifies that employees of private companies that provide direct services to education institutions are ineligible to receive unemployment benefits during the traditional education holidays, breaks and summer vacation. *Effective September 1, 2015* (H.71)

[2015-456](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0011094.PDF) **Erin’s Law** creates the Governor’s Task Force on Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children. Charges the task force to develop guidelines for a child sexual abuse prevention program for K-12 schools. Requires K-12 prevention programs, with content at the discretion of the school board, to meet specified minimum criteria. *Effective June 11, 2015* (H.197)

[2015-486](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0011124.PDF) **Nepotism Law for Education**: Prohibits a relative from being involved in the hiring, supervision or performance evaluation of a school employee. Adopts the Ethics Law definition for a relative: the spouse, dependent, adult child or his/her spouse, parent, spouse’s parent or a sibling or his/her spouse. Provides a specific hiring process for such applicants and imposes a penalty for violations. *Effective September 1, 2015* (S.361)

## Resolutions

[2015-489](http://arc-sos.state.al.us/PAC/SOSACPDF.001/A0011127.PDF) Establishes the **Joint Committee on Alabama Public Pensions** to study and

develop recommendations concerning the benefits, investments, and funding

of the state retirement systems. Additionally, asks committee to study retiree

health insurance benefits to ensure stability of the programs.

*Effective June 12, 2015* (HJR 288)

HR 312 & Express legislative intent to extend the initial date to allow local boards of

SR 110 education to register as charter school authorizers to September 1, 2015.