
Legislative Update Week 11
March 26, 2022

Top 3 Things to Know

1 ***Vouchers hit the Senate floor*** - On Tuesday the Senate voted 27-12 to set harmful voucher bill [S.935](#) for special order, meaning that the bill moved to the top of the calendar for debate.

You can [click here to see which Senators voted to prioritize sending public dollars to private schools](#) despite the thousands of voices in opposition to **S.935**.

The bill creates a private voucher system. To give the vouchers a more palatable name, the bill originally called the vouchers "Education Scholarship Accounts" but following an amendment this week also refers to them as "Education Scholarship Trust Funds."

On Wednesday debate began with a number of questions to Senator Massey (Edgefield) who was the chair of the Subcommittee on S.935. and is a sponsor of the bill.

Questions were raised by several Senators, including Senators **Fanning** (Fairfield), **Jackson** (Richland), **K. Johnson** (Clarendon), and **Hutto** (Orangeburg) about the accountability, fairness, funding, and harm to public schools. One discussion, [linked here](#), focused on the ability of private schools to deny admission to students on the basis of their sexual orientation.

On Thursday, Senator **Hembree** (Horry), also a bill sponsor, offered an amendment that changed the funding source of the bill from passing through local schools to coming from \$100 million of public dollars in the contingency reserve fund initially and in future years to coming from public dollars in the general fund. His amendment also set the amount of vouchers at \$6000 for the first year, though it will increase annually at the same percentage as per pupil allocations increase each year. Senator Hembree's amendment also added a new term for the vouchers to the bill—"Education Scholarship Trust Fund."

This amendment was debated at length by Senator **Fanning** with several Senators, including Senators **McLeod** (Richland), **Stephens** (Orangeburg), **Kimpson** (Charleston), and **Setzler** (Lexington), asking important questions regarding the ability of schools to discriminate, the teacher shortage crisis, public school teacher pay, and whether the bill really gives "choice"

considering the costs of private school tuition and the ability of private schools to discriminate in admissions.

Debate on additional amendments to the bill will begin on Tuesday at 2 p.m. [It is urgent that your Senator hear from you about school vouchers](#). Read more to learn how to take action!

2 *Senate Education Committee* - The Senate Education Committee met Wednesday to discuss two pieces of legislation, both of which it gave a favorable report to. [A full committee summary can be read here](#).

The first bill given a favorable report was [S.544](#), a statewide open enrollment bill. The SCEA has several concerns about this legislation that have yet to be addressed, even following several amendments adopted. [The SCEA testimony from March 2nd outlining our concerns can be read here](#). Amendments adopted were mainly concerning some discretionary limits districts can place on accepting students based on capacity, as well as transfer fees.

The second bill given a favorable report was [S.531](#), legislation that seeks to prevent transgender from participating in sports. [S.531 is similar to many bills around the country that attack transgender youth](#). NEA General Counsel [published a memo](#) breaking down legislation from around the country with steps educators can take. [NEA EdJustice also has a page](#) dedicated to supporting LGBTQ+ youth where you can become informed and take action. SC United has put together a [toolkit](#) on S.531 and similar legislation to help you get information and take action, too.


Despite many questions and objections raised by Senators **Scott** (Richland), **Malloy** (Darlington), and **Hutto** (Orangeburg) regarding the discriminatory aspects of the bill, the potential impact to South Carolina sports at the collegiate level, as well as legal implications and scope. Ultimately, despite the objection of many that the bill was too problematic to move to the floor, including a recommendation from Chair Hembree to keep the bill in committee for another week, bill sponsor Senator **Cash** (Anderson) pushed for a vote to be able to move the bill out of committee to the full Senate and was successful with a vote of 6 in favor and 5 opposed.

3 *The House was out*- The House was out on furlough this week, but they will return this week, and the House Education and Public Works Committee will resume discussion on [anti-Truth bills H.4325, H.4343, H.4392, H.4605, and H.4799](#). Public testimony is no longer being heard, but you are still able to make your voice heard by using [The SCEA Honesty in Education Action Center](#).

Don't forget that with any legislation or issue, you can reach out to your elected official by phone, email, or even social media [using this tool!](#)

[Check out the Week Ahead with Legislation and Meetings of Interest!](#)


Use Your Educator Voice!

 **Senators who did not vote to prioritize harmful voucher bill [S.935](#). [Use this link](#) to check out whether your Senator is one of the Senators who voted to set [S.935 for special order](#).**

If they are in the "Nays," send an email thanking them for not sponsoring and urging

them not to support the bill. (Not sure who your Senator is? [Use this The SCEA tool to find out and get their all of their contact information!](#))

Senators [Fanning](#) (Fairfield), [Jackson](#) (Richland), [K. Johnson](#) (Clarendon), and [Hutto](#) (Orangeburg), [McLeod](#) (Richland), [Stephens](#) (Orangeburg), [Kimpson](#) (Charleston), and [Setzler](#) (Lexington) for advocating that the Senate focus on the teacher shortage crisis and advocating for ALL of South Carolina's students on the floor of the Senate during debate on **S.935**. Click on the Senators' names to send a quick email of thanks.

 **Jeers - Senators who not voted to prioritize harmful voucher bill **S.935**. Use this [link](#) to check out whether your Senator is one of the Senators who voted to set **S.935** for special order.**

If they are in the "Ayes," send an email telling them you are disappointed in their support for a bill that sends public dollars to schools that can discriminate against students. (Not sure who your Senator is? [Use this The SCEA tool to find out and get their all of their contact information!](#))

Senator [Gustafson](#) (Kershaw) for adding her name *back* to sponsor **S.935** after previously having dropped sponsorship. Click on the Senator's name to send her a quick email letting her know that you are disappointed in her sponsorship of **S.935**.



Above: Senators discuss harmful voucher bill **S,935** on the Senate floor on Wednesday (left) and Thursday (right).

State Superintendent's Race

This week included even more candidates throwing their hat into the ring for South Carolina State Superintendent of Education. Notable among announcements this week are current teacher and SC for Ed advocate Lisa Ellis announcing that she will file to run as a Democrat on Monday.

[All candidates who have filed to run can be found at the South Carolina Election Commission web site.](#)

Six candidates have officially filed to run: Ellen Weaver, Lynda Leventis-Wells, Kathy Maness, Kizzi Gibson, and Sheri Few all as Republicans, and Representative Jerry Govan as the only Democrat who has filed so far.

Other candidates that have declared their intention to run but not yet filed include:

- Democrat Gary Burgess
- Republican Cindy Bohn Coats
- Republican Travis Bedson

The SCEA believes that educators must have a seat at the table on all issues that impact education.

The next State Superintendent of Education must understand and be ready to tackle the complex issues of education in our state and view issues in a children-first lens, understanding that working conditions for school staff are the learning conditions for South Carolina students.

That is why SCEA plans to engage all candidates to determine which candidate is best qualified to collaborate with educators and school staff to deliver the public schools South Carolina students deserve.

 **Take Action!** 

Protect Public Schools



**Tell your Senator:
Vote NO on Vouchers!**

The Senate will resume debate on harmful voucher bill **S.935** on Tuesday. [It is more important than ever to advocate now!](#)

You can help by [calling your Senator](#). When you click the button below, you'll fill out a form that will give you a call with talking points catered to your Senator's stance on the bill before patching you through to their office.

If there is no answer, be sure to leave a message with your name, a call-back number, and letting them know you are constituent in their district who wants them to vote **NO on S.935** and school vouchers.



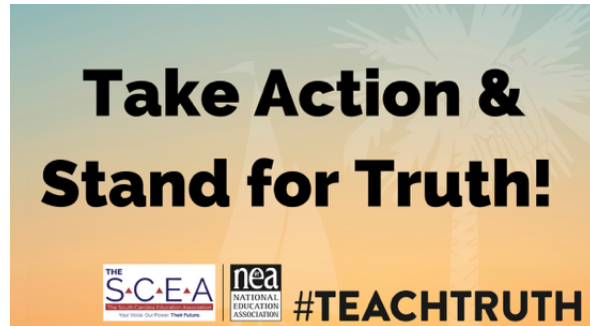
Take Action to Stop Vouchers Now!



South Carolina's students deserve to have fully staffed schools & a highly qualified educator every classroom. *Legislators need to fund it.*

Urge your Senator and Representative to [fund raises for ALL](#) South Carolina educators and schools staff.

Advocate for raises for ALL!



Testimony on anti-Truth bills in the House Education and Public Works Committee may have concluded, but testimony is not the only way to make your voice heard on this important issue.

Visit [The SCEA Honesty in Education Action Center](#) to make calls and email all committee members now!

Stand Up for Truth!

The Week Ahead & Legislation of Interest

[Click here for a look at the meetings scheduled for next week](#) on bills of interest to education.

Want the latest on federal legislation?

[Check out Education Votes by NEA and subscribe to the weekly Education Votes email.](#)



Contact your elected officials at any level on any issue.

Click this button to find their contact information, including email, phone number, and even their Facebook or Twitter.

Find & Contact Elected Officials



Do you believe every South Carolina student deserves a great public school?

Make sure your state Senator & Representative know that Public Education issues will have most impact your decision as a voter.

Take the Pledge!