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THE WEEK AHEAD

YOUR TOP THREE WAYS TO ENGAGE IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

WASA
WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

WEEK 7—WEEKLY TOP THREE

February 23, 2026

- Protect Local Effort Assistance (LEA)
- Preserve Funding for Transition to Kindergarten (TTK)
- Prevent Operational Cost Shifts to School Districts
- Bottom Line
- Quick Resources

Why This Week Matters

The supplemental budget proposals released last night reflect the significant fiscal pressures facing the Legislature. However, we are deeply concerned that the decisions made in these proposals do not sufficiently prioritize the needs of students and school districts. Several of the proposed reductions strike at the core of equitable K–12 funding. Two of the largest proposed reductions across the three budgets are: **Local Effort Assistance (LEA)** and **Transition to Kindergarten (TTK)**. In the Senate proposal, both are reduced at roughly double (or more than double, in the case of LEA) the House and Governor proposals. Additionally, **bus depreciation** is extended to 180 months in all three proposals and effectively increases the assumed life of buses and delays replacement cycles.

- **Local Effort Assistance (LEA)** — reduced by \$25.1M in the House and Governor proposals and \$59.1M in the Senate proposal
- **Transition to Kindergarten (TTK)** — reduced by roughly \$19M–\$19.5M in the House and Governor budgets and \$39M in the Senate proposal
- **Bus Depreciation** — reduced by \$21.1M in all three proposals

These are not peripheral investments. **LEA** supports property-poor districts and is a fundamental equity tool in Washington’s funding model. **TTK** is one of our most effective early learning strategies for closing readiness gaps before they widen. The extension of **bus depreciation** schedules affects daily operations and student access. When **TTK** and **LEA** are two items that rank among the largest savings in the budget (as is identified in the Senate), the impact falls disproportionately on rural and small districts, property-poor communities, and students furthest from opportunity.

In the current fiscal environment, reducing any part of K–12 funding and failing to adequately increase investments compounds existing pressures on school districts. Costs for insurance, utilities, transportation, special education, and student mental health supports continue to rise, and these are core operational obligations. When state funding does not keep pace with these increases, or is reduced, districts must absorb the difference. That leads to staffing reductions, program cuts, deferred maintenance, and fewer supports for students. In real terms, insufficient investment limits our ability to fully meet students’ needs, support staff in helping every student reach high academic goals and uphold the state’s basic education responsibilities.

Protect Local Effort Assistance (LEA)

What’s happening:

All three supplemental budget proposals reduce LEA funding, by \$25.1M in the House and Governor proposals and by \$59.1M in the Senate proposal, more than double the other proposals.

Why it matters:

LEA is a core equity tool in Washington’s funding model. It supports property-poor districts that cannot generate comparable local levy revenue. Reducing LEA disproportionately harms rural and small districts and communities with lower property values, widening opportunity gaps and undermining the state’s commitment to equitable K–12 funding.

Your action this week:

Urge legislators to restore LEA funding to at least current law levels in the final budget. Emphasize that protecting LEA is essential to maintaining equity across districts and preventing deeper disparities between property-rich and property-poor communities.

1. Sign in or testify CON to the proposed operating budget in [House Appropriations](#).
2. Sign in or testify CON to the proposed operating budget in [Senate Ways and Means](#).
3. Message your [legislators, especially those on Appropriations and Ways and Means](#), to tell them how LEA supports student learning.

Preserve Funding for Transition to Kindergarten (TTK)**What’s happening:**

TTK is reduced by approximately \$19–\$19.5M in the House and Governor proposals and by \$39M in the Senate proposal, making it one of the largest areas of savings identified, particularly in the Senate budget.

Why it matters:

TTK is one of the state’s most effective early learning strategies for closing readiness gaps before they widen. Reductions will limit access for students who benefit most from early intervention, particularly those furthest from opportunity. Cutting TTK now increases the likelihood of greater academic and intervention costs later.

Your action this week:

Advocate for restoration of TTK funding in the final budget and reinforce its role as both an equity strategy and a long-term cost avoidance investment. Encourage lawmakers to prioritize early learning as foundational to the state’s basic education obligations.

1. Sign in or testify CON to the proposed operating budget in [House Appropriations](#).
2. Sign in or testify CON to the proposed operating budget in [Senate Ways and Means](#).
3. Message your [legislators, especially those on Appropriations and Ways and Means](#), to tell them how TTK prepares children for K–12.

Prevent Operational Cost Shifts to School Districts**What’s happening:**

All three budget proposals (Governor, House, and Senate) extend bus depreciation schedules to 180 months, reducing funding by \$21.1M and delaying bus replacement cycles. Combined with LEA and TTK reductions, this shifts additional financial pressure to districts during a period of rising insurance, utility, transportation, special education, and student mental health costs.

Why it matters:

Extending bus depreciation effectively increases the assumed lifespan of buses, delaying replacement and impacting daily operations and student access. At the same time, flat or reduced K–12 investments fail to keep pace with escalating operational obligations. When funding does not match real costs, districts must absorb the difference through staffing reductions, program cuts, deferred maintenance, and fewer student supports.

Your action this week:

Call on legislators to avoid budget solutions that create downstream cost shifts for districts. Encourage them to maintain realistic funding assumptions for transportation and provide adequate K–12 investments that reflect actual

cost growth. Stress that failing to do so undermines the state’s ability to meet its constitutional basic education responsibilities.

1. Sign in or testify CON to the proposed operating budget in [House Appropriations](#).
2. Sign in or testify CON to the proposed operating budget in [Senate Ways and Means](#).
3. Message your [legislators, especially those on Appropriations and Ways and Means](#), to tell them how you rely on the current bus depreciation schedule to enable students to access basic education.

Bottom Line

The improved revenue forecast from last week creates additional flexibility for the Legislature and makes clear that the final budget can reflect priorities, not just constraints. That makes engagement right now critical. Your voices help ensure legislators understand that any reduction to K–12 funding has significant consequences, and that failing to keep pace with inflation in basic education funding is also effectively a cut. **Sustained investment in K–12 remains the state’s paramount duty and the budget proposals currently do not reflect that responsibility.**

Quick Resources

[WASA Bill Tracker](#) (updated 2/18)

[WASA legislative platform](#)

[Legislator contact list](#)



WASA Legislative Report Podcast

The podcast will be available every Friday during the Legislative Session on the [WASA website](#), or [subscribe to the Report](#) via multiple podcast apps.



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