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THE WEEK AHEAD

YOUR TOP THREE WAYS TO ENGAGE IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

WASA
WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

WEEK 8—WEEKLY TOP THREE

March 2, 2026

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

Why This Week Matters

We have entered Week 8 of a 9-week legislative session, and the finish line is now clearly in sight. With both the House and Senate having passed their operating budgets, the final 10 days will center on negotiating a single, unified spending plan that will determine the state's investments and reductions in K–12 education. While the number of [policy bills still alive](#) has narrowed considerably, those that remain generally reflect **bicameral** (a legislative system with two separate chambers or houses, both of which must approve a bill for it to become law) support and are advancing through the final procedural steps, including **concurrence** (the process by which one chamber agrees to amendments made by the other). Importantly, many of the bills still moving have been significantly amended in response to sustained advocacy around avoiding new un- or underfunded mandates, underscoring the impact of continued engagement at this stage of session.

Some good news: Conversations continue around the K–12 sales tax exemptions enacted last year under [ESSB 5814](#), with positive movement this week. The Senate has funded the exemption in its budget, and the House Finance Committee adopted an amendment to [ESSB 6346](#) (the millionaire's tax bill) to extend sales tax exemptions for schools and ESDs beginning July 1, 2026, covering services such as IT, custom software, staffing, security, and live presentations. Importantly, the exemption includes a severability clause to protect it even if the broader tax is challenged. Several other sales tax exemption bills remain technically in play as the session heads into its final stretch.

We remain deeply concerned that the House and Senate operating budget proposals fall alarmingly short of prioritizing the needs of students and school districts. Despite some movement since the initial proposals, reductions continue to target core components of equitable K–12 funding. Two of the most significant proposed cuts across the budgets are to Local Effort Assistance (LEA) and Transition to Kindergarten (TTK). While the Senate slightly reduced the scale of TTK cuts—following Senator Wellman's amendment redirecting a \$7.5 million charter school increase to TTK—LEA reductions in the Senate proposal remain more than double those proposed by the House and Governor. In addition, all three budget proposals extend bus depreciation schedules to 180 months, effectively lengthening assumed bus lifespans and delaying replacement timelines. To recap:

- **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 \$32M in the Senate proposal
- **Bus Depreciation** — reduced by \$21.1M in all three proposals

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. We still have time now during negotiations to communicate our concerns and needs, as some of the

statewide advocacy groups have done in [this letter](#) to Legislative leadership. Here's what you can do:

Continue to Advocate to 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. Share with them how your district utilizes LEA to serve student learning and close opportunity gaps.

Continue to Advocate to 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 \$32M 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:

Contact [House and Senate leadership](#) and budget writers immediately and urge them to fully restore Transition to Kindergarten (TTK) funding in the final operating budget. If full restoration is not possible, ask that references to "extreme childcare desert" and any new eligibility restrictions for 2026–27 be removed to prevent harmful redistribution of slots that could eliminate existing programs in your district. Given upcoming staffing deadlines, it is critical that lawmakers act now to avoid destabilizing programs that are already serving students successfully.

Continue to Advocate to 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:

Districts have already ordered and committed to buses based on the current depreciation schedule and the state revenue tied to it. Changing the rules mid-purchase pulls away funding districts relied on and could even force them to return dollars through year-end reconciliation. If these proposals cannot be fully reversed, the Legislature must minimize harm by:

- Grandfathering buses already ordered or contractually committed,
- Applying any changes prospectively — not to existing purchases, and
- Adjusting smaller buses to a 10-year depreciation schedule, not 15, to better reflect their useful life and limit fiscal disruption.

Ask [lawmakers](#) to protect districts from unexpected and retroactive financial impacts.

Bottom Line

There are just 10 days remaining until session adjournment on March 12 (“sine die”), when lawmakers conclude their work for this session (presuming they pass a budget). As final budget decisions are made, any reductions to K–12 funding - or failure to keep pace with rising costs - will further strain school districts facing increasing costs for core services like special education, transportation, utilities, and student supports. When state funding falls short, districts must absorb the difference, resulting in staffing reductions, program cuts, and fewer supports for students. Now is the time to **remain engaged** and continue communicating with legislators about the real impacts these decisions will have on our schools and communities.

Quick Resources

[WASA Bill Tracker](#) (updated 2/25)

[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.



Marissa Rathbone
 Proud Product of Washington Public Schools
 Assistant Executive Director | Government Relations
 PO Box 14459 | Tumwater, WA 98511
 360.481.5842 | mrathbone@wasa-oly.org

TRIO: Weekly Top Three is published by WASA in support of our members and members of our partners in WASBO, WSPA, and AEA.