

May 2026

Dear Friends and Supporters,

This month's educational update is a report on the results of some legislation in the just-finished 2026 regular session of the Alabama Legislature. Overall, it was a good session. Being an election year, legislators were careful not to bring up bills that might hurt their chances, such as legalizing gambling.

With the amount of money being pumped into Alabama Legislative races by pro-gambling interests, we expect to see a major push for gambling in the 2027 regular session, if not in a special session before. We have never seen the amount of obvious support for candidates who, if elected, would be expected to vote for gambling. The American Conservative Fund was among those pumping millions of dollars into the election process. Any candidate who received those funds much be considered questionable, notwithstanding comments by political leaders that it really did not matter. The saying "you dance with who brung you," relates to your loyalty to those who supported you and got you to where you are. How do we square the investment of millions of gambling dollars in Alabama legislative races and the idea that it is the other civil things you do that matters most? Does that mean it is okay to legalize gambling, so long as you are a good person otherwise? In short, we cannot trust those who take the gambling money.

In addition to the bills in this month's Update, we want to mention SB248, by Senator Shay Shelnett and Representative Susan DuBose, that now makes it mandatory for Alabama Public Schools to permit students released time for off-campus religious study and receive credit. SLI assisted in the authorship of the original bill which at the time gave the option to schools. Most public schools did not honor that and therefore, it was necessary to make it required. There is no reason for public educators to oppose constitutional religious activity, but they consistently do.

Thank you for your continuing support. With personal regards, I am,

Yours very truly,

A. Eric Johnston

AEJ/mm