

2025 SESSION RECAP

espite a difficult political environment, our union won major victories for Arizona educators during the 2025 state legislative session.

The voices and political power of our nearly 24,000-member union made all the difference as we **protected investments in public education, blocked unfunded mandates**, and successfully pushed legislators to revise bills that would have created new burdens for educators and public schools.

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AEA members march at the Arizona State Capitol in March 2025.

FY2026 Budget Overview: Maintaining Funding for Public Education

s the clock ticked closer to the deadline for lawmakers to pass a state budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026, our union worked closely with legislative allies and partners in education and labor to overcome partisan stalemates and pass a bipartisan budget with critical funding for Arizona K-12 schools.

Take a look at our funding victories in the state budget for FY 2026:

\$6.82 billion for public education

- \$72 million from the permanent state school fund and state land trust.
- \$37 million for FRPL (Group B weight increase for low-income students).
 - **PLUS**: \$3.8 million to help cover the increasing cost of school meals.
- \$29 million for a one-time supplement to additional assistance for high-need school districts.
 - \$23.1 million for District Additional Assistance that can be used for either M&O funds or unrestricted capital outlay funds.
- A 2% increase in state per-student funding (now set at \$5,113.26 per student) to account for inflation.

New funding for special programs and grants, including:

- \$82 million to support school safety.
- \$3.4 million for the Ninth Grade On Track Program (\$150 in additional funding for each ninth-grade student).
- \$125.9 million in state and federal funds for child care the largest investment of general funds in child care since the Great Recession.



Rep. Nancy Gutierrez, a longtime Tucson educator, played an essential role in protecting education funding during this year's budget negotiations.



Spotlight on a Big Win

The FY2026 budget includes a two-year waiver of the Aggregate Expenditure Limit (AEL), protecting schools from mid-year funding cliffs and allowing districts to dedicate more local revenues to public schools.

The Future of Prop 123: AEA Fights to Block **Voucher Expansion, Protect Educator Pay**

early a decade ago, our union worked to pass **Proposition (Prop) 123** — a voter-approved initiative that directed a small portion of revenue from our state land trust to support public education.

During this year's legislative session, our union defeated a highly partisan and controversial Prop 123 renewal proposal that would have limited pay increases for educators and created a constitutional right to state-funded private school vouchers.

Prop 123 was initially scheduled to expire this year, but lawmakers approved short-term funding to buy more time for continued negotiations in 2026. Our union will continue to fight for a clean, non-partisan renewal of Prop 123 that prioritizes public schools and public school students.



Talk to your friends, neighbors, and union siblings about what TAKE Prop 123 means for public ACTION education in Arizona. Voters will decide the future of Prop 123, and our work to protect it begins now.



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After some lawmakers introduced a controversial proposal to revise Prop 123, our union sponsored a series of billboards to draw attention to the consequences of underfunding public education. After pressure from thousands of union members, the plan was dropped — though lawmakers are likely to try again in 2026.

OUR IMPACT: Blocking Harmful Bills from Becoming Law

uring the 2025 Legislative Session, lawmakers introduced **1,724 bills** and passed **265 bills** into law. From meetings at the Capitol to community events, our members seized every opportunity to educate lawmakers about how their bills would impact our profession.

Together, we blocked dozens of harmful bills, including:

Funding Cuts and State Micromanagement

- ★ SB 1299: would have reduced funding for Arizona community colleges, threatening the jobs of our union members and risking the future of important teacher-training programs operating at the community college level.
- **★ SB 1269**: would have allowed volunteer chaplains to serve in public schools, undermining the rights of students from diverse faith traditions and discouraging districts from hiring school counselors and other qualified mental health providers.
- **★ SB 1693:** would have permitted private school students to try out for interscholastic activities at public schools, potentially taking athletic opportunities away from full-time public school students.
- ★ HB 2663: would have required school administrators to provide a written certification of the disciplinary actions that a principal takes before allowing a student to be readmitted to the classroom. Our union opposed this bill because it would have created new administrative burdens and pulled school administrators away from their work with students and teachers.

Making Our Voices Heard in the 2025 Session

11,992

letters to Arizona legislators.

150+ meetings at the Arizona State Capitol.

1,000+ calls to legislators from Arizona educators.

Unfunded Mandates

- ★ HB 2797 and SB 1528: would have required educators to teach about sexual abuse and sexual assault in kindergarten through 12th grade without providing funding to support this additional instruction.
- **HB 2725**: would have required students to complete three social studies courses in the 6th-8th grade to promote without providing funding to support this additional instruction.

Attacks on Democracy and Consumer Protections

- ★ HCR 2041: would have advanced a proposal to amend the U.S. Constitution by setting term limits for the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, opening the door to a "runaway convention" where legislators could undermine existing constitutional rights.
- **SB** 1582: would have loosened regulations on payday lenders, putting vulnerable families (including Arizona educators) at higher risk for usurious fees and costly interest.

OUR IMPACT: Fixing Bills with Unintended Consequences for Arizona Schools

Behind the scenes of this year's legislative session, our union lobbied to fix bills that would have created major administrative and financial burdens for our schools and our members – resulting in better laws and fewer mandates.

Notable fixes include:

- **HB 2019**: The original version of this bill would have required school districts to provide information on water safety, including by compiling a list of local providers of water safety education courses or swimming lessons. After input from AEA and other stakeholders, lawmakers designated the Arizona Department of Education as the primary provider of this information. Districts are now only required to provide a link to the state's information page instead of compiling the information themselves.
- HB 2484: During this year's legislative session, lawmakers introduced many cell phone bills, including some versions that would have created significant burdens for educators. After input from AEA and other stakeholders, lawmakers passed HB 2484, which gives significant flexibility to school districts to set policies that work best for their communities. If districts already have a policy in place, this law mandates no further requirements.
- **SB 1502**: The original version of this bill would have required a literacy endorsement for certified special education teachers from K-12th grade. After pressure from AEA, lawmakers modified the bill to remove the requirements for educators from grades 6-12. Our union understands that the existing endorsement continues to create burdens for elementary teachers, and we will continue to advocate for greater support and fewer unfunded mandates connected to literacy programs.



Leadership Matters: Governor Katie Hobbs Vetoes 30+ Bills Attacking Public Education

During this year's legislative session, our union secured dozens of vetoes from Governor Katie Hobbs to block harmful bills that would have created unfunded mandates, attacked our students, and injected political debates into our classrooms.

The number and scope of these vetoes underscore the importance of flipping the Arizona Legislature to a pro-public education majority and re-electing a governor who will protect and defend public education.

Education Bills Vetoed by Governor Hobbs in 2025 include:

- HB 2610: would have allowed state lawmakers to fire and replace the Governing Board members and superintendents of school districts in receivership. If enacted, HB 2610 would have stripped struggling districts of their most experienced leaders against the wishes of the community.
- HB 2375: would have required districts to conduct student disability evaluations during the summer without providing additional funding for staff salaries during that period.
- SB 1003: would have allowed individuals to sue districts for allowing trans youth to use bathrooms or other school facilities.
- **SB 1002**: would have prohibited Arizona educators from referring to students by their chosen names or pronouns without written permission from the student's parents.
- HB 2063: would have required schools to distribute redundant information to parents about immunization exemptions, contributing to vaccine skepticism that puts students and educators at risk.

- HB 2670: would have required Arizona schools to provide explicit instruction on fetal development without additional funding or support on this politically sensitive topic.
- HB 2700: would have required geography education in Arizona to include explicit instruction about the "Gulf of America" a term the Trump administration has used to refer to the region historically known as the Gulf of Mexico.
- **SB 1256**: would have prohibited state agencies from using diversity, equity, and inclusion programs for hiring, training, or promotion.

Veto Spotlight

During the 2025 session, our union set a national model for defeating bills that weaponize real fears about antisemitism to attack public education. After lawmakers passed



Sunnyside Education Association members hold a stand-out to protect public education and speak out against harmful bills, including HB 2867.

HB 2867, a controversial bill that would have weakened professional liability protections for educators accused of antisemitism, AEA worked together with the National Council for Jewish Women and the Tucson Jewish Museum & Holocaust Center to make the case for Governor Hobbs to veto the bill, which she did.

Looking Ahead: 2026 Legislative Session

During the 2026 Legislative Session, Arizona lawmakers are expected to debate dozens of issues of significance for Arizona educators, including:

Renewing Prop 123: Arizona lawmakers must choose to either provide full funding to Arizona public schools through the state General Fund or advance a 2026 ballot measure to renew Prop 123. Lawmakers may attempt to revive past efforts to attach voucher protections or performance pay to these renewal conversations. Our union will continue to advocate for full public school funding, including a clean renewal of Prop 123 that protects teacher salaries and local decision-making.

Voucher Accountability: Recent news coverage about out-of-control spending within Arizona's private school voucher program will increase pressure on Arizona lawmakers to institute greater accountability within the ESA program. Our union looks forward to working with a bipartisan

coalition of lawmakers to reduce waste, fraud, and abuse within the school voucher program and make progress toward a future where public dollars are no longer going to support private schools.

Local Decision-Making: Arizona lawmakers may revive previous attempts to undermine local decision-making around public schools, including through new statewide mandates related to performance pay and treatment of LGBTQ+ students. Our union will continue to stand strong in support of local leadership, especially on issues of classroom inclusion, civil rights, and district governance.

Fighting for Fully-Funded Public Schools: Our union will fight for a Fiscal Year 2027 budget that protects and expands funding for public schools. We will oppose any cuts to education funding, including cuts to programs that serve high-need school districts.

Expected Ballot Measures in 2026

rizona legislators advanced three ballot referrals during this year's legislative session that will go to voters for approval in 2026:

- ★ HCR 2021 would limit the ability of Arizona cities to levy taxes on food. This referral is strongly opposed by municipalities that rely on this revenue. If it passes, districts could be forced to make cuts to after-school programs and other school programming.
- **HCR 2055** would designate cartels as terrorist organizations and authorize local law enforcement to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement agencies. This referral faces opposition from some immigrant rights groups, who have raised concerns about racial profiling and overpolicing.

SCR 1044 would restrict vehicle mileage tracking by the Department of Motor Vehicles, raising questions about the implementation of transportation infrastructure funding.

Our union expects proposals for additional ballot initiatives to emerge during next year's legislative session, and we will be closely monitoring potential referrals for their impact on Arizona educators and schools.

AEA in the News: Legislative Press Highlights from the 2025 Session



Lawmakers propose ways to increase teacher pay

CBS NEWS

Bill banning teaching antisemitism vetoed by Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs, who says it's actually an attack on educators



Isaac School District teachers to be paid after approval from state treasurer

KJ27

Arizona teachers protesting at the state Capitol demand lawmakers extend public school funding



Vouchers Deliver Blow to Rural Schools: 'They're Taking Money From Our Students.'



Educators rally at AZ Capitol: 'Do your jobs'

AZMIRROR

Arizona teachers reject 'bad faith' plan tying funding renewal to voucher protections

azcentral.

Arizona lawmakers' bill targeting antisemitism is a well-intentioned bad idea | Opinion

Signing HB 2867 into law would put Arizona on a very dangerous road.

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