

GOP priorities for public ed advance from state Senate

BY MCKENNA HORSLEY
KENTUCKY LANTERN

FRANKFORT — The Republican-controlled state Senate passed bills Monday aimed at shining more light on school districts’ spending and shifting the balance of power in Kentucky’s largest school district.

The bills, considered top priorities by Senate Republicans, now head to the House, which also has a GOP supermajority, for further consideration.

Senate Bill 1, sponsored by Senate President Pro Tem David Givens, of Greensburg, mirrors a 2022 law deemed unconstitutional by the Kentucky Supreme Court that would shift powers from the Jefferson County Public Schools Board to the district’s superintendent. It passed by a vote of 29-7.

Republican Sen. Michael Nemes, of Shepherdsville, voted with Democrats against the bill.

Senate Bill 3, sponsored by Sen. Lindsey Tichenor, Smithfield, would require school districts to post various financial reports online as a means to increase transparency over public dollars following headlines of budget shortfalls in the state’s largest school districts, JCPS and Fayette County Public Schools. It passed by a vote of 35-1, with Sen.



The Kentucky Capitol in Frankfort, Kentucky, on February 27, 2024.

Photo by Arden Barnes/Kentucky Lantern

Jason Howell, R-Murray, as the lone vote against the bill.

The bill sponsors filed the legislation nearly two weeks ago. The bills are among a slate of priority education bills for the Senate Republican caucus this year.

On the Senate floor, Givens said SB 1 was necessary because lawmakers should treat JCPS, the state’s largest school district, differently than others. JCPS has more than 90,000 students. The next closest district in student

population is FCPS with more than 40,000. The use of possible “special legislation,” or policies that affect a single local government agency or city, was a question in the Supreme Court case.

“I think it’s important for us to realize that not only are we given responsibility and authority, not only do we fund the operations of this district and other districts across the commonwealth, we have a moral and ethical responsibility to provide the best possible edu-

cation for these future leaders and these future citizens of our commonwealth, and I’m confident that Senate Bill 1 enables a district of this size and scope to operate in a much more efficient way,” Givens said.

Democratic Floor Leader Sen. Gerald Neal said that he was critical of the district’s recent shortcomings, but added that he was encouraged about its future under Superintendent Brian Yearwood’s leadership.

“I’m a little concerned (about) when we push

the board back, when actually we should be pushing the board forward. We want more accountability,” Neal said. “And particularly when we’re talking about people who are elected by our neighbors, the parents of our kids, people who are vested in our communities, we want them to be more involved in that situation of oversight. That’s where accountability comes from.”

While presenting SB 3, Tichenor said her legislation would allow the

public greater access to how tax dollars are being spent by school districts statewide.

“The goal is simple — to ensure our education dollars are focused on student learning and student achievement,” Tichenor said. “Education money is ultimately for educating our students, and when monies are irresponsibly used elsewhere, once made transparent, a correction is needed.”

A floor amendment to SB 3 from Sen. Jimmy Higdon, R-Lebanon, added that information about separation pay to superintendents be made public online as well.

Senate Democratic Caucus Chair Reggie Thomas, of Lexington said while voting in favor of SB 3 that he would still defend some spending by Fayette schools during the last school year to hire additional teachers. He added that when public dollars are being used, “we must have transparency and the public should weigh in on that.”

During a Senate Education Committee meeting last week, JCPS officials told lawmakers they opposed the shift in governance outlined in SB 1, but see SB 3 as a way to better hold them accountable.

Don’t tune into the Super Bowl hoping for a break from politics

BY STEVEN SLOAN AND
STEVE PEOPLES
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Don’t tune into the Super Bowl hoping for a break from the tumultuous politics gripping the U.S.

The NFL is facing pressure ahead of Sunday’s game between the Seattle Seahawks and the New England Patriots to take a more explicit stance against the Trump administration’s aggressive immigration enforcement. More than 184,000 people have signed a petition calling on the league to denounce the potential presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the Super Bowl, which is being held at Levi’s Stadium in the San Francisco Bay Area. The liberal group Move-On plans to deliver the petition to the NFL’s New York City headquarters on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, anticipation is building around how Bad Bunny, the halftime show’s Spanish-speaking headliner, will address the moment. He has criticized President Donald



Jordan Strauss/Invision
Bad Bunny arrives at the 68th annual Grammy Awards on Sunday in Los Angeles.

Trump on everything from his hurricane response in his native Puerto Rico to his treatment of immigrants. On Sunday, he blasted ICE while accepting an award at the Grammys. His latest tour skipped the continental U.S. because of fears his fans could be targeted by immigration agents.

Trump, a Republican, has said he doesn’t plan to attend this year’s game, unlike last year, and has derided Bad Bunny as a “terrible choice.” A Republican senator is calling it “the woke bowl.” And a prominent conservative group plans to hold an alternative show it hopes will

steal attention from the main event.

The Super Bowl is one of the few remaining cultural touchstones viewed by millions of people in real time, and the halftime show is no stranger to controversy, perhaps most notably Janet Jackson’s 2004 performance in which her breast was exposed. But there are few parallels to this year’s game, which could become an unusual mix of sports, entertainment, politics and protest. And it will unfold at a tinderbox moment for the U.S., two weeks after Alex Prett’s killing by federal agents in Minneapolis

reignited a national debate over the Trump administration’s hardline law enforcement tactics.

“The Super Bowl is supposed to be an escape, right? We’re supposed to go there to not have to talk about the serious things of this country,” said Tiki Barber, a former player for the New York Giants who played in the Super Bowl in 2001 and has since attended several as a commentator. “I hope it doesn’t devolve, because if it does, then I think we’re really losing touch with what’s important in our society.”

BAD BUNNY HAS LEANED INTO THE CONTROVERSY

Bad Bunny, born in Puerto Rico as Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, has elevated Latino music into the mainstream and gained global fame with songs almost entirely in Spanish — something that irks many of his conservative detractors. He has leaned into the controversy, referring to the halftime show when he

hosted “Saturday Night Live” in October by joking “everybody is happy about it — even Fox News.”

He segued into a few sentences in Spanish, expressing Latino pride in the achievement, and finished by saying in English, “If you didn’t understand what I just said, you have four months to learn!”

Those who follow him closely doubt he’ll back down now.

“He has made it very clear what he stands for,” said Vanessa Díaz, a professor at Loyola Marymount University and co-author of “P FKN R: How Bad Bunny Became the Global Voice of Puerto Rican Resistance.” “So I can’t imagine that this would all go away with the Super Bowl.”

The halftime show is a collaboration between the NFL, Roc Nation and Apple Music. Roc Nation curates the performers and Apple Music distributes the performance while the NFL controls the stage, broadcast and branding.

The NFL, which is working to expand its

appeal across the world, including into Latin America, said it never considered removing Bad Bunny from the halftime show even after criticism from Trump and some of his supporters.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell on Monday described the singer as “one of the great artists in the world” and someone who understands the power of the Super Bowl performance “to unite people.”

About half of Americans approved of Bad Bunny as the halftime performer, according to an October poll from Quinnipiac University. But there were substantial gaps with about three-quarters of Democrats backing the pick compared to just 16% of Republicans. About 60% of Black and Hispanic adults approved of the selection compared with 41% of whites.

Republicans are eager to maintain Latino support in their bid to keep control of Congress. But as the Super Bowl draws near, many in the GOP have kept up their Bad Bunny critiques.

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NOTICE TO BID

The Caldwell County Schools Facilities Department requests bids for flooring for Caldwell County Primary School. Bids will be received at the Superintendent's office until 1:00 p.m. on Friday, February 27. Bid specifications may be obtained at the Board of Education, 612 West Washington Street, Princeton, KY 42445.

All bids must be sealed and marked as follows:
"Bid-Opening February 27, 2026 - 1:00 p.m"

The Caldwell County Board of Education reserves the right to reject any or all bids or any part thereof.
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GRID RESILIENCE POLE REPLACEMENT SERVICES

Princeton Electric Plant Board is soliciting bids for the design, construction, supply, and delivery of sixty-one (61) hot-dip galvanized (HDG) steel distribution utility poles. This project will be partially funded through the Grid Resilience State and Tribal Formula Grant, implemented by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE), under the Resilient and Efficient Codes Implementation (RECI) Program, and is part of the Kentucky Grid Resilience Grant Program, with a primary focus on improving the resilience of the electric grid against disruptive events caused by severe weather. Bids must be submitted online not later than 12:00 PM CST on March 4, 2026 through the DFS Procurement Portal at dfs.bonfirehub.com. Award will occur at the Princeton Electric Plant Board office, March 10, 2026 at 12:00 PM CST at 304 E Legion Dr. Princeton, KY 42445.

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