

# Education budget heads to Gov. Kay Ivey

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**Brian Lyman (<http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/staff/12375/brian-lyman/>)**, Montgomery Advertiser Published 1:50 a.m. CT May 18, 2017 | Updated 1 hour ago



Alabama's 2018 education budget is headed to Gov. Kay Ivey for final approval.



The Alabama House of Representatives.. (Photo: File)

The House and Senate late Wednesday approved a compromise \$6.4 billion Education Trust Fund budget that provides a \$13 million increase to the state's pre-kindergarten program (a 20 percent increase), a \$24.1 million increase to the \$4 billion K-12 Foundation program (an increase of about a half a percent), including a \$3.4 million increase to transportation (a one percent increase); a \$750,000 increase for juvenile probation officers and funding to hire roughly 150 teachers for grades 4 to 6.

The budget also includes a \$3.5 million increase for the Department of Mental Health to pay for health services for children.

The budget also includes \$26 million to pay for growing costs in a veterans scholarship program. The Legislature early Thursday sent changes aimed at reducing future eligibility to Ivey in the hopes of reining in those costs. Those who currently receive benefits will not be affected.

After a few years of significant growth, the 2018 ETF -- which goes into effect Oct. 1 -- will see flat growth year over year. The ETF is expected to grow about \$90 million, or 1.4 percent, year over year. The budget does not provide raises for teachers and keeps the state's share of insurance funding for education employees unchanged.

The \$6.4 billion budget, if signed by Ivey, will be the largest in a decade, but still about \$300 million behind the 2008 Education Trust Fund, which stood at \$6.7 billion.

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