

# 2026 Legislative Recap: How Tennessee's Voucher Laws Changed This Year

This year's legislative cycle included many bills with the potential to impact public education in Tennessee. One of the most prevalent areas of focus was the state's voucher programs, which provide public dollars to families opting to enroll their child in a participating private school instead of their local public school district. This infographic breaks down the need-to-know voucher bills that were passed or rejected this legislative session.

Several new bills will expand access to private school vouchers, affect funding for schools and families, and alter accountability and transparency measures.

BILL	STATUS	WHAT IT DOES	WHY IT MATTERS
<b>HB 2532/ SB 2247</b>	Signed by governor	Increases Education Freedom Scholarship (EFS) voucher seats <b>from 25,000 to 35,000 statewide</b> ; alters <b>how districts can recoup funds</b> from disenrollment due to vouchers and <b>requires districts to track students' social security numbers</b> to do so; adjusts priority levels for voucher distribution that <b>increase income caps to 300% of the free and reduced price lunch</b> income level	Vouchers will <b>expand more rapidly</b> than previous legislation noted. Districts will face a <b>larger burden to recoup funds</b> , which will also be calculated according to past year's funding levels that <b>do not account for cost of living increases</b> . Critics argue the bill is intended to begin tracking public school students' citizenship status. More <b>vouchers will be available for higher income families</b> , as the number of seats is increasing while accessibility issues remain.
<b>HB 1881/ SB 1585</b>	Signed by governor	Originally introduced to delete outdated state DOE reporting requirements, the amended version <b>alters state testing measures for Education Savings Account (ESA) students</b> to allow participating schools to take either TCAP or a nationally standardized test	While the bill does not remove accountability and reporting measures for ESA voucher students and participating schools entirely, it does <b>impact how policymakers and educators are able to compare outcomes and make decisions</b> based on achievement data from multiple different sources.
<b>HB 1927/ SB 1891</b>	Signed by governor	Allows districts which have <b>not received funding for teacher bonuses allocated through the 2025 voucher bill</b> to take action to receive this funding	Teacher bonuses were a compelling aspect for many lawmakers to support the 2025 voucher bill – fulfilling this promise in full is <b>important for trust and accountability</b> .
<b>HB 2533/ SB 2228</b>	On governor's desk for next action	<b>Consolidates and restructures</b> certain departmental procedures and councils; expands student eligibility for <b>Individualized Education Accounts (IEA)</b>	While the bill expands IEA eligibility for students with disabilities, it <b>alters how families can apply those funds</b> and <b>limits the use</b> of certain educational supports.

## Over the last decade, voucher programs have evolved from serving specific student sub-groups to students statewide, including from higher-income families

- 2015** TN enacts **Individualized Education Accounts (IEAs)** for students with qualifying disabilities who are unable to enroll in public school to use state funds for certain educational expenses.
- 2019** Lawmakers pass the **Education Savings Account (ESA)** program to provide private school vouchers to **students in Nashville and Memphis** – the bill is challenged in court but is ultimately deemed lawful.
- 2022** **ESA vouchers are implemented** in Nashville and Memphis, providing roughly \$8,000 in public dollars for students to attend a **participating private school**, with income eligibility requirements in place.
- 2023** The **ESA program is expanded to include Hamilton County** – the overall number of seats is increased, **higher-income families become eligible**, and the voucher amount increases to roughly \$9,000.
- 2025** Lawmakers enact the **Education Freedom Scholarship (EFS) Act**, which expands TN's voucher program statewide and provides roughly \$7,200 toward private school tuition and fees.
- 2026** **EFS vouchers are expanded in TN**, increasing the number of seats available, raising income eligibility limits, and raising the voucher amount to roughly \$7,500.

## Several proposed bills that would have promoted voucher transparency and accountability failed to advance pass the committee level

 <b>HB 1052/ SB 1338</b>	Intended to require the state comptroller to annually report on EFS voucher participation to the General Assembly to promote accountability and fiscal oversight.
 <b>HB 1544/ SB 1643</b>	Intended to require the state Department of Education to annually report on EFS voucher participation to the General Assembly to promote data transparency.
 <b>HB 1889/ SB 1978</b>	Intended to establish reporting requirements on voucher participation, cap income eligibility, and require private schools to administer TCAP to students using vouchers.