

Kids at the Capitol 2021



LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

Kids at the Capitol: 2021 Legislative Summary

When Arkansas's 93rd General Assembly convened on Monday, January 11, we knew the session would look different from any other. With the pandemic raging and after more than a dozen state legislators contracted the virus in late 2020, the Legislature adopted new procedures to minimize the spread of COVID-19. While the limits on capacity at the Capitol and in-person interaction were necessary for public health and safety, it certainly made many of our tried-and-true advocacy tactics difficult, if not impossible.

Even the weather contributed to an unusual legislative session. Thanks to back-to-back, record-setting winter weather events, Arkansas's 93rd General Assembly recessed for the entire week of February 15, as much of Arkansas transformed into "Antarkansas."

From a policy perspective, we were disappointed that the needs of Arkansas's most vulnerable children and families were rarely addressed. We failed to see the adoption of research-proven policies that would benefit children and families across Arkansas, including school discipline reform, financial relief for low-income families, real hate crimes legislation, better access to health care coverage for mothers and children, and more effective policies to reduce hunger. Like many, we were on the defensive for much of the session with seemingly endless legislation to limit voting rights and to threaten the well-being of transgender children and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in Arkansas.

And yet there were highlights, including better job and educational opportunities for immigrants, the continuation of Medicaid coverage for hundreds of thousands of low-income adults, teacher raises, increases in overall education funding, and more.

**THANK
YOU!**

Your advocacy efforts matter!

Keep reaching out on other
important bills.

The legislative session was also the longest anyone can remember, stretching to nearly the end of April. No Arkansas General Assembly session has lasted longer since 1931. And, technically, it's still not over. The legislature is taking an extended recess, with plans to reconvene this fall, when the 2020 U.S. Census data becomes available for legislative and congressional redistricting (delayed because of issues at the Census Bureau). They will formally adjourn after approving redrawn district lines and are expected to convene for a special session to consider tax cuts for high-income Arkansans.

In the meantime, public officials at the state and local levels will be making many important decisions about how to spend billions of dollars allocated to Arkansas under the federal American Rescue Plan. We want to thank everyone for staying engaged for more than three months. No matter if the legislation went the way we hoped, speaking up for the children of Arkansas is always valuable and powerful.

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Child Welfare

There were fewer child welfare bills filed in the legislative session as in past years. Several were clean-up bills from laws passed in previous sessions that needed clarification. Two important new pieces of legislation to note were Act 738 and Act 975. Act 738 permits courts to allow family members and others connected to the family to attend juvenile court hearings. This was the practice in many courts, and now the law reflects that practice.

The other, Act 975, moves the administration of the child advocacy centers and child safety centers from the Commission on Child Abuse, Rape, and Domestic Violence to its own board, and the Department of Finance and Administration will administer the funds for the centers. The following are a few of the child welfare bills AACF followed this session.

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Sen. Trent Garner SB 612	Act 1026 allows, in criminal proceedings, a child who is 12 or younger to testify through video conference technology for the child to feel comfortable testifying. Under previous law, a child could only testify outside the courtroom through close-circuit TV.	Passed	Supported
Rep. Charlene Fite Sen. Jonathan Dismang HB 1499	Act 975 moves the administration of child advocacy centers and child safety centers from the Commission on Child Abuse, Rape, and Domestic Violence to its own board and the Department of Finance and Administration.	Passed	Supported
Sen. Alan Clark SB 166	Act 738 permits courts to allow family members and others connected to the family to attend juvenile court hearings (including delinquency, family in need of services, and dependent-neglect).	Passed	Supported
Rep. Karilyn Brown HB 1797	Act 673 says the Child Welfare Agency Review Board can promulgate (put into effect) and enforce rules that prohibit the use of corporal discipline.	Passed	Supported



Democracy and Voting Rights

This year was a difficult one for voting rights. Fueled by false and dangerous narratives of election irregularities, state legislatures across the country passed a series of highly restrictive voting rights bills that will make it harder for many Americans to vote. Arkansas was no exception. Dozens of election-related bills were put forward by the 93rd General Assembly, some of which were aimed at making it harder to vote and diminishing the power of voters at the ballot box. There were also bills to take away power from democratically elected County Clerks and give more power to election commissioners who are appointed and not accountable to voters.

Voting is a fundamental right of citizens of this country and state, but sadly since the beginning of our democracy there have been efforts to ensure only certain Americans can vote. It has been a hard-fought struggle to expand access to voting and to end many restrictions to voting that were largely aimed at preventing BIPOC Americans from voting: property ownership requirements, poll taxes, the revocation of voting rights for people with

felony convictions, and gender restrictions, among many others. New laws that make it harder to vote take Arkansas backwards.

Not all voting rights legislation proposed by the General Assembly this year would roll back rights, however. In fact, there were bipartisan efforts to make voting easier. But those efforts largely stalled. Moving forward, there will likely be court cases challenging the new restrictions to voting, and hopefully there will be efforts to improve the voting process to make it easier, and not more difficult, to vote. But at the end of the day, the right to vote cannot be viewed through a partisan lens; it must be seen as sacred. On January 6th of this year, we saw how fragile the foundations of our democracy can be if not cherished and protected. The following are a few of the relevant bills AACF followed this session.

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Rep. Andrew Collins Sen. Breanne Davis HB 1202	Act 128 requires that sample ballots for each polling site be posted online for voters to review.	Passed	Supported
Sen. Clarke Tucker Rep. Michelle Gray SB 701	This bill would have made several changes to the absentee voting process, including allowing plain language to be used in the absentee ballot application and extending the deadline to complete the counting of absentee ballots from the closing of the polls on Election Day to the end of business on the Thursday following the election.	Failed	Supported
Rep. Justin Boyd. Sen. Breanne Davis HB 1517	This bill would have allowed people to register to vote online.	Failed	Supported

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Sen. Greg Leding SB 508	This bill would have made general election days a state holiday.	Failed	Supported
Sen. Greg Leding SB 509	This bill would have required employers to provide two hours of paid leave for employees to vote on election days. There was an exception if the employee's work schedule includes two consecutive non-work hours when the polls are open.	Failed	Supported
Sen. Kim Hammer Rep. Jack Ladyman SB 643	Act 973 moves up the deadline to return absentee ballots in person to the Friday before the election, except for an "authorized agent" delivering the ballot of someone who is medically unable to vote at their polling place.	Passed	Opposed
Sen. Breanne Davis Rep. Michelle Gray SB 614	Act 951 makes it harder for citizen-led ballot measure campaigns to hire paid canvassers to collect signatures for ballot measure petitions.	Passed	Opposed
Rep. David Ray Sen. Bart Hester HJR 1005	HJR 1005 will be on the 2022 ballot for voters' consideration. Currently, for a ballot measure to pass and become law, a majority must vote to approve it. If this proposed constitutional amendment passes, it will increase the threshold to at least 60 percent of votes cast.	Passed	Opposed
Rep. Mark Lowery Sen. Alan Clark HB 1112	Act 249 amends the state Constitution to effectively end the right to vote for people who do not own certain forms of ID.	Passed	Opposed
Sen. Kim Hammer Rep. Justin Gonzales SB 485	This bill would have cut early voting short by a day. Currently, early voting ends the Monday before the election. This bill would have ended early voting the Saturday before the election.	Failed	Opposed



Early Childhood and K-12 Education

One of our goals during this session was to help shape the state COVID education policy response to focus on closing equity gaps, which have likely worsened during the pandemic, by requiring that a study be conducted and/or plan be developed on research-proven strategies to close those gaps. Although a bill was drafted, it was never introduced and heard in committee. The good news is that while the Arkansas Department of Education opposed our bill, they have contracted with researchers at the University of Arkansas to conduct a study similar to what AACF was advocating for.

We also aimed to protect funding for public schools by ensuring that a constitutionally required adequate education is fully funded and by preventing the redirection of education dollars for charter schools and private schools. In the House, we helped defeat a major voucher bill (HB 1371) that would have allowed automatic and unlimited increases in future public spending on private school vouchers. A more limited voucher bill (SB 680) was introduced by Sen. Dismang and considered in the House and Senate Revenue and Tax Committees, where it faced little opposition and ultimately passed as Act 904. The projected revenue impact of this more limited program is \$2 million.

And we tried to reduce the school-to-prison pipeline by reforming school discipline policies that disproportionately impact BIPOC children, who are punished more severely and more often than their White peers for the same actions. We sought to expand an existing law for grades K-5 that bans expulsions or out-of-school suspensions and expand the existing partial ban of corporal punishment for certain special education students with the most severe developmental disabilities. Sen. Missy Irvin introduced two bills for us on this issue. Neither bill passed, but Senator Irvin has promised to push for an interim study on comprehensive school discipline reform. AACF and our partners in the Arkansas Out of School Network (AOSN) also advocated for state funding to finally implement the Positive Youth Development Act (PYDA) of 2011. While a \$5 million appropriation bill was approved for PYDA, no state funds were approved and it was unclear at press time how much of this appropriation is actually going to be funded with new federal COVID relief funding. The following are a few of the early childhood and K-12 education bills AACF followed this session.

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Rep. Jimmy Gazaway HB 1610	Act 1084 requires that public schools implement positive behavioral supports for students who exhibit social, emotional, or behavioral problems or are in crisis. It places major limits on schools' use of physical restraints and requires training of personnel on the use of restraints.	Passed	Supported
Sen. Missy Irvin Rep. Lee Johnson SB 291	Act 744 defines characteristics and strategies for community schools, which include integrated student supports, expanded learning times, active community and family engagement, and collaborative leadership practices.	Passed	Supported

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Rep. Bruce Cozart HB 1614	Act 680 raises teacher salaries. It sets a statewide target average salary of \$51,822 for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years and requires the House and Senate Education committees to jointly set the amount in future years. Districts with salaries below the target will receive equalization funding of \$185 per student.	Passed	Supported
Rep. Bruce Cozart Sen. Missy Irvin HB 1677	Act 614 increases state funding for public schools for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years. The law sets out the amounts in per-student foundation funding as well as extra amounts for the number or percentage of students who are in alternative learning environments, students who are English language learners, and students who are low-income. It also provides professional development funding.	Passed	Supported
Sen. Missy Irvin Rep. DeAnn Vaught SB 501	This bill would have expanded the prohibition against corporal punishment in public schools to include all students in special education with an individual education plan under the federal IDEA law. Current law only prohibits its use against students with the most severe physical or developmental disabilities.	Failed	Supported
Sen. Missy Irvin Rep. DeAnn Vaught SB 502	This bill would have expanded the current ban against expulsions and out-of-school suspensions for kids in grades K-5 to all students in foster care.	Failed	Supported
Sen. Jonathan Dismang Rep. Jamie Scott SB 140	This bill would have required schools to seek out and consider information on a student's adverse childhood experiences before placing them in an alternative learning environment or levying an exclusionary disciplinary action against them. It would also require that every public school implement positive behavioral supports.	Failed	Supported
Sen. Jonathan Dismang Rep. Ken Bragg SB 680	Act 904 creates the Philanthropic Investment in Arkansas Kids Program, a private school voucher for grades K-12. It creates a state income tax credit for 100% off eligible contributions to a scholarship (school voucher) granting organization. The total amount of state income tax credits claimed cannot exceed more than \$2 million per calendar year.	Passed	Opposed

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	ACF's position
Rep. Ken Bragg Sen. Jonathan Dismang HB 1371	This bill would have created a new voucher program to pay for scholarships to K-12 private schools. Among other things, it would have expanded eligibility for private school vouchers beyond the current Succeed Scholarship Program and would have created an income tax credit program that could have automatically grown from \$10 million in state funding annually to much higher amounts in just a few years.	Failed	Opposed
Rep. Mary Bentley Sen. Breanne Davis HB 1644	This bill would have prohibited DHS from imposing minimum post-secondary education requirements for child care program directors and workers.	Failed	Opposed

Family Economic and Food Security

To promote family economic well-being, AACF and our partners again advocated for the creation of a state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Sen. David Wallace introduced a coalition-backed EITC bill, SB 10. The bill failed to get out of the Senate Revenue and Tax Committee this session, but we are hoping we can get the bill considered again when the Legislature convenes in special session late this year and personal income tax cuts are on the agenda.

The Legislature passed more laws that weakened family economic security than laws that could benefit everyday Arkansans. While a proposal to

implement an “implied warranty of habitability” for rental housing in Arkansas advanced out of committee, it did not pass out of the House. Legislation aimed at eliminating criminal evictions did not advance out of committee. One bright spot was SB 594. While the legislation is insufficient in many areas, it does repeal the need for pre-trial deposits for tenants to have their hearing in court.

Several pieces of legislation passed this session will make it harder for hungry children to obtain nutritional assistance in Arkansas. Two new laws make it harder for families to keep their

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, requiring state officials to go above and beyond requirements under federal law to investigate families and remove them from the SNAP program. Meanwhile, a proposal that would have made it possible for families on SNAP to build their financial security by saving more money (SB 650), failed to pass the Senate and was referred to interim study. The following are a few of the relevant bills AACF followed this session.



Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Sen. David Wallace SB 10	This bill would have provided targeted financial relief to working low- and middle-income families through an Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).	Failed	Supported
Sen. Clarke Tucker Rep. Tippi McCullough SB 713	This bill would have committed the state to addressing the inequality in pay by gender by, among other things, requiring equal pay for state employees.	Failed	Supported
Sen. Jonathan Dismang SB 650	This bill would have raised the asset limit for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or food stamp) benefits and allowed for inflationary increases. Under current law, most families can't have more than \$2,250 and still be eligible for SNAP benefits, and this legislation would double that amount to \$4,500.	Interim Study	Supported
Rep. Nicole Clowney HB 1798	This bill would have eliminated criminal evictions in Arkansas so that all eviction proceedings are handled in civil courts. Arkansas remains the only state in the United States with a criminal eviction statute.	Failed	Supported
Rep. Jimmy Gazaway HB 1563	This bill would have created minimum standards for rental housing and remedies for tenants whose landlords don't repair defects that have an effect on health and safety. Arkansas remains the only state in the nation without an implied warranty of habitability.	Failed	Supported
Sen. Scott Flippo Rep. Robin Lundstrum SB 295	Act 780 changes many aspects of eligibility for SNAP and Medicaid. It requires that recipients update the state more often on minor changes in their financial status and will have state agencies and commissions share information more often to investigate whether recipients' circumstances have changed.	Passed	Opposed
Rep. Ken Underwood Sen. Bart Hester HB 1512	Act 419 limits the state's ability to extend SNAP benefits to families who are having trouble meeting work requirements.	Passed	Opposed
Rep. Austin McCollum Sen. Bart Hester HB 1676	This bill would have reduced the maximum length of unemployment benefits from 16 weeks to 12 weeks in some circumstances.	Failed	Opposed

Health Care

One of AACF's goals for the 93rd General Assembly was to support the renewal of our state's Medicaid Expansion program for low-income adults. After many attempts, the Medicaid appropriations bill ultimately passed late in the session. SB 410 also passed, giving the Department of Human Services (DHS) approval to submit a federal waiver application continuing the Medicaid Expansion program (as ARHOME) but with major changes. AACF has concerns about some of these changes and has submitted comments to DHS on parts of the proposed waiver. Another bill, HB 1428, sponsored by Rep. Josh Miller, would eventually have cut eligibility for low-income adults currently on the Medicaid expansion program, but was ultimately defeated by health advocates.

Unfortunately, several bad bills passed that threaten access to health services. One was Act 530, which bans gender transition treatment for minors, including hormonal and treatment therapies that are now provided in Arkansas. The other was Act 462, the co-called "Medical Conscience Act." The new law allows health care providers and insurers to legally discriminate against people by allowing them to refuse medical treatment on the provider's religious, moral, or ethical beliefs.

Federal legislation passed before the beginning of the state legislative session that extended Medicaid coverage to adult Compact of Free Association islanders (mostly the Marshallese in Arkansas). To accelerate state implementation of the change in Arkansas, AACF and our Marshallese partners lobbied for an expedited rule review by the Arkansas Legislative Council's Executive Committee. As a result of the review, Marshallese Arkansans have been eligible for Medicaid since early March.

To improve child and maternal health in Arkansas, we advocated for an expansion of Medicaid coverage for new mothers and more consistent coverage for children. Rep. Lee Johnson introduced HB 1759 with the following provisions: (1) adopt 12-month continuous eligibility for children in ARKids A (traditional Medicaid) to keep children from losing their insurance during the year; (2) allow pregnant women and children to obtain immediate coverage while their applications are reviewed, if they seem likely to be eligible; and (3) adopt one-year postpartum Medicaid coverage for mothers (currently 60 days). Because of budget concerns with the total cost of the package, DHS opposed the bill, and it failed to get out of committee. The following are a few of the health-related bills AACF followed this session.



Medicaid Equity for Marshallese

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Rep. Julie Mayberry Sen. Missy Irvin HB 1826	Act 1089 requires that each public school district provide a health services program under the direction of a licensed registered nurse. It requires at least one nurse in each district to participate in annual professional development and requires the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education to create an education program for school nurses.	Passed	Supported
Sen. Missy Irvin Rep. Michelle Gray SB 410	Act 530 changes Arkansas's Medicaid Expansion health insurance coverage in a variety of ways, including requiring the state to cover some beneficiaries in the traditional Medicaid program, while allowing others to be covered by private plans. To receive coverage from the private insurance plans, participants will be required to take part in "Health Improvement Initiatives" and "Economic Independence Initiatives."	Passed	Supported
Rep. Lee Johnson HB 1759	This bill would have provided better coverage to mothers, babies and children in the Medicaid program.	Failed	Supported
Rep. Robin Lundstrum Sen. Alan Clark HB 1570	Act 626 bans gender transition treatment for minors, including hormonal treatment and therapies that are provided now in Arkansas.	Passed	Opposed
Sen. Kim Hammer Rep. Brandt Smith SB 289	Act 462 allows health care providers to refuse treatment to people based on the health care worker's religious, moral, or ethical beliefs or principles.	Passed	Opposed
Rep. Josh Miller Rep. Dan Sullivan HB 1428	This bill would have eliminated the Medicaid Expansion program for uninsured adults. The bill proposed to move the adults eligible under the Medicaid Expansion program into the regular Medicaid program. Moving this population into regular Medicaid would have decreased the federal match rate.	Failed	Opposed

Immigrant Families

One of the bright spots of the 2021 session was the advancement of legislation that will make Arkansas a better place to grow up for children in immigrant families. Several proposals long rejected by state lawmakers, such as allowing bilingual education in our schools, sailed through with little opposition. A couple of big legislative wins will allow immigrants with work permits under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy to obtain professional licensure, including teaching licenses. Similar legislation had been filed numerous times in previous sessions and failed.

On the defensive side, a bill that would have encouraged local law officers to participate in immigration enforcement failed to pass. Our partners at Arkansas United — along with a coalition of immigrants, their advocates, supporters from public schools and higher education, as well as employers — helped advocate for these positive changes and against the bad ideas. These are examples of the types of changes we all need in Arkansas. When opportunities open up for children in immigrant families, we are all better off as a state — from the well-being and economic security of kids to our economy as a whole. The following are a few of the relevant bills AACF followed this session.

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Rep. Clint Penzo Sen. Bob Ballinger HB 1554	Act 1106 establishes an affirmative defense to a prosecution if the accused was a victim of human trafficking. It also expands protections for women coerced into giving their children up for adoption.	Passed	Supported
Rep. Clint Penzo Sen. Bart Hester HB 1735	Act 746 expands the fields in which immigrants are allowed to work in Arkansas. It allows any professional or occupational licensing entity to issue licenses to immigrants who qualify and have federal work permits, including those issued to immigrants with under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy -- commonly referred to as DACA.	Passed	Supported
Rep. Megan Godfrey Sen. Clarke Tucker HB 1451	Act 663 allows a public school district to adopt a bilingual program or a dual-immersion program approved by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education.	Passed	Supported
Rep. Clint Penzo Sen. Bob Ballinger HB 1379	Act 599 will protect the rights of birth mothers during adoption proceedings. Among other things, it ensures that they can only consent to adoption when the information is translated into their native language.	Passed	Supported
Rep. DeAnn Vaught Sen. Lance Eads HB 1594	Act 513 allows immigrants living and working in the United States under the DACA policy to obtain teaching licenses in Arkansas.	Passed	Supported

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Sen. Bart Hester Rep. Clint Penzo SB 287	Act 217 allows recipients of certain state-funded scholarships to include lawful permanent residents, those with visas and those who are migrants from Compact of Free Association islands, such as the Marshall Islands.	Passed	Supported
Sen. Trent Garner SB 545	This legislation would have levied a new tax to help fund law enforcement agencies that establish a 287(g) program. Those programs allow local agencies to enforce federal immigration laws, and most Arkansas agencies have declined to participate.	Failed	Opposed

Juvenile Justice

Our primary goal under juvenile justice for this session was to eliminate or reduce the disproportionate economic impact of juvenile court fees and fines on low-income families. Sen. Alan Clark introduced SB 455, which would have

eliminated virtually all juvenile court fees and some fines, but the bill failed to get out of committee. The following are a few of the juvenile justice bills AACF followed this session.

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Sen. Alan Clark SB 455	This bill would have eliminated certain fees and fines for juveniles in the courts, which families can be required to pay out of pocket, including, but not limited to: cost of counsel, probation and supervision, and diversion and treatment services. It would also have ensured that certain services were available at no cost to juveniles or their parents, including educational opportunities, diversion alternatives and the cost of attorneys.	Failed	Supported
Rep. Jamie Scott Sen. Alan Clark HB 1470	Act 422 prohibits placing a juvenile in solitary confinement if the juvenile: is pregnant, has delivered a child within the past 30 days, is breastfeeding, is suffering from postpartum depression, or is caring for a child in a juvenile detention facility. Some exceptions apply, such as if the juvenile has engaged in violence while detained.	Passed	Supported

Racial Equity

Despite support from Gov. Hutchinson and the biggest businesses in the state, a much-touted hate crimes bill failed. It would have increased criminal penalties for offenders who target victims based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, homelessness or military service background. Instead, lawmakers passed — also with the backing of the Governor and the business community — a bill that increases the amount of a prison sentence an offender must serve if they target victims based on the victim’s group or class. But it does not specify what those classes or groups are.

Lawmakers passed a “Stand Your Ground Law,” which removes the duty to retreat from Arkansas’s self-defense law. Many of those who advocated against its passage were concerned that it will have the effect of putting more Black Arkansans in harm’s way. In other states where Stand Your Ground can be used as a legal defense, statistics show firearm-related homicides were ruled justified more than four times more often in cases where the shooter was White and the victim was Black than when the races were reversed.

Meanwhile, legislation failed that would have repealed the law designating Confederate Flag Day in Arkansas. Another bill that would have created a State Police division to investigate abuses of power by law enforcement failed to pass. On the bright side, legislation that would have effectively outlawed teaching our country’s racial history as part of the “1619 Project” failed to pass. Another bill that would have reduced funding to schools that teach curriculum to “promote social justice” also failed to pass. The following are a few of the relevant bills AACF followed this session.



Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas’s children and families	Bill status	AACF’s position
Sen. Bart Hester Rep. DeAnn Vaught SB 160	Act 611 requires that, beginning in 2022-23, all public school districts include teaching of the Holocaust and its causes. The state-developed curriculum must encourage tolerance of diversity “and reverence for human dignity for all citizens in a pluralistic society.”	Passed	Supported
Rep. Fred Allen Sen. Linda Chesterfield HB 1029	Act 259 adds John Walker to the list of civil rights leaders in the teaching materials regarding African American history in public schools. John W. Walker (1937-2019) was a lawyer who emerged from segregated schools and society in southwestern Arkansas to wage a 60-year war on discrimination in Arkansas’s education systems, public institutions and workforce.	Passed	Supported

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Rep. Jamie Scott Sen. Joyce Elliott HB 1871	This bill, known as the CROWN Act, would have prohibited employers, schools, colleges and universities from discriminating against individuals based on traits associated or perceived to be associated with race, including an individual's hair texture. A protected hairstyle, as defined in the bill, included Afros, braids, locks and twists.	Failed	Supported
Rep. Vivian Flowers Sen. Joyce Elliott HJR 1021	This proposed constitutional amendment would have fully abolished slavery in Arkansas. It would have repealed the part of the state Constitution that allows slavery and involuntary servitude as punishment for a crime. It would have required that, if prisoners are working, they be compensated for that labor with either money or "good time" to shorten their sentences.	Failed	Supported
Rep. Andrew Collins Sen. Breanne Davis HB 1203	This bill would have repealed the state law that currently designates the Saturday before Easter Sunday as "Confederate Flag Day" in Arkansas.	Failed	Supported
Rep. Fred Love HB 1007	This bill would have created a new Arkansas State Police division to investigate alleged abuses of power by law enforcement. It would have established a hotline for reporting alleged abuses and would have created a searchable database of officers who have been accused.	Failed	Supported
Rep. Fred Love Sen. Jim Hendren HB 1020 & SB 3	Either of these hate-crimes bill would have increased penalties by no more than 20 percent for crimes in which an offender targets a victim because of their race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, homelessness or military services. Arkansas remains one of only three states that doesn't have such a law on the books.	Failed	Supported
Sen. Bob Ballinger Rep. Aaron Pilkington SB 24	Act 250 removes the duty to retreat, under certain circumstances, from Arkansas's self-defense law.	Passed	Opposed
Sen. Trent Garner SB 627	Act 1100 prohibits state entities from teaching, instructing or training what the state defines as "divisive concepts," which primarily pertain to racial and gender equity.	Passed	Opposed

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Rep. Mark Lowery Sen. Gary Stubblefield HB 1231	This would have reduced funding to schools that include in their curriculum the "1619 Project." That's the New York Times' sweeping report of the history of racial disparity in the United States, beginning with the first slave ships that arrived here more than 400 years ago.	Withdrawn by Author	Opposed
Rep. Mark Lowery Sen. Gary Stubblefield HB 1218	This bill would have had the state withhold partial funding from public schools and colleges that include teaching to promote social justice for a group of people on the basis of race, gender, political affiliation or social class. It would also have withheld funding if a school or college "advocates the isolation" of students based on characteristics including race and ethnicity.	Withdrawn by Author	Opposed

Tax and Budget

Most of the harmful tax legislation proposed this spring did not pass. Proposals to eliminate the state income tax, to reduce the top tax rate, to eliminate the "throwback" rule for corporation income, and more failed to gain traction.

We worked to protect funding for ARKids First and Medicaid. HB 1546 would have cut the soda pop tax, endangering funding for the Medicaid

Trust Fund, but it was defeated several times on the House Floor. There were no other major efforts to cut funding for the Medicaid budget this session.

Worryingly, though, the Legislature and Governor have committed to coming back later in the year and passing more tax cuts. That could limit revenue for essential children's programs. The following are a few of the relevant bills AACF followed this session.

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Rep. Joe Jett Sen. Jonathan Dismang HB 1209	The federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act put a limit on the State and Local Tax (SALT) Deduction. Act 362 creates a work around for individuals to be able to claim an uncapped amount of the SALT deduction. While this raises some revenue for the state, the ultimate impact is to cut taxes for the very wealthy.	Passed	Opposed
Rep. Les Eaves Sen. Jonathan Dismang HB 1361	Act 248 allows businesses that received loans through the Paycheck Protection Program to deduct payroll and other expenses paid from PPP loans from taxable income.	Passed	Opposed

Primary sponsors and bill numbers	What it means to Arkansas's children and families	Bill status	AACF's position
Rep. David Ray Sen. Ben Gilmore HB 1902	This bill would have constrained the growth of state expenditures based on an arbitrary calculation of “disposable” personal income.	Withdrawn by Author	Opposed
Rep. David Ray Sen. Trent Garner HB 1864	This bill would have required the state to take money from general revenue to put into a special fund that would have been used to finance income tax cuts that would disproportionately help higher-income Arkansans.	Withdrawn by Author	Opposed
Rep. Lanny Fite Sen. David Wallace HB 1546	This bill would have eliminated a tax on the manufacturers, wholesalers and distributors of soft drinks that could endanger the integrity of the Medicaid Trust Fund.	Failed	Opposed
Rep. John Maddox Sen. Bart Hester HB 1403	This bill would have cut the top income tax rate in a way that primarily benefited the most affluent Arkansans.	Failed	Opposed
Sen. Jonathan Dismang SB 483	This bill would have eliminated the “throwback rule” that ensures corporations pay taxes on all their income.	Failed	Opposed

Fast Facts – 2021 Legislative Session

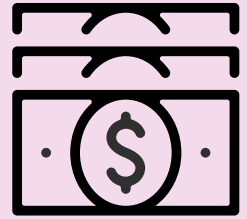
1,675

bills filed



\$5.84 billion

general revenue budget
2021-2022



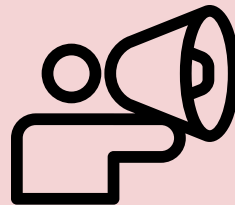
1,099

bills
passed



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6 bills
from AACF
agenda
introduced



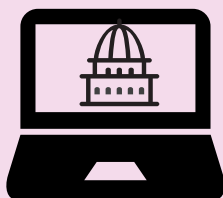
AACF sent

20 advocacy alerts,
resulting in

627 advocates
contacting
their legislators

942 times
by email

388 attendees
at our first-ever
virtual Kids Count
Week at the
Capitol



AACF provided written testimony on

12 bills and testified
in person **4** times before
legislative
committees





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