# Alabama Senate filibuster likely dooms abstinence education bill this session



A legislative effort to introduce a bill mandating Alabama’s public schools to teach sexual risk avoidance and abstinence-based sex education is unlikely to pass during the current legislative session, following significant delays and opposition in the state Senate.

The bill, known as Senate Bill 277, is sponsored by Senator Shay Shelnutt, a Republican from Trussville. It seeks to overhaul the sex education curriculum in Alabama schools by focusing on sexual risk avoidance rather than comprehensive sex education. Key provisions in the bill include teaching about the financial costs associated with pregnancy, child care, abortion, and adoption, alongside instruction on parenting responsibilities. The bill also prohibits providing referrals or information on how to acquire abortions, misrepresenting contraceptive efficacy, and using sexually explicit images in sex education materials.

Furthermore, SB 277 aims to restrict local boards of education from partnering with individuals or organisations that do not endorse sexual risk avoidance or that advocate for or perform abortions. It also mandates a 14-day parental notification period before any sex education instruction is delivered and provides parents or guardians with the right to opt their children out of such programs.

The bill’s progress was hindered on Tuesday during a prolonged Democratic filibuster over the General Fund budget, which consumed much of the legislative day’s allotted time. As a result, debate on SB 277 was pushed to the closing minutes before midnight, when the legislative day ended without a vote being held. Senator Shelnutt expressed frustration over the delay. Speaking on the Senate floor near the end of the session, he said, “We’ve only got 10 more minutes. Y’all wasted the whole day. So, let’s just waste the last 10 minutes. I know you want to waste the last 10 minutes,” directed at Democratic senators.

Senator Vivian Davis Figures, a Democrat from Mobile, questioned Shelnutt about the specifics of the proposed curriculum and whether he had consulted with the Alabama Department of Education regarding the existing sex education framework. Shelnutt responded defensively, stating, “You’ve read the bill. You know what the bill does. There’s no sense wasting my time answering your questions. Y’all want to stop it, so just you got the mic. Go.” Figures insisted her questions were sincere, but Shelnutt maintained his position, emphasising that the bill was “a good bill” and expressing his opposition to what he described as inappropriate content being taught by “left-wing, crazy people.” He added, “If you got a problem with it, you got a problem with it.” He later described some current sex education content as “crap” he did not want taught to children.

Following these exchanges, Senator Rodger Smitherman, a Democrat from Birmingham, spoke in defence of the Democratic filibuster, rejecting claims that the legislative day was wasted. He said, “It’s only a waste when you don’t care about things that we’re trying to address for the people that we represent. So, if I’m categorized as trying to represent the people that I represent, and someone wants to call it a waste, then so be it.”

With only four days remaining in the 2025 Alabama legislative session, the window for advancing Senate bills narrows considerably. From Thursday onwards, any Senate-originated bill not yet passed by the chamber will require unanimous consent to move forward to the House of Representatives, meaning that a single senator’s objection can effectively end the bill’s chances this session.

The Birmingham News is reporting on the unfolding developments surrounding SB 277, which highlights ongoing debates in Alabama regarding the direction and content of sex education in public schools.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://apnews.com/article/c8c9736eeab7b3925bf2ac48122d7ada> - This article discusses Alabama lawmakers passing bills mandating the display of the Ten Commandments and banning pride flags in schools, reflecting the state's legislative focus on conservative education policies.
2. <https://1819news.com/news/item/lawmaker-plans-to-re-file-bill-in-2025-banning-discussion-instruction-on-gender-identity-sexual-orientation-after-stalling-in-senate> - This piece reports on State Rep. Mack Butler's intention to reintroduce legislation in 2025 that would ban classroom instruction or discussion on gender identity and sexual orientation in public schools, indicating ongoing legislative efforts to restrict such topics.
3. <https://mentonealabama.org/alabama-bills-limiting-lgbtq-topics-sex-education-advance-in-legislature/> - This article covers the advancement of bills in Alabama's legislature that aim to limit discussions on LGBTQ topics and sex education, highlighting the state's legislative direction on these issues.
4. <https://www.them.us/story/alabama-no-longer-teach-students-homosexual-conduct-unacceptable> - This article reports on Alabama's removal of language from its sex education curriculum that labeled homosexual conduct as unacceptable, reflecting changes in the state's approach to sex education.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/alabama-laws-d1c74b7e4907b249df80165bf5aea387> - This piece discusses Alabama's removal of anti-gay language from its sex education law, indicating a shift in the state's legislative stance on LGBTQ issues.
6. <https://www.alreporter.com/2024/02/20/new-dont-say-gay-bill-would-extend-through-12th-grade/> - This article details a new bill filed by Rep. Mack Butler to extend Alabama's 'Don't Say Gay' law through 12th grade, highlighting ongoing legislative efforts to restrict discussions on sexual orientation and gender identity in schools.
7. <https://www.al.com/politics/2025/05/shelnutt-angry-filibuster-likely-killed-alabama-sex-education-bill-democrats-wasted-the-whole-day.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data