

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

The State of the Union 2012

On January 24, 2012, President Barack Obama delivered the 2012 State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress.

His speech and its specifics revolved around this quote. “*My grandfather, a veteran of Patton’s Army, got the chance to go to college on the GI Bill. My grandmother, who worked on a bomber assembly line, was part of a workforce that turned out the best products on Earth.*

The two of them shared the optimism of a nation that had triumphed over a depression and fascism. They understood that they were part of something larger: that they were contributing to a story of success that every American had a

chance to share—the basic American promise that if you worked hard, you could do well enough to raise a family, own a home, send your kids to college, and put a little away for retirement.

The defining issue of our time is how to keep that promise alive.”

Unlike some recent State of the Union speeches, this speech did not contain multiple new initiatives that the President would put forward. It focused on several themes:

- Revision of the tax code to provide an incentive for companies to bring jobs and profits back on American soil.

- Immigration reform.
- Investigation and remedies for unfair trading practices in countries like China.
- Education reform, including resources, flexibility and support for college attendance.
- Clean energy development.
- Support for veterans in finding job opportunities.
- Mortgage refinancing programs.

If you would like to read the full text of the 2012 State of the Union, you will find the President’s speech at www.whitehouse.gov.

Bullying

The U.S. Department of Education released a report, *Analysis of State Bullying Laws and Policies*, in December 2011.

The report summarizes anti-bullying laws in 46 states and policies in 41 states that are used as models for schools.

According to the Depart-

ment, from 1999-2010, more than 120 bills were enacted by state legislatures to either “amend or introduce statutes that address bullying and related behaviors in schools.”

Of the 46 states with anti-bullying laws, 36 have provisions that prohibit cyber bullying and 13 states have

provisions that allow school personnel to address off-site bullying.

The Department will implement a follow-up study in 2012 to identify how state laws translate into practice at the school level.

For a copy of the report, go to <http://www.ed.gov/>

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Teacher Gifts: Alabama Sets a Limit

In 2011, Alabama passed a new ethics law and it has caused confusion for parents and students. The new law stated that gifts of “de minimis” value could be given. (No dollar limit was set.) In early December, the Alabama Ethics Commission listed gifts that would be acceptable: coffee mug, homemade cookies, other presents at nominal values. A ham or turkey or \$25 gift card was deemed too much.

A Snapshot of the GOP Candidates: Ron Paul



Ron Paul is a Congressman from Texas and his campaign themes are often classified as “Libertarian”.

He was born in Pennsylvania and graduated from Gettysburg College and the Duke University School of Medicine. Serving as a flight surgeon in the U.S. Air Force during the 1960’s, he established his medical practice in Texas

in 1968. Representative Paul is the father of Senator Rand Paul from Kentucky, so both father and son have ties to the SECA region.

According to his campaign website, his education focus is as the “home-schooling champion,” stating that:

- No nation can remain free when the state has greater influence over the knowledge and values transmitted to children than the family does.
- No big government spending program can or will solve our nation’s education problems.
- One-size-fits all central planning simply does not work.
- Tax credits should be given to homeschooling parents who homeschool to support the costs for

tutors, books, computers and other K-12 related educational needs. He proposed a \$5,000 annual tax credit for this purpose.

His Congressional Record: Education

- ◆ Voted against the No Child Left Behind Act.
- ◆ Has called for the elimination of the U.S. Department of Education and a gradual elimination of the student-loan program.
- ◆ Voted against the Education Jobs Act. *Source: Education Week, p. 25, 1/11/2012.*

For more information go to <http://www.ronpaul2012.com/the-issues/>

A Snapshot of the GOP Candidates: Rick Santorum

Rick Santorum served four years in the U.S. House of Representatives and 12 years as a U.S. Senator. During that time, he served for eight years on the Senate Armed Services Committee. According to the *Washington Post*, Santorum “was a tea party kind of guy before there was a tea party.”

According to his campaign website, Santorum “believes that education is the responsibility of the consumer, the parent. Putting ‘parents first’ is how best we put ‘students first’. Parents have the fundamental right to direct the upbringing and education of their children with local school systems...As a homeschooling parent, he has learned the importance of flexible and personalized approaches to education.”

Santorum believes that the federal role in

education should be “very limited” and that “education is the responsibility of parents, local schools (public and private) and states in that order.

His Congressional Record: Education

- ◆ Voted in favor of the No Child Left Behind Act.
- ◆ Introduced an amendment to the reauthorization of the Individuals With Disabilities Act to reduce the paperwork burden for special education teachers.
- ◆ Advocated for special education and sought more funding for autism research.

He supports homeschooling and in 2001, enrolled some of his children in an online charter school. *Source: Education Week, p. 25, 1/11/2012*



For more information about his stand on the issues, go to <http://www.ricksantrum.com/issues>

A Snapshot of the GOP Candidates: Mitt Romney

Mitt Romney was born in Detroit to Lenore and George Romney. His father rose to the position of CEO of American Motors and served as Governor of Michigan.

He comes from a business background and has served in various capacities in the business world. He worked in the private equity sector and spearheaded the 2002 Winter Olympics.

He is the only candidate to have served as the Governor of a state, Massachusetts. According to his campaign website, during his gubernatorial tenure, he:

- Restructured and consolidated state government programs.
- Cast more than 800 vetoes to spending bills as he brought conservative principles to state government.
- Cut red tape for small business.

- Signed into law job-creating incentives.
- Erased a \$3 billion state budget deficit without borrowing or raising taxes.

His campaign is focused on three areas:

- ◆ Jobs
- ◆ Healthcare
- ◆ Foreign Policy

He has a plan called *Five Bills on Day One* that reflects his business background and economic priorities.

- 1) American Competitiveness Act
- 2) Open Market Act
- 3) Domestic Energy Act
- 4) Retraining Reform Act



- 5) Down Payment on Fiscal Sanity Act (This includes a 5% immediate cut in non-security discretionary spending.)

For more information about the candidate and his economic plans, go to <http://www.mittromney.com/learn/mitt>

A Snapshot of the GOP Candidates: Newt Gingrich



Newt Gingrich came to prominence on the American political scene with his *Contract for America*. That policy platform catapulted the Republican Party to a sweeping victory in 1994, capturing the majority of the U.S. House of Representatives for the first time in 40 years. As Speaker of the House, he shepherded through the first balanced budget in many years, tax cuts and welfare reform.

Gingrich was born in Pennsylvania and earned a doctorate in Modern European History from Tulane University in New Orleans. Before his election to Congress, he taught History and Environmental Studies at West Georgia College.

His campaign website outlines an education plan that includes:

- Empower parents to pick the right school for their child.
- Institute a Pell Grant-style system for kindergarten through 12th grade.
- Require transparency and accountability about achievement.
- Implement a “no limits” charter system.
- Establish a pay for performance system.

- Welcome business talent in our communities into the classroom.
- Restore American history and values into the classroom.
- Protect the rights of home-schooled children.
- Encourage states to think outside outdated boundaries of education.
- Shrink the Department of Education.

Gingrich and his wife live in McLean, Virginia.

For more information about his campaign platform, go to <http://www.newt.org/solutions>

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Southern Early Childhood Association



"A Voice for Southern Children"

We're on the Web!
www.southernearlychildhood.org

How to Use This Newsletter

If you're interested in advocacy, one of the most effective tools that you can have is access to information. This newsletter is provided as a service to locate and share information that we think will be helpful to you in your work at the state level and to keep you updated on what's happening in public policy.

You'll find information that:

- **Compares your state to other SECA states**—how you're doing, what issues you have in common, what the hot topics are in your states.
- **Brings the national scene to your fingertips** and gives you a perspective on how national events might impact you...You'll also receive information about where to find additional information.

We hope you'll find it helpful. Children need you to be their "voice" in your community and state.

What's Happening in the States

Florida

CS/HB 1191 by Bileca, Corcoran and Trujillo, is entitled *Parent Empowerment in Education*. The bill "Authorizes parents of students assigned to certain underperforming public schools to submit petition to school district requesting implementation of school turnaround option selected by parents; requires school district, upon request, to provide parent with performance evaluation for classroom teachers assigned to child; requires notification to parent of student assigned to teacher who is teaching out-of-field or has received unsatisfactory performance evaluations & of availability of virtual instruction." The "parent trigger" bill is generating debate in Florida, is opposed by



Representative Bileca

the Florida PTA but is a priority of former Governor Jeb Bush's Foundation for Florida's Future. The bill is currently in the Rulemaking & Regulation Subcommittee. For a copy of the bill go to www.myfloridahouse.gov.

Georgia

In his 2012 State of the State Address, Governor Deal provided details about the Georgia budget and his priorities. Some things to note:



Governor Deal

- ◆ The Governor is requesting \$1.6 million to create a Reading-Mentors Program.

- ◆ The Governor is requesting funding to increase the pre-K school year by 10 days.

Kentucky

Governor Beshear has taken a step forward in the early childhood arena by requesting that legislation formalize the Early Childhood Advisory Council. This group was created by Executive Order. He has also stated his intent to continue to streamline the early childhood programs in Kentucky.



Governor Beshear

Coming in March!
A Summary of the 2012 State of the State Addresses