

# Public Policy Notes

## Southern Early Childhood Association

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### No Rosy Fiscal Picture for States

On November 12, 2009, the National Governor's Association (NGA) and the National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO) released a preliminary review of *The Fiscal Survey of the States*. This report is produced every two years and reflects the current fiscal status of state budgets.

According to the press releases from the organizations, **states will face continued revenue declines in FY 2010, which translates to more belt tightening and program cuts throughout state government.**

Overall, state revenues declined 7.5% in fiscal 2009, and states reduced expendi-

tures from the General Fund by 4.8%. Many states are expected to reduce spending by another 4% in FY 2010, the first time that state spending has declined in back to back years.

The Pew Center on the States also issued a report, *Beyond California: States in Fiscal Peril*, that listed a group of 10 states that were most at risk. **Florida**, one of those 10 states, is in particular difficulty, primarily due to the bursting of the housing bubble and soaring unemployment. In 2009, the state attempted to close the budget gap through a combination of budget cuts, fund transfers, federal stimulus money and more

than \$2 billion in tax and fee increases. Nevertheless, state expenses are expected to outstrip state revenue and lead to budget shortfalls each of the next 3 years

Two other SECA states, **Georgia and Kentucky** were close behind Florida in the list of states in particular difficulty. The Pew Center found that states that rely heavily on one type of industry, have a history of persistent budget shortfalls or face legal constraints that make it difficult to make major changes were suffering more than others.

Sources: [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org).

[www.pewcenteronthestates.org](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org)

### Kentucky & Budget Cuts: Preschool Cuts Possible

The Kentucky Department of Education has submitted to state budget officials its proposals for **cutting education spending by approximately \$20 million** for the remainder of the fiscal year. Governor Steve Beshear asked that plans be developed to pare 6% of the current fiscal year budget. According to Terry Holliday, Kentucky Commissioner of Education, "This is the latest

reduction of six that have happened in the past two years. We have made the easy reductions. We have reduced the travel, the professional development, the textbooks, the costs that are not closely associated with the classroom. We have frozen all hiring at the Kentucky Department of Education....Now, we have run out of options. We must begin to reduce some program dollars."

Potential program cuts: dropout prevention, gifted & talented education, family resource & youth service centers and **preschool programs.**

Sources: Terry Holliday blog, [www.education.ky.gov/KDE](http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE)

[www.kentucky.com](http://www.kentucky.com)

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#### ECAC Update

Go to the [Public Policy page](#) of the [SECA Website](#) to find updated, state-specific information about Early Childhood Advisory Councils.

#### Special points of interest:

- Impeaching a Governor?
- Extending Broadband Internet Into Local Libraries
- Rural Schools: Challenges & Opportunities
- New Literacy Act
- The Math Doesn't Add Up
- Food Insecurity in America

## South Carolina Governor Back in the News!

In an unusual move, the South Carolina General Assembly has initiated an ethics investigation and possible impeachment proceedings against Governor Mark Sanford. This action arose from the controversy surrounding his trip to Argentina and a possible charge of dereliction of duty because of his absence from South Carolina during that trip.

You will remember that Governor Sanford made some very different headlines when he was one of a few Governors that staunchly resisted accepting any federal stimulus money for the state.

Governor Sanford faces 37 counts of "Use of Public Office for Personal Financial Gain" in hearings before the State Ethics Commission. Those hearings will probably take place in early January 2010, and each count carries a possible penalty of \$2,000.

A seven member panel of the House Judiciary Committee has been appointed to recommend action concerning possible impeachment proceedings to the full Committee. This panel has chosen to consider only 5 of the state



Mark Sanford

ethics charges in regard to impeachment. Only 2 US governors have been impeached in the past 80 years, both after they were charged with felony crimes.

Sources: *USAToday*, 11-24-09  
*GreenvilleOnline.com*, 12-8-09

**Update:** The panel recommended on Wednesday, December 9th, that the Committee issue a formal censure to the Governor, rather than impeachment.

## Broadband Access in State Libraries: The Gates Foundation

On December 1, 2009, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation announced grants to assist state library systems to bolster Internet connections in 5 states and to help 14 other states compete for federal broadband stimulus funds.

Arkansas and Virginia were two of 5 states that were awarded grants to execute statewide plans to improve and maintain Internet connections in local libraries. Arkansas received \$735,207 and Virginia received \$977,468 in

grant funds. Three other SECA states, Kentucky, North Carolina and Oklahoma, received support to develop applications under the NTIA's Broadband Technology Opportunities Program that will provide federal stimulus funds start-

**In most communities (70%), the public library is the only provider of free Internet access available to residents.**

ing in 2010 to expand broadband infrastructure to more communities across the country and to help new Internet users benefit from that access.

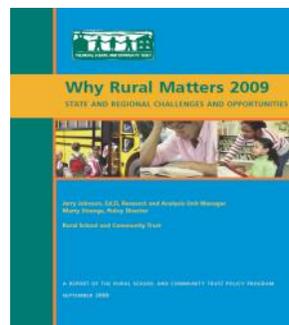
*"When libraries have access to broadband, they can effectively deliver critical educational, employment and government services for residents that lack Internet access elsewhere." Press Release, 12-1-09*

[www.gatesfoundation.org](http://www.gatesfoundation.org)

## Rural Schools: Not Just White Farm Kids from Iowa

The Rural School and Community Trust issued the fifth in a series of reports in November. *Why Rural Matters 2009* takes a serious look at the unique challenges, opportunities and the reality of high-poverty rural schools.

"It's not uncommon for people to carry in their head a picture of a rural student as a white kid on a farm in Iowa," according to Jerry D. John-



son, a policy research and analysis manager at the Trust. The reality is that 900 rural school districts with the highest student poverty rates serve approximately 1.4 million students, and these high poverty districts are mostly located in a

band of Southern states. Thirty-seven percent of those students are socio-economically disadvantaged and 59% are persons of color (28% African American, 23% Hispanic and 8% Native). "The study concludes that rural students in states with more rural poverty and socio-economic diversity perform lower on various educational outcomes." For a copy of the report, go to [www.ruraledu.org](http://www.ruraledu.org).

## The LEARN Act: Kentucky Representative Supports Literacy

On November 5, 2009, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Representatives **John Yarmuth (D-KY)** and Jared Polis (D-CO), announced that they would introduce major legislation to fund comprehensive literacy programs. *The Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN)* will provide \$2.35 billion in grants to support state and local school-based literacy programs.

“The Act incorporates principles from the Striving Readers adolescent literacy program, and it makes reforms and improvements to K-3 and early literacy programs, including strong conflict of interest provisions. It also places a great

focus on coordinating literacy instruction across districts and the state and across grade levels.” *Source: Press Release, 11-5-09, <http://yarmuth.house.gov>*

“Students who are not proficient in reading and writing are far less likely to succeed in school and in life . . . Our nation and our communities must make literacy education a top priority. By investing in local high-quality literacy programs and expanding literacy instruction for the students who need it most, that’s exactly what the LEARN Act will do.” according to Representative Yarmuth. *Source: Press Release, 11-5-09, <http://murray.senate.gov>*

Senator Murray expects that the bill will be folded into the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2010.

For specifics on the bill, go to <http://murray.senate.gov>.



Rep John Yarmuth

## Jobs Saved and Created: The Stimulus Math Doesn’t Add Up

On October 30, 2009, the “official” data of jobs retained and created under the Federal Stimulus program were posted at Recovery.gov. Since that time, there’s been a firestorm of criticism about how the numbers were derived, mistakes that were made in calculating the data presented, and reporting problems that could be traced back to unclear directives on how to report the data. Two programs in SECA states received particular attention in the na-

tional media. A shoe store owner in **Campbellsville, Kentucky** reported that he had saved or created 9 jobs under a \$900 contract for boots for the Army

**Across the country, journalist and government watchdogs are finding a yawning gap between stimulus claim and stimulus reality.**  
*Chicago Tribune*

Corps of Engineers. The **Southwest Georgia Community Action in Moultrie, Georgia** claimed that all existing Head Start employee’s jobs were saved because they received a pay raise with the stimulus cash. (The raises were authorized under the stimulus program.) “It’s a glitch in the system,” according to Ben Allen, research director at the National Head Start Association. *Source: AR Democrat/Gazette, 11-5-2009*

## Kentucky Governor Appoints Interim Education Chief

With the resignation of Secretary Helen Mountjoy in November, Governor Steve Beshear appointed Joe Meyer as the Acting Secretary for the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet.

Prior to his appointment as deputy secretary, Meyer served as senior policy advisor to the Governor and as chief of staff for the chair of the House majority caucus.

As a state senator, Meyer represented Kentucky’s 23rd Senate District from

1989 to 1996. He also represented the 65th House District from 1982 to 1988, During that time he served as chair of the Senate Education Committee and Senate State and Local Government Committee. He is currently a member of the Southern Regional Education Board and has served previously



Kentucky’s Interim Education Chief Joe Meyer

on the board of the Education Commission of the States, the Kentucky Long Term Policy Research Center and the Covington Business Council.

*Source:*  
[www.educationcabinet.ky.gov](http://www.educationcabinet.ky.gov)

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"A Voice for Southern  
Children"

We're on the Web!  
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### *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.

## Food Insecurity: The Latest Statistics

In October 2009, the United States Department of Agriculture released a report, *Household Food Security in the United States, 2008*. The report noted that 85% of American households were food secure throughout the entire year but that the incidence of households that were "food insecure" had grown from 2007 to 2008. *Food insecurity means that the food intake of one or more household members was reduced and their eating patterns were disrupted at times during the year because the household lacked money and other resources for food.*

The USDA report was based on a survey of 44,000 households. Respondents in the households were asked the following questions:

1. Have you ever worried about running out of food in the previous 12 months.?
2. For adults, have you lost weight due to a lack of food money?
3. For kids, have parents "cut" their kids portions at any point in the last year?

"Yes" answers to these questions included the households in the "food insecurity" category.

The least severe forms of insecurity were the most commonly reported. "Worry" with 19.7% of households topped the list, followed by running out of food before money came in to buy more (15.3%). Some 11.3% of respondents stated that they couldn't

afford "balanced" meals for the kids—but it was up to the respondents to define balanced.

**About 1.6% of adults went without food for a whole day in 2008 and the figure for children was 0.1%, a reduction from 0.2% in 2007.**

For many of these households, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp Program, has provided the assistance necessary to move from "food insecurity" to "food security". Within a few months of entering the program, the prevalence of very low food security declined to around 12% in households receiving SNAP benefits.

Source: [www.ers.usda.gov](http://www.ers.usda.gov)