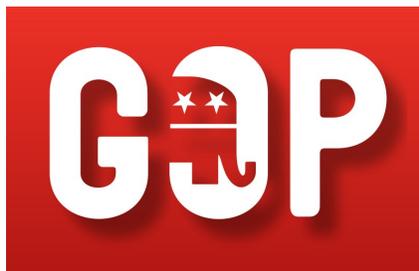


# Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

## The 2014 Bipartisan Budget is a Reality



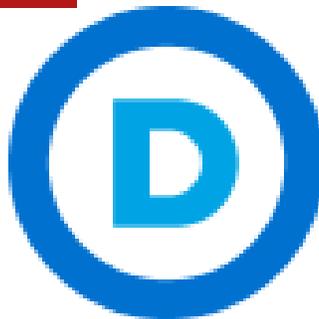
restored, primarily in Head Start and the Child Care & Development Block Grant. A new pre-K initiative was also

After years of bi-partisan wrangling and failure to produce a federal budget, the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate have passed a budget that has been signed into law.

These actions occurred the week of January 13-17, with President Obama signing the budget on January 17th. The passage of the budget was a victory for Representative Paul Ryan and Senator Patty Murray who broke the budget logjam. (We reported on their efforts in the *December 2013 issue of Public Policy Notes.*)

The budget was the first in some time that allocated spending levels for individual agencies and some of the sequester cuts were restored.

Early childhood had funds



funded. (See page 2 of this newsletter for more information.) This budget carries the federal government through September 30, 2014.

***“Both sides made tradeoffs in the end.***

***Democrats won - and Republicans conceded - on continued funding for Obamacare as well as large spending increases for Head Start and mental health programs.***

***Republicans gained - and Democrats lost - on continued budget cuts for***

***the Environmental Protection Agency and the IRS.”***

***“With very few exceptions we’ve heard nothing but positive comments from my colleagues here in the Senate.”***

**Senator Richard Shelby of Alabama** on the floor of the Senate prior to the vote. Source:

*In rare bipartisan action, Congress approves \$1.1 trillion budget,* <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2014/01/16/in-rare-bipartisan-action-congress-approves-1-1-trillion-budget/>, retrieved 1/23/14

President Obama will introduce his FY 2015 budget on March 4, 2014. That budget will cover the period October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015.

Next fiscal deadline—In February or early March, Congress must raise the debt ceiling to allow the government to borrow to finance operations.

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**2014 State of the Union  
January 28, 2014  
9:00 pm EST.**

The address will be carried on all major television networks.

# Good News for Early Childhood: More Federal Support

With the passage of the Omnibus Appropriations Bill for 2014 during last week, early childhood education scored some victories during a very tight fiscal year.

- ◆ **Head Start** received an increase of \$1.025 billion which restored funding cut by the sequester. This funding will also provide programs with a cost of living increase. \$500 million of the increase will go to new Early Head Start/Child Care Partnerships, available to all states. Programs will compete within the state for funding. Existing or new Early Head Start programs will be allowed to partner with local child care centers and family child care providers to assist low-income families with infants and toddlers.

- ◆ The **Child Care & Development Block Grant** received a \$154 million increase. The Block Grant will continue to have set-asides for after-school and resource & referral activities, a national toll-free hotline, quality improvement activities, infant/toddler care and research.
- ◆ A **new initiative for preschool development grants** was funded at \$250 million. These will be competitive grants to states to build their capacity to develop, enhance, or expand high-quality preschool programs for children from families at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. States may subgrant funds to entities including school districts; however, the districts must collaborate with local early

learning providers in order to receive the subgrant.

Two types of grants will be available: one for states that have no or limited programs and one to states with sizeable pre-K programs already in place.

The appropriation allows up to 3% of this funding to be used for technical assistance, evaluation and other national activities. The program will be jointly administered by the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.

**If you would like more information, about the early childhood appropriations, go to <http://www.nwlc.org/our-blog/step-forward-early-learning>**

Source: *Email update, 1/14/14, hblank@nwlc.org.*

## The Arkansas Medicaid Expansion: In Danger?

**Medicaid Expansion**— a topic of much debate recently. For many of the Southern states, a decision not to expand with federal assistance was made. Arkansas legislators voiced similar reluctance to expand the existing system to serve families at higher income levels but finally adopted an experiment that the nation has been watching.

The **Private Option** as the Arkansas Medicaid Expansion is called, was developed to meet the objections voiced by many legislators. Most of those objections were based on the ultimate cost of the expansion and effect on the state

budget down the road.

The concept of the Private Option was to create a two-tiered program:

- ◆ Individuals who exhibited the most need and qualified would be placed in the traditional Medicaid program.
- ◆ Individuals who qualified but were not as unhealthy or needy were placed in a program that routed them to a private insurance plan through traditional health insurance companies with premiums paid by the state. Federal funds were utilized to pay those premiums.

The program passed a Republican controlled state Senate with the 27 votes needed for passage and no votes to spare.

The state enters into a fiscal session on February 10th and the legislature will need to authorize an appropriation to spend the federal funds needed to fund this option. At this point, two Senators who previously voted yes have declared their intent to cast a no vote for reauthorization and that would effectively eliminate the program. Federal funds to support the option could not be spent without the appropriation. *We'll keep you posted.*

# Pre-K and New York: A Study in Politics?



*Bill de Blasio*

In January, New Yorkers inaugurated a new mayor of New York City, **Bill de Blasio**. The first Democratic mayor of the city in many years,

Mayor de Blasio ran on a platform that included universal pre-K for the city's children. He proposed instituting a new city income tax on citizens making over \$500,000 per year to fund the program.

With the election of Mayor de Blasio, both the mayor of New York and the Governor of the state of New York are Democrats and the issue of pre-K is on the agenda for both of them.

**Governor Cuomo** (a possible contender for the 2016 presidential nomination) recently released a state budget that included \$1.5

billion over 5 years to fund pre-kindergarten services in the state; however, he has not proposed a tax increase dedicated to the program.

*Why would this be of interest to advocates?*

⇒ Mayor de Blasio represents the liberal wing of the Democratic Party and has stated his intention to reduce income inequality in society.

⇒ Governor Cuomo is clearly committed to “moving society forward” but also has stated that “to do that as a Democrat, you will need the full faith and confidence of the middle class”, according to Chris Lehane, a Democratic strategist with ties



*Andrew Cuomo*

to both men.

⇒ This discussion within the Democratic Party possibly foreshadows a larger debate at the national level. Will these philosophical battles hurt the party as it readies for the presidential election?

We've witnessed a similar philosophical disconnect within the Republican Party in recent years as the Tea Party has risen in prominence. It will be interesting to see how both parties reconcile these differing viewpoints as the political process and 2016 presidential election politics become more prominent.

**Who would have thought that pre-kindergarten might be the topic of disagreement? We're certainly on the radar screen now.**

*Source: Democrats Lock Horns Over Pre-K, The Wall Street Journal, 1/22/14*



## Oklahoma Senator Tom Coburn to Retire

**Senator Tom Coburn** has announced his retirement from the United

State Senate when this current session of Congress concludes at the end of the year. His retirement will occur two years before his current term ends. Mr. Coburn is battling a recurrence of prostate cancer.

*“Serving as Oklahoma’s senator has*

*been, and continues to be, one of the great privileges and blessings of my life. But, after much prayer and consideration, I have decided that I will leave my Senate seat at the end of this Congress....My commitment to the people of Oklahoma has always been that I would serve no more than two terms. Our founders saw public service and politics as a calling rather than a career. That’s how I saw it when I first ran for office in 1994, and that’s how I still see it today. I believe it’s important to live under the*

*laws I helped write, and even those I fought hard to block....As dysfunctional as Washington is these days, change is still possible when ‘We the People’ get engaged, run for office themselves or make their voices heard. After all, how else could a country doctor from Muskogee with no political experience make it to Washington?” From Dr. Coburn’s statement, [www.coburn.senate.gov](http://www.coburn.senate.gov)*

A primary for the seat will be held June 24, 2014. The general election will be held November 4th.

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Southern Early Childhood Association



"A Voice for Southern Children"

## 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.

*This monthly newsletter is produced by Glenda Bean, SECA Executive Director.*

*SECA strives to provide non-partisan and non-biased information*

*that is of interest to early childhood educators. Sign up at*

*[http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/policy\\_newsletter\\_sign.php](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/policy_newsletter_sign.php)*

*to receive notice of its availability each month.*

## Mid-term Elections: The Balance of Power in the Senate?

As we approach the mid-term elections this fall, some significant offices are up for grabs by Republicans.

In **Arkansas**, Senator Mark Pryor (D) is being challenged by



Pryor (D)

Representative Tom Cotton.



Cotton (R)

In **Louisiana**, Senator Mary Landrieu (D) is being challenged by Republicans Bill Cassidy and Paul

Hollis.



Cassidy (R)  
Landrieu (D)  
Hollis (R)



Hagan (D)  
Brannon (R)



In **North Carolina**, Senator Kay Hagan (D) is facing front



runner Republican Greg Brannon.



Warner (D)

In **Virginia**, Senator Mark Warner (D) has met a challenge from former Republican Par-



Gillespie (R)

ty Chairman, Ed Gillespie.

All of these incumbents are considered threatened for re-election and the outcome of the mid-terms could affect the balance of power (and gender) in the U.S. Senate.