

# Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

## Mayors: Advocating for Early Childhood

The U.S. Conference of Mayors will meet in Dallas, Texas on June 20-23, 2014 for their annual meeting.

During that meeting, the mayors will consider the adoption of a resolution to support a national commitment to building an **Early Learning Nation** by the year 2025.

The Early Learning Nation phrase has been a consistent theme of the Bezos Family Foundation. “*We want an early learning nation that takes advantage of the rich science that’s being discovered daily. We want it to shape policy, but we also want it to shape lives.*”

Source: Remarks by Jackie Bezos, *Making Economic Security a Family Tradition*, <http://captulsa.org>, p. 31.

The resolution, *In Support of a National Commitment to Building an Early Learning Nation by the Year 2025*, was submitted by 16 mayors from across the country, including two from SECA states.

Mayor Frank Ortis of Pembroke Pines, FL and his colleague Mayor Mick Cornett of Oklahoma City, OK



Ortis

were two of the mayors who submitted the reso-

lution.

The resolution identifies a new generational term, **Generation Alpha** (babies born between 2010 and 2025) and contends that this generation will be second in numbers only to the Baby Boomer generation.

### From the Proposed Resolution

“NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that The U.S. Conference of Mayors supports a movement committed to engaging every community and particularly parents and caregivers in daily brain-building moments with their children,



Cornett

while highlighting the ease and developmental importance supported by the latest scientific research of these conversational moments between adult and child; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The U.S. Conference of Mayors supports designating the decade of 2015-2025 as an era of community focus in building an Early Learning Nation so, in turn, the children of Generation Alpha emerge equipped and prepared to resolve issues, assume leadership positions, while generating innovative and long-term solutions for previously intractable and seemingly unsolvable challenges. Source: *The North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation*, <http://buildthefoundation.org/2014/05/mayors-see-support-for-early-learning-nation/>  
We'll keep you posted.

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### Inside this issue:

<i>School Lunch Rules: Changing Again?</i>	2
<i>In the News</i>	3
<i>WV Advocates Score a Win!</i>	3
<i>From the SECA States</i>	4

## IRS Postpones Rules on Political Non-profits

After a deluge of public comment on proposed rules on political non-profits, the IRS has announced that it will rework the rules and will postpone a public hearing on the rules until a new draft is ready.

These proposed rules concerned the ability of 501(c) (4) organizations to engage in political activity. For alternative ideas, check out the **Bright Lines Project** at <http://www.brightlinesproject.org/>

# School Lunch Rules: Should They Change Again?

We've reported in several past editions of *Public Policy Notes* about the new school lunch guidelines adopted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The guidelines added more fruits and vegetables to school breakfasts and lunches and reduced the amount of sodium and fat included in those meals.

These guidelines were born out of a desire to provide healthier meals for school children and to address the childhood obesity epidemic. Passed as part of the **Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act**, these guidelines are now being re-evaluated by the U.S. House, and the House Appropriations Committee passed a FY 2015 agriculture budget bill on May 29, 2014 that would allow schools to opt out of nutritional guidelines passed in 2012. (For a brief discussion of the major components of the Act, see the February 2012 edition of *Public Policy Notes*.)



**Robert Alderholt (R-AL)**, chairman of the committee's Agriculture Subcommittee, stated, "*Much has been said*

*about the waiver language for the school meals program.....it merely provides a temporary waiver for those schools that are having difficulty making the economic realities of the new federal regulations work with the economic realities in their school district.*

*The new USDA regulations are far reaching and have come too fast for local school districts to swallow. As such they have upset the economics of the*

*school meals program by driving the cost of the plate up while pushing participation down. This is causing some school systems to abandon the school meals program altogether.*" Source: Press Release, [www.alderholt.house.gov](http://www.alderholt.house.gov), 5/20/14



In a press release on May 29, 2014, the "School Nutrition Association, on behalf of 55,000 school cafeteria professionals and the families they serve, urged Congress and the Administration to take immediate steps to provide school nutrition professionals the flexibility they need to plan healthy, appealing meals while maintaining fiscally solvent programs." Source: Press Release, 5/29/14, <http://www.schoolnutrition.org/Blog2.aspx?id=20506&blogid=564>

## First Lady Michelle Obama

and other advocates issued statements condemning the House action. The First Lady prefaced a discussion with school leaders and nutrition experts with these comments. "*We're now seeing efforts in Congress to roll back these new standards and undo the hard work that all of you, all of us have done on behalf of our kids..... We're now realizing that childhood obesity is a real issue. And so many families are looking for help now in their efforts to find new ways to feed their families balanced meals.*" Source: Press Release, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov), 5/27/14

**Tom Vilsack**, Agriculture



Secretary, issued this statement on May 19, 2014. "*The House bill would undermine the effort to provide kids with more nutritious food and would be a major step backwards for the health of American children, just at the time childhood obesity rates are finally starting to level off. USDA has shown flexibility in implementing these new standards, and Congress should focus on partnering with USDA, states, schools, and parents to help our kids have access to more healthy food, not less.*" Source: Press Release, 5/19/14, [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

The **major issues** in the debate are these:

- The new rules impose a higher standard of nutritional content on schools who participate in the National School Lunch program.
- The cost of including fresh fruits and vegetables is greater than the cost of providing processed and pre-prepared foods. (Advocates for the waivers say that these requirements have made much of the school meal service unprofitable and financially unsound.)
- The rules require a change in the way meals are prepared and the choices that are provided to children. Kitchen staff must prepare more food, rather than just heating a pre-packaged food.
- Children are being asked to change food behaviors, with many of the foods unfamiliar to them. These new food choices are being rejected by children, contributing to significantly more food waste than in the past, an assertion denied by the Department of Agriculture.

## In the News

*USA Today* / May 29, 2014

**Teen births** are at the lowest ever reported in the USA and both the number of births and birth rate dropped 10% in just one year, according to the latest preliminary federal data released today.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/militaryintelligence/2014/05/29/birth-rate-teens/9670669/>

*Centers for Disease Control & Prevention* / May 29, 2014

To update national **measles** data in the United States, CDC evaluated cases reported by states from January 1 through May 23, 2014. A total of 288 confirmed measles cases have been reported to CDC, surpassing the highest reported yearly total of measles cases since elimination (220 cases reported in

2011).....The large number of cases this year emphasizes the need for health-care providers to have a heightened awareness of the potential for measles in their communities and the importance of vaccination to prevent measles.

[http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm63e0529a1.htm?s\\_cid=mm63e0529a1\\_e](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm63e0529a1.htm?s_cid=mm63e0529a1_e)

*South Florida Times* / May 28, 2014



For the third consecutive year, from July 7 through Aug. 1, Miami-Dade County Public Schools will provide students and parents with **virtual access to summer learning** tools 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the Student Portal at [dadeschools.net](http://dadeschools.net). Ac-

cess to iSummer learning activities is made simple and easy through smartphones and other mobile devices, which most students do not venture too far without.

[http://www.sfltimes.com/index2.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=16107&pop=1&page=0&Itemid=146](http://www.sfltimes.com/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16107&pop=1&page=0&Itemid=146)

*The Business Journals* / May 28, 2014

Recognizing that early care and education initiatives are the best investments to ensure the successful outcomes of all children, the **Robert R. McCormick Foundation** is investing more than \$5 million in grants to 17 nonprofit organizations to support quality as well as expanded early care and education in Illinois.

[http://www.bizjournals.com/prnewswire/press\\_releases/2014/05/28/DC36207](http://www.bizjournals.com/prnewswire/press_releases/2014/05/28/DC36207)



**WV HEALTHY Kids and Families Coalition**

## West Virginia Advocates Score a Win!

In May, Governor Ray Tomblin cut funding by veto from appropriations designed to support Family Resource Centers, Family Resource Networks, In Home Visitation Programs, Child Advocacy Networks and Domestic Violence Prevention Programs. The rationale for vetoing \$800,000 in funding for these five agencies was that they were providing duplicative services.

West Virginia advocates went to work and on May 22, 2014, Governor Tomblin announced that he would sign a budget amendment that restored the cuts after his vetoes were overturned by the West Virginia Legislature. The

House and Senate members took money out of the Licensed Racetrack Regular Purse Fund to restore the cuts.

According to Tomblin, "As far as the main programs, if the bill is in order, I'll sign off on those." On May 27, 2014, he signed the bill. Source: Metro News, <http://wvmetronews.com/2014/05/22/governor-will-approve-family-and-children-funding-bill/>, 5/22/14

In an e-mail sent on May 27, 2014 on behalf of the **Our Children, Our Future** campaign, the story of the efforts to restore the funds was outlined. The e-mail

provided these insights:

- **Grassroots lobbying** made the difference. Over 225+ parents, advocates and workers held a vigil at the Capitol prior to passage of the amendment.
- A **coalition** emerged to fight the cuts, including representatives of religious institutions, law enforcement officials, and AFL-CIO & business leaders.
- **Everyday citizens** helped lead the fight.

For more information on the **West Virginia Healthy Kids and Families Coalition**, go to <http://wvhealthykids.org/>

## Southern Early Childhood Association

1123 S. University, Suite 255  
Little Rock, AR 72204  
Little Rock, AR 72215-5930

Phone: 800-305-SECA

Fax: 501-227-5297

E-mail:

[info@southernearlychildhood.org](mailto:info@southernearlychildhood.org)

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

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"A Voice for Southern Children"

## How to Use Public Policy Notes

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*

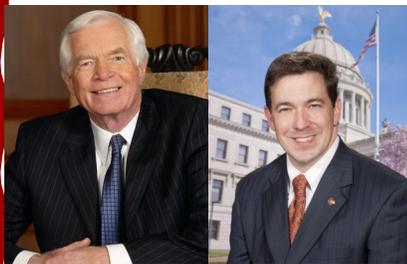
*that is of interest to early childhood educators. Sign up at*

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

*to receive notice of its availability each month.*

## From the SECA States

### Mississippi



Cochran

McDaniel

Six-term **U.S. Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS)** is facing a primary run-off with **Mississippi State Senator Chris McDaniel** to retain his seat. The Congressman trailed in the primary election of June 5th by a vote margin of 155,040 for McDaniel and 153,654 for Cochran. McDaniel is a Tea Party candidate and Cochran is considered

a GOP establishment candidate. Mississippi officials have until June 13th to complete their canvass of the vote, including provisional ballots cast by voters who lacked identification. (Those voters have 5 days to submit identification in order for their votes to be counted.)

### Kentucky



McConnell

Grimes

**U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell** survived his primary contest to become the Republican candidate for his

Congressional seat. His opponent in the fall will be Democrat **Alison Lundergan Grimes**, the current Kentucky Secretary of State.

### Oklahoma

Citizens have launched a petition drive for the second time to get financing for storm shelters on the ballot. They are calling for a \$500 million bond issue to finance storm shelters for every public school in Oklahoma. This drive comes on the heels of the Oklahoma legislature's failure to act to support safety upgrades. Go to [www.takeshelterok.com/](http://www.takeshelterok.com/) for more information.



**Citizens taking action to protect Oklahoma's children.**