

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

The August Recess: What Awaits When Congress Returns

August 2013

Volume 6, Issue 8

Congress has adjourned for the month of August and members have headed to home districts. When they return in September, they'll face major issues that don't show signs of bipartisan agreement...at least at this point.

Immigration Reform

One of the "thorniest" issues on the Congressional agenda, immigration reform remains to be resolved. The Senate has passed a comprehensive bill. It appears the House of Representatives may take single issues and turn them into legislation. The debate at this point hinges on border security and a path to citizenship.



Senator Marco Rubio of Florida has been one of several Republicans active in this debate and helped to craft the Senate bill.

Government Surveillance

The hearings about the federal government's data collection program will continue after the recess. The debate is between the need for national security and individual privacy rights.

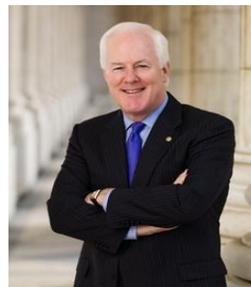
Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina has been vocal on this issue.



Health Care & The Budget

The Affordable Care Act continues to be a source of partisan contention and some Congressmen are stating their intention to hold the spending authorization for the federal government in limbo unless the funding to implement "Obamacare" is deleted from the federal budget. FY 2014 begins October 1, 2013 and Congress must pass at least a continuing resolution before that date in order to keep the federal govern-

ment functioning. (A Continuing Resolution extends the current budget for a period time; however, it is time limited and not a permanent spending authority.) If nothing is done, the federal government will effectively shut down on October 1st. **Senator John Cornyn of Texas** has been active in this debate.



We're also headed toward a debate on raising the federal debt ceiling, necessary if the federal government is going to be able to borrow money to finance its deficits. It appears that Congress is still far apart on how to address our major national issues. **Stay tuned!**

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Town Hall Meetings

Most of our Congressional representatives have chosen **not** to schedule town hall meetings in their districts during the recess; however, there are some bright spots in the SECA states. We've given you a list of those from your state that are or have provided that opportunity. **That information is found on page 2 of this newsletter.**

Town Hall Meetings: A Thing of the Past?

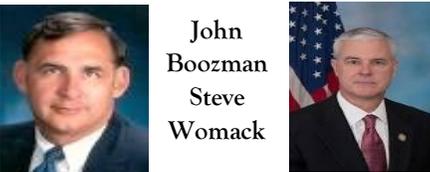
We've gone to several sources to find schedules of town hall meetings that have been held or will be held during the recess in the SECA states. It's not a lengthy list....many Congressional representatives have chosen not to hold "in person" town hall meetings but are relying on technology such as "phone town halls" to gather information from constituents. For those who are listed below, they've typically scheduled one or two "in person" meetings...a small number compared to a few years ago.

Alabama



Martha Roby, Mo Brooks, Jo Bonner

Arkansas



John Boozman
Steve Womack

Florida



Kathy Castor
Daniel Webster
Steve Southerland
Ron DeSantis

Oklahoma: Markwayne Mullin,
James Lankford, Frank Lucas

Georgia



Lynn Westmoreland, Tom Graves,
Rob Woodall

Kentucky



Rand Paul

Louisiana



David Vitter
Steve Scalise



Mississippi



Alan Nunnellee

North Carolina



Patrick McHenry, Mark Meadows,
Robert Pittenger

Oklahoma



Tennessee



Diane Black

Texas



Michael McCaul, Kevin Brady,
John Cornyn

We didn't find any town hall meetings scheduled (according to these sources) for **South Carolina, Virginia** or **West Virginia**.

Town hall meetings have a long history in American politics and have traditionally been a significant source of constituent input...often helping a legislator decide how to vote on certain issues. With the demise of the town hall meetings, the reliance on other forms of communication (phone, e-mail, fax, etc.) will be enhanced. However, Congressional offices still schedule appointments for constituents and, if you are granted an appointment, be prepared, articulate and concise. Legislators only have so much time and they appreciate someone who has their position clearly and concisely stated.

Sources: *National Active & Retired Federal Employees*, www.narfe.org; *Patient Opt Out*, <http://patientoptout.com>. *Accountable Congress*, www.accountablecongress.com

2013-2014 Teacher Ambassador Fellowships Announced

On August 6, 2013, Secretary Arne Duncan announced the selection of the eight teachers who will receive the **Teacher Ambassador Fellowships** for the 2013-2014 school year. The recipients were chosen from a field of 1200 applications.

Now in its 6th year, these Fellowships were created to “give outstanding teachers an opportunity to learn about national policy issues in education and to contribute their expertise to those discussions.”

Three of the teachers will serve as full-time employees at the Department of Education headquarters

in Washington, D.C. and five will remain in their classrooms and participate on a part-time basis.

This year, one of the three who will work in D.C. hails from the SECA state of Florida.



Emily Davis, a 7th and 8th grade Spanish teacher at Pacetti Bay Middle School

in **St. Augustine Florida** will work in the Office of Educational Technology.

Emily joined the teaching profes-

sion in 2003 and obtained her Master’s Degree in Educational Leadership at Pepperdine University. She “believes that all students deserve a high-quality, holistic education that encourages the development of international mindedness across disciplines.”

“Improving education is about schools and classrooms, so it’s vital that the clear and strong voices of teachers and principals guide our work...The Teaching Ambassador Fellows play a critical role in ensuring that we hear directly from classroom teachers across the country ..” Secretary Duncan

Source: Press Release,
<http://www.ed.gov/news>, 8/6/2013

Appointments to the NAEP Governing Board

Secretary Duncan named five new members of the National Assessment Governing Board on August 1, 2013. Two of those appointees come from SECA states.



Leticia Van De Putte of **San Antonio, Texas** is a Texas State Senator, representing District 26 which encom-

passes a large portion of the city, and an education champion in her state legislature. On January 8, 2013, she was elected to serve as President Pro Tempore of the Texas Senate’s 83rd regular session.

During her tenure as President of

the National Hispanic Council of State Legislatures, she presided over a strategic partnership with the National Black Caucus of State Legislatures to address the student racial achievement gap.

Dr. Doris Roché-Hicks is the Principal and CEO of Dr. Martin Luther



King Charter School for Science and Technology in **New Orleans, Louisiana**. Her school was the first school to open in New Orleans’ Lower Ninth Ward after Hurricane Katrina. She has served the New Orleans public school system in various roles over the years and as president of the Principal’s Association of

New Orleans Public Schools. She was recognized as New Orleans “Elementary School Principal of the Year. “

The appointees will “help set policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as The Nation’s Report Card. NAEP makes objective information on student performance available to policymakers and the public at the national, state and local levels for nearly a dozen subjects. NAEP has served an important role in evaluating the condition and progress of American education since 1969.”

Source: Press Release,
<http://www.ed.gov/news>, 8/1/2013

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"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

to receive notice of its availability each month.

News From the SECA States

Florida



Tony Bennett

For the second time in his tenure as Governor, Rick Scott is looking for a Commissioner of Education. **Tony Bennett resigned** after seven months amid allegations that he changed the grade of a charter school run by a political donor during his tenure as Indiana's school chief. He has denied the accusations.

Georgia

Georgia hit the news for two education items.

⇒ The U.S. Department of Education announced that it would **withhold \$9.8 million** from the state after it failed to meet one of the promised benchmarks, merit pay, in its approved Race to the Top grant agreement. The funds will be set aside for Georgia if the state moves forward with its commitment. Any unused money as of October 1, 2015 will revert to the U.S Treasury.

⇒ On another issue, the state **withdrew from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Consortium** that has developed tests to align with the Common Core stand-

ards. The state cited cost, technological readiness and local control over test design as deciding factors.

North Carolina

The state has eliminated teacher tenure and is doing away with salary premiums for teachers who hold master's degrees.

Tennessee

Residents of six suburbs near Memphis have voted to create their own school districts after the Memphis school system and the Shelby County District merged. After a negative ruling by a federal judge, a new state law allowed the referendums. For the 2013-2014 year, students will attend the merged district.