

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

The Fiscal Cliff—We Didn't Go Over!

In the December issue of *Public Policy Notes*, we noted that by this issue we'd have some answers. The Fiscal Cliff was averted—well, actually it happened, just only lasted less than a day, so no real impact on the economy. The financial markets reacted positively to the compromise and the economy at least stayed somewhat level.

That said, the “big” issues were delayed for consideration. There were both positives and negatives in the final compromise and we've still got a long way to go.

What Happened

- 1) Most of the tax cuts enacted in 2001, 2003 and 2010 were maintained for individuals with incomes under \$400,000 and for couples under \$450,000, so most middle class families didn't see a significant rise in income tax rates.
- 2) Tax credits that impact families were extended, including the Child Tax Credit, EITC, Dependent Care Credit, among others.
- 3) Unemployment compensation for long-term unemployed was extended for another 12 months.
- 4) The sequester was delayed for two months—not eliminated but delayed.
- 5) The farm bill was passed and significant increases in milk prices were avoided.
- 6) The payroll tax holiday of 2% that was enacted during the height of the recession was allowed to expire. Paychecks will be smaller as employees pay the additional 2% beginning January 2013.

What Comes Next?

During the first two months (January & February) of 2013, Congress will debate the following issues:

- ◆ The federal debt ceiling must be raised to allow the government to borrow more money to fund authorized spending. If the debt ceiling is not raised, the government will not have the ability to borrow to maintain funding for programs.
 - ◆ The sequester has not been eliminated, just delayed. Congress must either amend the law to redefine how cuts will be made or allow the automatic process to occur.
- To date, Congress has

not been successful in reaching a compromise position on how the federal budget deficit will be brought under control.

The next two months promise to be either productive or a repeat of the gridlock that we have seen during the last four years. Look for policy alerts to be posted on the Public Policy page of the SECA website.

January 2013

Volume 6, Issue 1

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Need State Specific Advocacy

Information?

Go to the SECA website and click on “Our States” at the top of the home page. When the drop down menu appears, click on “State Advocacy Contacts” and select your state. You'll get immediate access to the information you're seeking. No more searching the web!

The Can Kicks Back

The “millennials” are striking back and working to engage their generation in the budget talks that are taking place in Washington. “**The Can Kicks Back** is a millennial-driven campaign to solve America’s fiscal crisis.”

The mission of **The Can Kicks Back (TCKB)** is to “educate, organize and mobilize young Americans to strategically increase pressure on our elected leaders in order to achieve a bipartisan, comprehensive and long-term deficit reduction agreement by July 4, 2013.”

The millennials (persons born in the 1980’s and 1990’s) have begun the campaign to prevent Congress from “kicking the can down the road” in regard to solving the federal debt problem. As the generation that will pay the tab for any actions taken now, a group of 20 and 30 year-olds are initiating a discussion with their peers to encourage Congress to act responsibly.

The Can Kicks Back has two partner organizations: **Fix the Debt** and **Concerned Youth of America**. **The Can Kicks Back** is



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The Debt Is Too Damn High
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the millennial outreach partner for **Fix the Debt**. According to the organization’s website, the Advisory Board includes the two chairs of the President’s Deficit Reduction Committee, Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson.

If you’d like more information about these organizations, to the following websites:

<http://www.thecankicksback.org/>

<http://www.fixthedebt.org/>

<http://www.concernedyouth.com/>

New Congress Reflects More Diversity



With the swearing in of the 113th Congress last week, our nation recorded diversity milestones in the makeup of our national representatives.

For the first time in history, New Hampshire sent an all-female congressional delegation, representing both parties, to Washington.

The new Congress also includes a record seven openly gay lawmakers, 20 female senators, and, for the first time, women hold a majority of the

Democratic Party’s House seats. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois and Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii will be the first female combat veterans to serve in Congress.

The increased diversity comes mainly among House Democrats and for the first time, white men will be a minority among House Democrats. The Republicans are still majority white males.

In the Senate, Democrats have more women—among the record

20 women Senators, 16 are Democrats but the Republicans count three ethnic minorities among their ranks, compared with two for Democrats.

The 113th Congress also boasts more Latino representatives than anytime in history: 28 in the House of Representatives and 3 in the Senate.

The South is contributing to that diversity

with some very prominent personalities. In the U.S.

Senate, the state of

South Carolina has sent Tim Scott to replace Senator Jim DeMint. Senator Scott becomes the only African-American in the Senate in the 113th Congress.



Meet the 113th Freshman Members of the SECA Region



Left to Right——Steve Daines, AL; Tom Cotton, AR; Ron DeSantis, FL; Lois Frankel, FL; Joe Garcia, FL; Alan Grayson, FL



Left to Right——Patrick Murphy, FL; Trey Radel, FL; Ted Yoho, FL; Doug Collins, GA; Andy Barr, KY; Thomas Massie, KY



Left to Right——George Holding, NC; Richard Hudson, NC; Mark Meadows, NC; Jim Bridenstine, OK; Markwayne Mullin, OK



Left to Right——Tom Rice, SC; Joaquin Castro, TX; Ted Cruz, TX; Pete Gallego, TX; Beto O'Rourke, TX; Steve Stockman, TX



Left to Right——Mark Veasey, TX; Filemon Vela, TX; Randy Weber, TX; Roger Williams, TX; Tim Kaine, VA

Source: *The New Faces of the 113th Congress*, <http://www.nationaljournal.com/congress-legacy/the-new-faces-of-the-113th-congress-20121105>, retrieved on 1/10/2013

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"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.

News to Note

Rising Star

Joaquin Castro, newly elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Texas, was selected as the Chair of the Democratic Freshmen of the House.

Castro was previously a representative in the state legislature and follows in the footsteps of his political activist mother and father. His brother, Julian, is Mayor of San Antonio, Texas and Joaquin introduced him at the Democratic Convention to provide one of the major keynote addresses.



Joaquin Castro

New Reports of Interest

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission issued a report, *2012 Report Card on Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs*, in November 2012. The state passed a law in 2007 that required the State Board of Education to develop an assessment of the effectiveness of teacher training programs. The report includes information on the type of data compiled and program specific reviews of different teacher education programs at various universities. For a copy of the report go to http://www.tn.gov/thec/Divisions/ftt/12report_card/PDF%20201

2012 Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs.pdf

Teacher Absence as a Leading Indicator of Student Achievement was released by the Center for American Progress. The report includes an analysis of federal data on teacher absence and its effect on student achievement. The report estimates that teacher absences cost schools a "minimum of \$ 4 billion annually".

For a copy of the report go to <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/view/>