

# Public Policy Notes

## Southern Early Childhood Association

### Two Southerners Appointed to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction

In reaching a compromise to raise the federal debt-ceiling limit earlier this month, a committee was created and given the task of finding at least \$1.2 trillion in deficit reduction over the next 10 years. This reduction would be on top of the \$900 billion in cuts over 10 years that were included in the Budget Control Act of 2011.

Advocates have been anxiously watching for the appointments to this Committee by the Senate and House majority and minority leaders. The composition of the Committee will determine how the group functions and how successful they are at reaching a bi-partisan agreement on additional deficit reduction.

On August 9, 2011, Senate Majority Leader Reid (NV) announced his appointees: Sens. John Kerry (MA), Max Baucus (MT) and Patty Murray (WA).

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY) was right behind him with appointments: Sens. Jon Kyl (AZ), Pat Toomey (PA) and Rob Portman (OH).

On the House side, House Majority Leader John Boehner (OH) appointed Reps. Dave Camp (MI), Fred Upton (MI) and **Jeb Hensarling (TX)** to the Committee.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (CA) named her appointees on August 11. Her appointees are **Reps. Jim Clyburn (SC),**

Xavier Becerra (CA) and Chris Van Hollen (MD).

The Committee is now complete with 12 appointees and begins work to develop a set of recommendations that will be provided to Congress by **November 23, 2011**. If the group cannot develop a proposal, automatic across-the-board budget cuts will be triggered.

Rep.  
Clyburn



Rep.  
Hensarling

### The Budget Control Act of 2011

The Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction is just one part of the Budget Control Act. As the committee begins its work, everything is on the table, meaning that recommendations could include severe cuts in **discretionary spending** and could touch entitlement programs such as Medicare, Social Security and Medicaid.

Revenue increases could also be included.

Here's some information to help you understand how this might affect programs that we support.

Federal programs are either funded as mandatory, discretionary or entitlement programs. **Discretionary funding is just what is sounds**

**like: Congress decides each year what those funding levels should be.**

Head Start is completely discretionary; \$2 billion of the Child Care & Development Block Grant is discretionary; Title I is discretionary.

**Discretionary programs are up for grabs in this debate.**

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#### Children Need Advocates NOW!

*"The legislation that will most profoundly affect young children and their families over the next decade is the Budget Control Act of 2011. It will require advocates to redouble their efforts to avoid deep cuts in key programs for children and families and needs to be the subject of considerable advocacy from the field in the coming months." National Women's Law Center, 8/8/2011*

## Need Help Advocating for Children?

You want to make your voice heard but you're just not sure that you know how to approach becoming an advocate?

The **First Five Years Fund** has developed tools to help you in this effort. Their website has a section devoted to helping you get the message out. The section includes:

- A sample Letter to the Editor
- A sample Press Statement
- A sample Op-Ed

If you're not comfortable developing your own communication, you can customize these tools. You'll find them at

<http://www.ffyf.org/content/communications-templates>

"The First Five Years Fund helps America achieve better results in education, health, and economic productivity through investments in quality early childhood education for disadvantaged children from birth to age five. We provide knowledge, data, and advocacy, helping federal policymakers make investments in the first five years of a child's life that create greater returns for all. Start building with early childhood education and you'll finish with a better US." *Source: www.ffyf.org*



**Start small, achieve big.** Early childhood education builds a prosperous US by providing infants and toddlers with the developmental resources necessary for success in school, college, career and life. Investing in early childhood education is the first step toward building a better US.

## Connecting the Dots: A New Resource from SECA

Being an advocate is even more important as we enter discussions on the federal level about which programs to fund. **Priorities will be set and choices made** and children have no voice in the debate unless you are their advocate.

We know that becoming active as an advocate can be intimidating and we've developed a new publication, *Connecting the Dots*, that's designed to help you learn how to begin the process.

In this publication you'll find:

- A brief introduction about how powerful your voice can be.
- Information on getting started.
- SECA resources that are available to assist you.

**"Public policy and advocacy—two words that strike fear in the hearts of many early childhood professionals!"**

- Ideas about how to use this information.

It's a short, user-friendly guide to successfully advocating for children and we've included a sample "data sheet" to give you an idea of how to "prove your point".

Go to [www.southernearlychildhood.org/policy.php](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/policy.php) after September 1st for a copy.

## Children First Act of 2011

Senator John Kerry and Representative Joseph Crowley introduced the *Children First Act of 2011* on July 28, 2011. The legislation is designed to increase access to stable and affordable child care for low-income families.

The bill would increase **mandatory** funding for child care by \$500 million for FY 2012, \$700 million in FY 2013, and \$750 million in FY 2014, resulting in an increase of \$7.2 billion over ten

years. Child care subsidies would also be excluded from the eligibility test to determine if individuals are eligible for TANF. Child care providers funded through TANF (funds not transferred to the CCDBG) would be required to meet state health and safety standards. (TANF child care is often provided by relatives or individuals not subject to child care licensing and/or standards.)



*Senator Kerry*

*"It shouldn't be a luxury for a parent to know their kids are safe while they're at work," Senator Kerry said. "A choice between no child care and affordable child care that is subpar is a choice that no parent should have to make." Source: Press Release, 7/28/2011, [www.kerry.senate.gov](http://www.kerry.senate.gov)*

## Continuum of Learning Act Introduced: Amending ESEA

On August 5, 2011, Reps. Mazie Hirono (HI), **Walter Jones (NC)**, Don Young (AK) and Jared Polis (CO) introduced the **Continuum of Learning Act of 2011 (H.R. 2794)**. It includes the following provisions.

- Require states to review and revise their K-3 standards as needed to ensure they cover all the areas of development and learning, including social and emotional development and approaches to learning as recommended by the National Research Council.
- Promote joint professional development between schools and commu-

nity-based early childhood education programs and allow Title II funds to be used for scholarships tied to compensation rewards for teachers who earn an Associate or BA degree in early childhood.

- Provide professional development for elementary school principals in child development and learning, DAP teaching practices and collaborations with community early childhood settings.
- Require states to create teaching certificates that



Rep. Walter Jones  
North Carolina

reflect the specialized knowledge and skills of teaching young children for those teaching in the early grades and younger.

- Prevent inappropriate high-stakes use of child assessment for grades 2 and below.
- Help elementary schools evaluate their readiness to support all children's learning in the early grades.
- Strengthen collaborations between schools and community-based early childhood programs. Source: [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)

## NGA: Two Southern Governors Assume Leadership Roles

The National Governor's Association announced a new economic initiative developed by Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman who has assumed chairmanship of the Association for 2011-2012. *Growing State Economies* will be the focus of Governor Heineman's leadership year and is designed to "provide governors and other policymakers with a set of policy options that have been shown to foster job growth. A major emphasis will be on understanding how a small business becomes

*a fast-growing firm and what state policies support that transformation."*

Notably, two SECA governors will assume the chairmanship of the Association's **Education, Early Childhood and Workforce Committee**. **Gov. Mike Beebe** of Arkansas will serve as Chair and **Gov. Bill Haslam** of Tennessee will serve as Vice-Chair. **Gov. Robert McDonnell** of Virginia will also serve on the Committee.

Other notable committee assignments:

- **Economic Development and Commerce Committee:** **Gov. Robert Bentley (AL)**, **Gov. Mary Fallin (OK)**
- **Health & Human Services Committee:** **Gov. Nathan Deal (GA)**
- **NGA Center for Best Practices Board:** **Gov. Bev Perdue (NC)**

Source: *News Release, 7/25/2011, [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org)*

## NCLB Waivers Available Soon

Secretary Arne Duncan announced on August 8, 2011, that the US Department of Education will provide a "process for states to seek relief from key provisions of the *No Child Left Behind law, provided that they are willing to embrace education reform.*" After 16 months of Congressional inaction on a proposal to reform NCLB, the White House and Department of Education have jointly worked to develop this waiver process. At the news conference, officials stressed that this is "not a pass on accountability. There

*will be a high bar for states seeking flexibility within the law."*

The goals of the White House proposal submitted to Congress over a year ago include:

- "College and career-standards.
- More great teachers and principals.
- Robust use of data.
- More flexible and targeted accountability systems based on measuring annual student growth."

It is anticipated that the requirements to receive a state waiver will incorporate those goals. Specifics will be available in September. "There is no magic bullet for fixing education and the best ideas will always come from the local level...NCLB is forcing districts into one-size-fits-all solutions that just don't work." according to Duncan. Source: *Press Release, Obama Administration Proceeds with Reform of No Child Left Behind Following Congressional Inaction, 8/8/2011, [www.ed.gov/news](http://www.ed.gov/news)*

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Southern Early Childhood Association



"A Voice for Southern Children"

We're on the Web!  
[www.southernearlychildhood.org](http://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 from the SECA States

**Arkansas/August 3, 2011** Gov. Mike Beebe announced that Arkansas is one of 10 states to receive a \$1 million grant to redesign curriculum and programs in an effort to help more students attend and complete college. The grant is administered by Complete College America, "a multistate organization that works to increase degree counts by promoting successful strategies in admissions, remediation and completion." *Source: Curriculum redo in works, Arkansas Democrat Gazette, 8/3/11*

**Georgia/August 5, 2011** Pat Minish, Executive Director of the Georgia Association for Young Children (GAYC), will participate on the team to develop the state's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant application. *Source: GAYC e-mail, 8/5/11*

**Kentucky/July 12, 2011** Gov. Steve Beshear signed an Executive Order creating the Early Childhood Advisory Council. Terry Sims Tolan, former president and CEO of the United Way of Kentucky was introduced as the Council's executive director. *Source: Governor Beshear creates Early Childhood Advisory Council, Press Release, 8/12/11, Office of the Governor*

**Oklahoma/July 26, 2011** The OK Commission for Human Services has delayed a vote to increase child care co-pays over a disagreement about whether the Commission has the authority to increase the rate. The vote is being delayed until November. *Source: Okla. Panel delays vote on child care cost hike, 7/26/11*  
<http://www.businessweek.com>

**Tennessee/August 5, 2011** "On August 5, 2011, the Memphis City

Schools received a \$12 million payment from the city, the first in a 10-month series of payments the city promised to make after the school board said it couldn't open school on time because of cash flow problems. *Source: Memphis City Schools gets \$12 million payment from city, Commercial Appeal, 8/5/11, www.commercialappeal.com.*

**West Virginia/July 22, 2011** Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin announced West Virginia's intent to apply for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. "*West Virginia is already leading the way with coherent, compelling and comprehensive early childhood education.*" *Source: Tomblin: State to apply for Race to the Top education funding, The Register Herald, 7/22/11*