

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

The Children's Movement of Florida: The 2011 Legislature Was Disappointing

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In 2010, a new grassroots organization was formed in Florida, [The Children's Movement of Florida](#). This group is led by David Lawrence, a former editor of the Miami Herald, nationally known children's advocate and the 2005 recipient of the SECA President's Award. (This award is given each year to an outstanding state advocate, and FLAEYC selected Mr. Lawrence to receive the award in 2005.)

The Movement began its work with an innovative approach to gathering grassroots support by scheduling a 17-city bus tour of Florida and dubbed the rallies, **The Milk Parties**. At the conclusion of the tour, the organization announced its 2011 legislative agenda. The agenda included:

1. Health care coverage of an additional 300,000 children, along with an outreach effort to widen access to the KidCare program.
2. Enhanced screening and treatment for children who may have special needs.
3. For the Florida VPK program, the require-

ment for a research-based curriculum and more funding for high-quality teacher training and pre-and post-assessments of children.

4. Implementation of a public awareness campaign, along with developing—in three languages—a toll-free telephone and Internet treasury of information and referral services.
5. A reallocation of existing funds, a partnership with business leaders and modest funding to substantially improve mentoring programs.

The organization estimated that implementation of these initiatives would cost the state of Florida less than 1 percent of the state's revenue and required no new taxes. The proposals were endorsed by Florida TaxWatch as fiscally responsible and in the state's long-term interest. Source: <http://childrensmovementflorida.org/news>.

"What we must do in Florida is reorder our priorities, ensuring that children and families



David Lawrence, Jr.
Recipient of the 2005 SECA
President's Award

come first," according to Lawrence at the release of the agenda. *"After meeting with Governor-elect Rick Scott and top lawmakers, I believe they now appreciate the importance of this."* Unfortunately, in May 2011, Governor Scott signed a budget that cut \$30 million from the Florida pre-K program.

Mr. Lawrence expressed his dismay in a May 31, 2011 article in *The Gainesville Sun*. *"How is it that Florida's infamously underfunded voluntary pre-kindergarten program is being forced to absorb a 7 percent decrease in the already low per-child funding? More 4-year-olds will be packed into each classroom. And the focus of providing a high-quality early learning experience will be lost to the need for behavior management."* Source: *The Gainesville Sun*, 5/31/2011

CORRECTION

In last month's *Public Policy Notes*, we had an article about a new report from the CDC entitled, *Healthy Food Environments for Children*. In that report, Mississippi was listed as a state that did not have regulations concerning the provision of drinking water throughout the day in child care.

Beverly Peden, our SECA Board representative from Mississippi let us know that Mississippi did indeed adopt regulations that included this provision and those regulations can be found in Appendix C of the Mississippi regulations.

SECA strives to provide the latest information and relies on the entities producing the reports to ensure accuracy. Occasionally, we'll find outdated or erroneous information included. **We appreciate Beverly's update and hope that you will provide notice of any errors found in future sources.**

Two New Federal Background Check Bills

According to *Capitol Connection Weekly Update*, two new criminal background check bills for child care have been introduced in Congress.

These two bills are in addition to the bill, S. 581, previously filed by Senator Burr of North Carolina. This bill requires a comprehensive background check for all licensed, regulated or registered providers. States not in compliance with these requirements would have their CCDBG allocation reduced by 5 percent in the following fiscal year.



Senator Richard Burr
North Carolina

Representative C.A. Reppersberger of Maryland has filed an identical bill, H.R. 1726, in the House of Representatives.

A third bill, H.R. 1711, by Representative André Carson of

Indiana again requires a comprehensive background check for all licensed child care providers but goes further by also requiring the check for license-exempt child care providers (except relatives)

who receive a subsidy. It also includes an inspection requirement of every three months and requires licensed providers to receive 40 hours of initial training plus 24 hours annually of training that includes CPR, first aid, recognizing child abuse, basic health and safety and child development.

For background material and other resources about criminal background check legislation, go to the NACCRRRA public policy website at

<http://www.naccrra.org/policy/key-legislation/>

A Call to Action: Maltreated Infants and Toddlers

“As a society, we have a moral imperative to protect children. Protection must include ensuring not only a safe environment but also developmental support so young children can fulfill their potential later in life.” A Call to Action on Behalf of Maltreated Infants and Toddlers, 2011

The American Humane Association, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, the Child Welfare League of America, the Children’s Defense Fund, and ZERO TO THREE, recently issued a *Call to Action on Behalf of Maltreated Infants and Toddlers*.

The document “*represents our collective vision of important steps that can and should be taken in policies, programs and practices to better address the developmental needs of infants and toddlers who come to the attention of the child welfare system. ...It is intended to provide a starting point for federal, state and local policymakers and administrators to assess and identify where and how they can revise or institute policies that protect the*

development of infants and toddlers as well as their safety.”

SOME STATISTICS

- Children from birth to 1-year-old have the highest rates of victimization.
- Infants and toddlers constitute more than one quarter of all children who are abused and neglected.
- Every day, 2010 babies are removed from their homes because their parents cannot take care of them.
- Infants and toddlers accounted for 31% of children who entered foster care in 2009—the largest single group of children entering care. Sixteen percent were less than 1 year old.
- Once they have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care, infants who enter care at less than 3 months old are in foster care 50% longer than older

A CALL TO ACTION ON BEHALF OF
MALTREATED INFANTS AND TODDLERS



Sponsored by:
American Humane Association
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
ZERO TO THREE

children and are much more likely to be adopted than reunified.

- A total of 1,740 children died from abuse and neglect in 2008; more than three quarters (79.8%) of these children were 3 years or younger.

Source: *At a Glance, Facts About Infants and Toddlers, A Call to Action on Behalf of Maltreated Infants and Toddlers*, p. 3.

For a complete copy of the report, including policy recommendations, to go

<http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/CalltoActionZto3.pdf>.

The New Demographics: Where We'll Be in 2050

The Center for American Progress recently released the graphic at the right. It's a snapshot of the changing demographics of the United States and reflects a trend that shows in 2050, the majority of American citizens will be "persons of color".

Starting in 2000, many states in the South have experienced a growth in the population that identifies itself as multi-racial. **North Carolina** experienced a growth of more than 100%; **South Carolina** more than 100%, **Georgia** grew 82%, **Kentucky** grew 77%, **Tennessee** grew 74% and **West Virginia** grew 72%. In 2010, 14.6% of new marriages were classified as interracial.

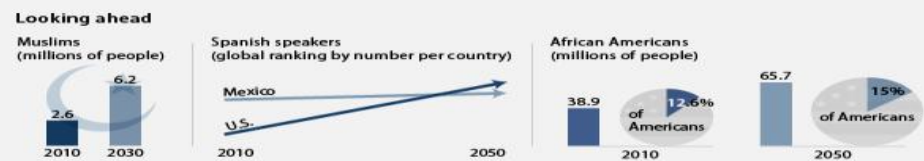
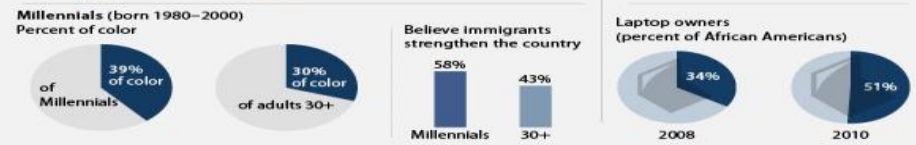
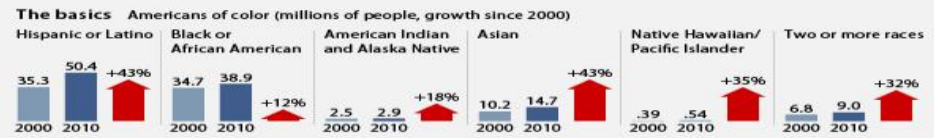
By 2042, people of color will constitute the majority of our population. This decade, the majority of young people will be people of color. Source: www.policylink.org

The South has gained new ethnic groups: Hispanics or Latinos, Asians, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders. This growing diversity is reflected in changing cultural norms and customs.

Source: <http://www.americanprogress.org>.

The New Demographics

Since 2000, U.S. communities have grown exponentially and trended toward greater ethnic and racial diversity nationwide. The release of 2010 Census data has only further illustrated a definitive decade of change in the American landscape. Progress 2050 has selected some existing facts and exciting projections from the newly released data to highlight the numerical gains communities of color have and will make in the 21st century. We believe these factoids capture the truly wide spread of change in the country.



Most data from 2010 U.S. Census via Social Explorer. For detailed source information, see http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/04/census_infographic.html



Center for American Progress

Farm to School: Healthier School Meals

When the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 was passed, a provision was included that allows communities to **establish local farm to school networks, to create school gardens and to ensure that more local foods are used in the school setting.** (See *Public Policy Notes, December 2010*, for more information on the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.)

This provision was included to help

improve the amount of fresh produce and locally grown foods that are available in school lunches. It is also hoped that the ability to buy food from local farmers will help to support small farm networks, groups that are well represented in the South.

Healthier school lunches are one initiative aimed at helping to reduce the rates of childhood obesity in the U.S., a problem that is particularly significant in the South.

The fruits, vegetables, meats, poultry and dairy products allowed under the new U.S. Department of Education rule, will "qualify only if they are relatively unprocessed. They may be refrigerated, frozen, peeled, sliced, cut, ground, dried, washed, and in the case of dairy products, pasteurized, but canned and pickled items wouldn't qualify."

Source: *Education Week, 5/18/2011*

Let's Move! Child Care

On June 8, 2011, First Lady Michelle Obama unveiled **Let's Move! Child Care**, a “new effort to work with child care providers to get children off to a healthy start.”

The new campaign has a checklist that providers and parents can use to determine if children are eating healthy, staying physically active, and limiting screen time.

With the announcement of the new initiative, The First Lady also announced that the Department of Defense, the General Services Administra-

tion and Bright Horizons have committed to the practices outlined in the checklist. This commitment will impact approximately 280,000 children in 1,600 child care centers nationwide.

The checklist includes recommendations on:

- Physical activity.
- Screen time.
- Food.
- Beverages.
- Infant feeding.

Source: Press Release, 6/8/2011
www.whitehouse.gov

For **FREE** resources and information go to
www.healthykidshealthyfutures.org



First Lady Obama announces **Let's Move! Child Care** at the CentroNia child care center in Washington, D.C.

North Carolina Governor Vetoes Budget

On June 12, 2011 Governor Beverly Perdue formally announced her decision to veto the state budget passed by the **General Assembly of North Carolina**. With this action, she became

the first Governor in North Carolina to ever veto the state government budget.

In her announcement made in the old Capitol, Governor Perdue defended



her veto. *“For generations, we North Carolinians have distinguished ourselves from other Southern states as a place of opportunity, and a place that understands the value of investing in our people. Education has been our hallmark....Now for the first time, we have a legislature that is turning its back on our schools, our children, our longstanding in-*

vestments in education and our future economic prospects....This budget will result in generational damage.”

The budget includes significant cuts to **Smart Start and More at Four**, public schools, and colleges and universities. Experts expect a second vote on the budget and that the budget will stand.

Sources: Perdue Vetoes State Budget, <http://www.examiner.com>, 6/12/2011
www.governor.state.nc.us/Blog, 6/12/11

Tornadoes and Southern Schools

During the month of April, the South experienced virulent weather that devastated many communities. The storms claimed at least 329 lives, and they heavily damaged or destroyed more than a dozen schools. Federal disaster areas were declared in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee.

Because of the destruction of schools in some of these areas, steps have been taken to assist those affected districts in managing the state requirements for a

certain number of instructional days each year.

Governor Bentley of **Alabama** signed legislation on May 5th that allowed the suspension of instructional and work-day requirements due to weather emergencies in the affected districts.

In **Mississippi**, students from the destroyed schools of Smithville High School and East Webster High School in Maben, MS, were moved into space in nearby schools.



Governor Bentley, Senator Orr and Representative Henry at the bill signing.

The **Georgia** State Board of Education approved on May 6th requests from five districts to waive the required number of instructional days in 2011.

Florida Debates “Education Savings Accounts”

A proposal to create “education savings accounts” has ground to a halt in the Florida Legislature.

Senate Bill 1550 was proposed to create savings accounts for students that would be worth 40% of the current state funding or about \$3,100 per student. These savings accounts would be available to parents to use for a variety of private school services, including tutoring and virtual education. The accounts could also be used for religious schools.

Dubbed by some as “**vouchers for all**,” the proposed funding would be a pot

of public-school money set aside to fund the accounts.

“It recognizes that parents should have choices,” according to Senator Joe Negron, R-Stuart, who sponsored the savings-account measure. He called it a *“GI bill for kids.”*

The concept for the plan was devised by the Goldwater Institute in Arizona “as a way to offer parents options outside public schools but meet the constitutional problems of earlier school voucher programs. Florida’s first private-school voucher program



was struck down by the state supreme court in 2006. The court said the program violated state requirements for a uniform public school system and diverted public dollars into separate private systems. Source: *Expanded School*

Voucher Plan Advances in Florida Senate, Orlando Sentinel, 4/14/2011.

As of May 7th, the bill had been indefinitely postponed and withdrawn.

*Florida State Senator
Joe Negron*

More Coffins Than Cradles: West Virginia

An article published May 6, 2011, in *The New York Times*, focused attention on Wierton, West Virginia, a community that is slowly losing population.

This community in West Virginia’s northern panhandle holds the distinction of being a community whose population is not being replaced as older members of the community die. With just 71 births for every 100 deaths in the community, the population of the community is slowing declining.

Along with the population decline

comes a decline in the tax base and a lack of volunteers to maintain the vitality of the social and business network of the community.

“According to Kenneth Johnson, a senior demographer at the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire,

“This is the story of what’s happening to white America...America is built by young people. They are the backbone. But what if they are not there?” Kenneth Johnson

there are now 853 counties nationwide with similar population trends—more coffins than cradles—as he calls it.

West Virginia is the only state with more deaths than births, but other states, like Maine, are not far behind. In those states, the dominant U.S. demographic trend, the influx of immigrants who are generally young with children, has not had a significant impact. Source: *With Death Outpacing Birth, A County Slows to a Shuffle, The New York Times, 5/6/2011*

Alabama Enacts Strict New Immigration Law

Arizona began the debate over immigration and the ability of the federal government to stem the tide of illegal immigration.

On June 9, 2011, Governor Robert Bentley of **Alabama** signed a new immigration law that “sets a new national standard for tough immigration policy.” The new law “surpasses that of Arizona with provisions affecting law enforcement, transportation, apartment

rentals, employment and education.” It makes Alabama the fourth state, after Georgia, Utah and Indiana to follow Arizona’s lead.

Alabama will now **require schools to find out whether students are in the country lawfully**, require all businesses to check the legal status of workers by using a federal system called E-Verify, and make it illegal to knowingly transport illegal aliens.

Under the law, Alabama schools will be required to report the presumed number of illegal aliens enrolled in their school to the state board of education on an annual basis. Children will not be barred from school; however, advocates fear that families will remove them from school to avoid identification. Source: *Alabama Raises Aliens-Law Ante, Arkansas Democrat Gazette, 6/10/2011*

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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.

Dental Health and America's Children

The Pew Children's Dental Campaign was created to ensure that more children "receive dental care and benefit from the policies proven to prevent tooth decay. "Tooth decay is the most common childhood disease, affecting nearly 60% of children. More than 16 million disadvantaged children do not receive the care they need each year."

The Campaign issued its first report in 2010 and released its second annual report on May 24, 2011. The report rates each state and the District of Columbia on important benchmarks of children's oral health, giving grades of A to F.

The Campaign has developed **four "efficient, cost effective solutions."**

- Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (the program that serves low-income children) should work better for

kids and for providers so that insurance coverage translates into real access to needed care.

- Sealant programs should be expanded for the children who need them most.
- Access to optimally fluoridated water should be expanded.
- The number of professionals who can provide dental care to low-income children should be expanded.

The states were rated on eight policy benchmarks. (*For information on the benchmarks, go to <http://pewcenteronthestates.org>*)

THE SECA STATES

Several states showed significant improvement (marked in red) over their first rating last year.

State	2011	2010
Alabama	C	D
Arkansas	C	F
Florida	F	F
Georgia	B	C
Kentucky	C	C
Louisiana	D	F
Mississippi	C	D
North Carolina	D	C
Oklahoma	B	C
South Carolina	A	A
Tennessee	C	C
Texas	B	B
Virginia	C	C
West Virginia	C	F

A summary, *Dental Health and Children*, is available on the Public Policy page of the SECA website.