

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

Two Federal Deadlines Approaching

During the month of November, two significant deadlines at the federal level are quickly approaching.

The U.S. government is currently operating under a Continuing Resolution (CR) because Congress has not passed FY 2012 appropriation bills. (FY 2012 began the first of October 2011.) **This CR is scheduled to expire**

November 18, 2011, and if allowed to expire, the federal government would come to a halt because no agency would have the authority to expend federal funds. As of today, November 15th, it appears that another CR will be passed to extend the operational authority into mid-December.

A somewhat more critical

deadline is November 23, 2011....the date on which the Deficit Reduction Super Committee must submit a list of recommendations to reduce the federal deficit over a 10-year span. If the Committee fails to reach an agreement, across-the-board budget cuts will take effect in 2013, without any prioritization of programs or initiatives.

The Committee has been wrestling with two distinct philosophical orientations.

- Generally, the Democrats on the Committee would prefer to enact revenue increases with smaller budget cuts.
- Generally, the Republicans on the Committee have stated

their opposition to revenue increases and want to bring the budget into balance by cutting and streamlining programs.

Another stumbling block is federal entitlement programs, most notably Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security. The growth in those programs continues to drive the escalating deficit and Congress will need to act to ensure long term viability of both Medicare and Social Security.

House Majority Leader Eric Cantor has stated, "I believe they will reach an agreement by deadline." We'll keep you posted.

Separation of Church and State

In an interesting challenge to how pre-K is funded and programs selected, the Arkansas Better Chance program in [Arkansas](#) is being investigated to determine if state money is being used to promote religion.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State is planning to file a Freedom

of Information Request to secure records for two state funded pre-K programs:

- *Growing God's Kingdom*
- *Noah's Ark Preschool & Open Arms Learning Center.*

There are several issues incorporated into this investigation. 1) Can pre-K funds

be provided to faith-based programs under certain conditions? 2) These are state funds, not federal. Does that mitigate any problem with the First Amendment? 3) Can state funds be utilized to purchase only a portion of the pre-K day, allowing religious education in the remaining portion of the day?

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Want to Know More About the Deficit Reduction Committee?

In the August 2011 *Public Policy Notes*, we published an article about the formation of the Committee. You can find that issue at http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/policy_newsletter_sign.php

Two Southerners are among the six members of the Committee: Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-TX) and Rep. James Clyburn (D-SC).

Kentucky Governor Re-Elected

Governor Steve Beshear was re-elected on November 7, 2011 to a second term as Kentucky's Governor. Governor Beshear, a Democrat, bested his Republican opponent by a significant margin and was predicted to win as early as this summer.

Running on a platform of *Tested, Trusted and Tough*. Governor Beshear and his Lieutenant Governor, Jerry Abramson, based their campaign on the past several years' experience of managing the state's fiscal crisis and improving the business climate.

According to the campaign website,

"Steve Beshear and Jerry Abramson know how to partner with business to create jobs for Kentuckians. Each has a long successful record of attracting companies to the state, as well as helping existing businesses grow and thrive." During his first term in office, Governor Beshear:

- Overhauled the state's economic development programs and created the *Incentives for New Kentucky* program to create more jobs.
- Tightened Kentucky's budget belt by slashing more than \$1 billion in spending.



Although the budget changes were painful, Kentucky voters rewarded the Governor for his leadership during a fiscal crisis. They also supported his priorities of business creation and education.

Source: <http://stevebeshear.com>

The South Gets Redder!

If you follow politics, you have undoubtedly heard of the "red and the blue" states. **Red** reflects states that vote predominantly Republican and **blue** reflects states that vote predominantly Democratic.

This month, the Southern electorate made more changes, moving from a traditionally Democratic stronghold to a solidly Republican region.

In 2010, we had already experienced seeing **Alabama** go from a Democrati-

cally held state to a Republican state for the first time since Reconstruction.

In this month's election, the GOP has assumed control of the **Mississippi**

For more information about the leadership changes of the South's statehouses, access the November 2010 issue of *Public Policy Notes* at <http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/upload/file/Public%20Policy%20notes%20november%202010.pdf>

House of Representatives for the first time since Reconstruction. According to Governor Barbour of Mississippi, "It'll be easier for the next governor to do the hard things." Source: *Arkansas/Democrat Gazette*, November 15, 2011, p. 3A.

The state of **Virginia** also moved toward GOP control of the state's two houses. The Virginia House is solidly Republican: The Virginia Senate is split evenly at 20-20. Source: <http://ncsl.org>.

Mississippi Elects Phil Bryant as Next Governor

Lieutenant Governor Phil Bryant of Brandon, MS is the new Governor-elect of Mississippi. Governor Haley Barbour was term-limited and could not run for another term. With the election of Governor Bryant, the state of Mississippi maintains a Republican administration.



Mr. Bryant won with 61% of the popular vote and history was made as he became the first Republican to succeed another one as Mississippi Governor in the modern era.

Immediately after the election, Governor-elect Bryant outlined the is-

ssues that he would focus on in 2012.

- Smart Budget Act
- Rainy Day Fund
- "Learn to Earn" dual enrollment for schools
- Comprehensive regulatory review commission to spur job development.

Source: <http://www.ltgovbryant.com>

The Health Care Innovation Challenge

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced on November 14, 2011 that her department would provide up to \$1 billion in grants from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation. These grants will be awarded to innovative projects that “test creative ways to deliver high quality medical care and save money.”

Funding for these grants was included in the Affordable Health Care Act and awards are expected to range from \$1 million to \$30 million over three years. Applications are open to “providers, payers, local government, community-based organizations and particularly to public-private partnerships and multi-payer approaches.”

These grants are designed to create jobs within the health care sector and to find innovative approaches to providing care for the elderly and disabled, as well as Medicaid recipients and **children who are served by the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP)**.

The objectives of the initiative are to:

- “Engage a broad set of innovation partners to identify and test new care delivery and payment models that originate in the field and that produce better care, better health and reduced cost through improvement for identified target populations.
- Identify new models of workforce

development and deployment and related training and education that support new models either directly or through new infrastructure activities.

- Support innovators who can rapidly deploy health care improvement models (within six months of award) through new ventures or expansion of existing efforts to new populations of patients.”

Letters of Intent due by December 19, 2011. For more information go to <http://www.innovation.cms.gov/initiatives/innovation-challenge/index.html>

Four New National Child Care Technical Assistance Centers

On September 30, 2011, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the Office of Child Care (OCC) announced the creation of **four new national centers** “that will provide child care technical assistance to states, territories and tribes to improve the quality of school-age care and early care and education.” “In coordination with OCC’s new State Child Care Systems Specialist Network,” the centers will help grantees of the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF).

- **The National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement** “will provide targeted technical assistance to states as they help more child care programs reach for higher standards of quality tied to school readiness and academic excellence.” *Contractors: ICF International, Inc. in partnership with the BUILD Initiative.*
- **The National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems** (jointly funded by OCC and the Office of Head Start) “will

build state capacity to support the estimated 1.2 million early childhood educators and afterschool teachers in child care centers and family child care homes by creating pathways for career advancement and developing strategies for higher qualification and improved compensation.” *Center Partners: Zero to Three, Child Trends, NAEYC, and the National Alliance Registry.*

- **The National Center on Child Care Subsidy Innovation and Accountability** “will support CCDF administrators as they develop and maintain strong subsidy systems that are child-focused, family-friendly, fair to child care providers and that increase accountability and integrity of programs to ensure that funds are used appropriately and effectively.” *Contractor: Walter R. McDonald and Associates, Inc.*
- **The National Center on Tribal Child Care Implementation and Innovation** “will focus on the

unique needs of tribes to ensure tribal communities have access to technical assistance they need to provide high-quality child care and share tribal-state innovations.” *Contractor: Community Development Institute*

“Our focus is to raise the bar on quality child care across the country. Child care programs provide vital support for working parents. Our children deserve the best care possible—care that promotes healthy development and success in school.” George Sheldon, HHS Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families.

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) provides funding for child care subsidies for over 1.6 million children and includes a quality “set-aside” that funds many of our state’s professional development systems.

Source: Press Release, ACF, September, 30, 2011, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news>

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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.

No Child Left Behind: Applying for Waivers

The U.S. Department of Education announced earlier this fall that they would approve waivers to many of the accountability requirements of the No Child Left Behind law.

States were seeking to be released from the 2014 deadline for all students to be proficient in math and reading/language arts. In exchange for the waiver, states are required to:

- Adopt standards for college and career readiness.
- Focus improvement efforts on 15 percent of the most troubled schools.
- Craft guidelines for teacher evaluations based in part on student performance.

Thirty-nine states indicated their desire to apply for the waivers. The first-round deadline for submissions was November 14, 2011. The second

round deadline is February 2012.

Eleven states have formally submitted waiver requests.

For the SECA States

Applications Submitted

- Florida
- Georgia
- Kentucky
- Oklahoma
- Tennessee

Intent to Apply in the Second Round

- Arkansas
- Mississippi
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Virginia

No Notification of Intent to Apply

- Texas
- Louisiana
- Alabama
- West Virginia

If the waivers are approved, states will be able to:

- Set performance targets to graduate students from high school rather than utilize 2014 NCLB targets.
- Design locally-tailored school interventions.
- Measure school progress with multiple measures, rather than just test scores.
- Have more flexibility in spending Title I funds.

Source: Press Release, November 15, 2011, <http://www.ed.gov/press-releases>