

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

The State of the SECA States: What Our Governors Had to Say

During the months of January and February 2010, Governors of nine SECA states presented their State of the State speeches to state legislators. These speeches are intended to outline the Governor's priorities for the current legislative session and are a "snapshot" into the politics that one may expect during that state's legislative session.

Governors of these SECA states have presented State of the State speeches:

Alabama/January 13th

Georgia/January 14th

Kentucky/January 8th

Mississippi/January 18th

Oklahoma/February 1st

S Carolina/January 25th

Tennessee/February 1st

Virginia/January 18th

W Virginia/January 14th

Two SECA states, Florida and Louisiana, have speeches scheduled for March or April. Updates on the content of those speeches will be added to this special edition when they are presented. Florida's speech is scheduled for March 2, 2010 and Louisiana's speech will occur in either March or April.

Three SECA states (*Arkansas, North Carolina & Texas*) will not have State

of the State speeches this year. Texas does not have a legislative session in 2010, and Arkansas has a fiscal session only in 2010.

The 2010 speeches were delivered by several "term-limited" Governors who will leave office at the end of the year. **Governor Bob Riley** of Alabama, **Governor Sonny Perdue** of Georgia, **Governor Mark Sanford** of South Carolina, and **Governor Phil Bredesen** delivered their last State of the State speeches.

In the following pages, you'll find brief summaries of those speeches, including any budget proposals

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Legislative Session Dates

Alabama
January 12/April 26

Arkansas
February 8/March 9

Florida
March 2/April 30

Georgia
January 11/late March

Kentucky
January 5/April 15

Louisiana
March 29/June 21

Mississippi
January 5/April 3

Oklahoma
February 1/May 28

South Carolina
January 12/June 3

Tennessee
January 12/early May

Virginia
January 13/March 13

West Virginia
January 13/March 13

Want to Read the Original Speech?

If you would like to read a summary or the full text of any of the State of the State speeches, you can find them at

www.stateline.org

This website has links to both the speech summaries and the full texts of the speeches.

Tennessee: Remaining True to the Principle of the “Family Budget”

“My goal throughout this recession has been to remain true to the principle of the “family budget” that I talked about when I first became Governor. It’s nothing more than the commonsense idea that we’re going to adjust our expenses to match our income, and we’re going to be very careful about using money from our savings account. It’s the way sensible families have to manage through these times and, while the numbers for state government are much larger than for any family, the principle is the same,” Governor Bredeesen remarked in his State of the State

Address on February 1, 2010.

Governor Bredeesen presented a proposed state budget that included no federal stimulus funds. The budget document that was presented reflected the 4 year plan submitted last year with further state budget reductions to reflect revenue declines experienced over the last year.

The budget fully funded the state’s Basic Education Program (BEP) with freezes in the capital outlay component of that program. Additionally, the pension system is fully funded and the

growth of the TennCare program (Tennessee’s Medicaid program) has been reduced. The budget also proposes using some state reserve funds to avoid further cuts to agency budgets and asks that 314 state positions that were scheduled for elimination be preserved.



Governor Bredeesen

He also noted that the state’s child welfare system is now fully nationally accredited. 2-1-2010

Georgia: History and Today’s Tough Decisions



Governor Perdue

years in office, relate the state’s fiscal crisis to other challenges in American history and challenge the Georgia legislature to make the hard decisions need to improve the future of

Governor Perdue took the opportunity at his State of the State Address on January 14th, to reminisce about his previous seven

the state. Traditionally, Governor Perdue had utilized this speech to present a state budget, define policy issues and present his legislative agenda. This speech offered only one budget detail, an increase of funding for the mentally disabled as required by recent court

“This is our time to carry the heavy load...to do the hard thing now for the sake of our children and grandchildren” Governor Perdue

decisions. The proposed budget was presented on January 15th, the day after the Address.

“Our nation’s story, unfolding through the centuries, gives us some much needed perspective...about where we are and what we face today. It teaches us that each generation has faced their own trial and shouldered their own responsibility...What stands out most is each generation’s willingness to pick up the yoke.” 1-14-2010

Mississippi: Sharp Revenue Declines & the Budget

On January 18th, Governor Barbour, a Republican, used his State of the State Address to urge the Democratically-led Legislature to approve a bill that would allow him to cut individual state agency budgets up to 10 percent. Without budget cutting flexibility, the Governor stated that the state’s sharp revenue declines would force 8.1% across the board reductions in agency budgets, without taking into account the priorities for state services.

He also called job creation and workforce training his number 1 priorities and touted Mississippi’s leadership in alternative energy production.



Governor Barbour

He vowed not to raise taxes and said he could not support a tax amnesty program. He also urged the Legislature

to make the state’s Rainy Day Fund last three more years by spending only 1/3 of the fund this year. He recommended draining the tobacco trust fund instead.

“We may not agree on everything, and don’t have to. We do have to be honest with each other and our constituents about the facts and the situations we face; and honest about the options we have....I’m committed to working with you.” 1-18-2010

Virginia: With Challenge Comes Opportunity

Governor Bob McDonnell was sworn in on January 16th and presented his first State of the Commonwealth Address on January 18th. Drawing on the history of Virginia as the place that much of the story of America was written, Republican Governor McDonnell reached out to legislators in a spirit of bi-partisanship and collegiality.

“Together we face challenges, and the choices we make this session will come after much reflection and debate. If we can show leadership and agree to cooperate, we will move Virginia through these difficult times. I ask that you

make decisions based not on which house or political party or branch of government wins... but whether or not Virginia wins.”



Governor McDonnell

The Governor laid out a policy agenda that included the development and adoption of policies that promote job creation and economic development. He requested these funding increases: doubling the

funding for the Governor’s Opportunity Fund (an economic development fund), \$5 million for an industrial mega-site fund, \$3.6 million for the Virginia Tourism Corporation, \$2 million for the Motion Picture Opportunity Fund. He also pledged to VETO any tax increases.

“I will introduce legislation this session that will result in the establishment of more charter schools, expand access to virtual schools and pursue the innovative idea...to create College Laboratory Schools.” 1/18/2010

Kentucky: Focusing on Priorities to Help Families, Create Jobs

Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear addressed a politically divided state legislature on January 8, 2010 and used this state of the commonwealth address to take credit for making government leaner and more efficient. Since taking office in 2008, Governor Beshear cut the state budget six times, amounting to about \$900 million.

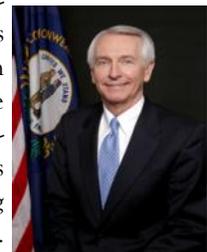
The address contained a few specific priorities aimed at helping families,

creating jobs and making government more efficient. In the address, he proposed eliminating the premium that needy families must pay to access the state’s health care program for children.

“I refuse to hunker down and hide, to just wait out this storm and to passively accept the economic situation that others have created for us.” Governor Beshear

He also proposed raising the state’s dropout age, allowing college students to transfer between institutions more freely, tougher domestic violence laws and new smoking cessation programs.

1/8/2010



Governor Beshear

Oklahoma: Don’t Cut Education Funding



Governor Henry

“Our responsibility to our students is sacred, and our progress in schools has been tremendous. I will not tolerate any effort to cut teacher pay or siphon resources from our classrooms, our students or our future.”... Strong words from a

Governor who is entering his last year of office and faces a major budget shortfall.

“The budget crisis will test each of us, and it will demand our best. It will require listening to the needs of our people, not the noise of partisan rancor. It will demand cooperation and collaboration, not confrontation and political calculation. The decisions we make will affect millions of Oklahomans today and in the future. The

stakes are that high.....Working together for the good of all Oklahomans, I have confidence that we will resolve this crisis responsibly and effectively. “

Regarding early childhood education...“Nowhere has our work been more critical than in the area of education..Perhaps the most important is the focus we have placed on our youngest students...We cannot undermine these efforts and jeopardize the future of our youngest Oklahomans.” 2/1/2010

Florida: Smaller Government/Lower Taxes

During his final State of the State speech, Governor Crist outlined his accomplishments during his time in office and proposed several new initiatives and funding priorities.

His accomplishments:

- The reduction and stabilization of property taxes and property insurance reform.
- *Accelerate Florida*, a program that speeded up direct expenditures for public sector projects.
- *Cover Florida*, the state's basic insur-

ance plan.

- The reduction of uninsured children in Florida through *KidCare*.
- The creation of an Office of Chief Child Advocate to deal with foster care issues.
- Early intervention programs for children with autism.

New initiatives included:

- 1) Implementation of a

verification system to ensure that background checks on persons who work with children, elderly and vulnerable populations are valid, 2) Reinstating the sales tax holiday for 10 days prior to the new school year and 3) Investment of \$67 million in community and state colleges to help offset tremendous growth in these institutions.



Governor Crist

3/2/10

Arkansas: Education is a Priority



Governor Beebe

Arkansas held a "fiscal only" session in 2010. Prior to this year, Arkansas held biennial sessions that included both

budget and issues legislation; however, a constitutional amendment was

adopted in 2008 that created the "fiscal only" session in the years between the regular sessions.

Although Governor Beebe did not deliver a "state of the state" address, he

"The proposed budget also reflects a priority that will never change, no matter the times—and that's an emphasis on education."

Governor Beebe

did present a proposed budget that was considered during the session. The budget included a 50% forecasted decrease for *new* general revenue funding and proposed the creation of a "rainy-day fund" with any surplus funds. "Arkansas is known for its history of fiscal restraint, as our Constitution prohibits deficit spending and requires the State budget to be balanced. My budget recommendations reflect this spirit.." 2/8/10

Louisiana: Better Results in Education and Health Care

Governor Jindal called on Louisiana lawmakers:

- to improve accountability in schools,
- to revamp health care funding, and
- to resist raising taxes in a difficult budget environment.



Governor Jindal

"Every time I can remember in our state's history, whenever we have faced fiscal challenges, our state has done one of two things: we've either raised taxes on our people or we've expanded gambling," Jindal said. "We will not, we must not do that in facing the challenges we face today."

In primary and secondary education, the Governor called for more flexibility for local schools, as long as they showed improvement on test scores. He also pushed for a shift in the programs the state uses to encourage high school drop-outs to learn job skills.

The budget proposed by Jindal fully funded the basic formula for pre-K through 12th grade. 3/29/2010

West Virginia: The Budget's Slender

West Virginia has weathered the recession much better than most of the SECA states and Governor Manchin emphasized that, although the “path toward continued success is going to be challenging, the state is in a “planning mode, not a panic mode”.

“When I look at West Virginia, I see a state of accomplishment, NOT a state of disarray. When I look at West Virginia, I see a state of responsible financial planning, NOT a state of economic turmoil. When I look at West Virginia, I see a state of prosperity, NOT a state of missed opportunities.” Although

the Governor enacted a 3.4% budget cut in 2009, the state remained relatively untouched by the economic downturn.

Manchin’s priorities for the state include:

1. Streamlining the parole system to expand work-release programs and pushing rehabilitation programs for



Governor Manchin

non-violent offenders.

2. Educating West Virginians, keeping college graduates in the state and attracting new residents.
3. Freezing college tuition for the coming year.
4. Supporting the coal industry and advancing new ways to use it.
5. Producing more clean energy, such as wind power.

1/14/2010

South Carolina: An Apology & Three Priorities



Governor Sanford

After a very rocky political year for the Governor, his last State of the State Address included his final apology for the political unrest that his extramarital affair caused for the state of South Carolina.

He pledged to work in his final year

with Legislators to achieve three priorities:

1. Overhauling the Employment Security Commission

“If you take but one pearl from this talk, it is that now is the time to make your voice heard-whether in correcting the path Washington is on now, or in bettering our state.”

2. Requiring future governors and lieutenant governors to run on the same ticket, and
3. Imposing caps on state spending so lawmakers aren’t tempted to spend too much when times are good.

He also reaffirmed his call to raise the state’s cigarette tax and cut corporate taxes by the same amount. The current tax is the lowest in the nation.
1/20/2010

Alabama: Increases for Education

Unlike many of the Governors of SECA states, Governor Bob Riley of Alabama was able to offer not only an optimistic outlook for the economy in Alabama, but he proposed adding \$400 million to the public school budget in his State of the State speech.

“No cuts for state agencies, more funding for our schools, without raising anybody’s taxes. Now that does not sound like we have a crisis. But it does

sound like we have a great opportunity,” according to Governor Riley.

He stated his opposition to a possible move to legalize “electronic bingo” and pushed his agenda to allow the creation of charter schools. This authorization would make Alabama eligible for \$200 million in federal funds if the schools



Governor Bob Riley

were permitted.

He also called for the passage of tax credits for businesses to promote job creation and the passage of ethics reforms. “I ask my friends in the majority (Democrats) to stop making excuses..and let these reforms come up for a vote.”

1-13-2010