

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

The State of the SECA States 2011: What Our Governors Had to Say

During the months of January and February 2011, 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/March 1st

Arkansas/January 11th

Florida/March 8th

Georgia/January 12th

Kentucky/February 1st

Mississippi/January 1st

Oklahoma/February 7th

S Carolina/January 19th

Texas/February 8th

Virginia/January 12th

W Virginia/January 12th

Louisiana's Governor will speak March 20th. The date of the speech in Tennessee has not been announced.

Most of the speeches focused on state budget issues, how state's planned to deal with fiscal issues, the Governor's legislative priorities and a re-cap of how the state had fared through the recession.

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

Some common themes:

- Jobs, jobs, jobs
- Governmental reform; smaller government
- Our past: We've "kicked the can down the road"
- Budget cuts

If you would like to access full text copies of the speeches, go to www.stateline.org

Information on Tennessee and Louisiana added on page 6 in May 2011

Legislative Session Dates: Black for Split Party Control, Red for Republican Control and Blue for Democratic Control

Alabama

March 1/Mid June

Arkansas

January 10/Late April

Florida

March 8/May 6

Georgia

January 10/mid April

Kentucky

January 4/March 22

Louisiana

April 25/June 23

Mississippi

January 4/early April

North Carolina

January 4/late April

Oklahoma

February 7/May 27

South Carolina

January 11/June 2

Tennessee

January 11/mid May

Texas

January 11/May 30

Virginia

January 12/February 26

West Virginia

January 12/mid March

Sources www.ncsl.org
www.stateline.org

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State of the States
Volume 4
Special Edition

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If Party Control of Your Legislature Changes, Why Does That Matter?

The Republican and Democrat Parties have campaigned on very different political platforms, and the party in control of the Legislature has the opportunity to enact many of those platforms. The governing philosophies are different and can affect state programs and budgets.

Texas: Deficits and Bragging Rights

On February 8th, Governor Perry (just elected to his third term of office) presented his State of the State Address to the Texas Legislature. His speech was peppered throughout with references to Texas's position in the country as one state that has weathered the recession relatively well and included some proposals about how to reduce a projected budget deficit in 2011. *"I could keep listing accolades, but I don't want to give the other states a complex, and we've got a lot of ground to cover this morning. So let me boil it down to these simple truths: the core elements of our economy are strong and Texas is still the envy of our nation."*

That said, Governor Perry acknowledged that Texas was facing a budget deficit this year and stated that he had asked state agencies to **"identify an additional 2.5% savings for the 2011 fiscal year."**

Other proposals included:

- Eliminating duplicate functions within agencies and suspending non-critical entities like the Historical Commission until the economy improves.
- Election reform, tougher eminent domain laws and



Governor Perry

mandatory sonograms before an abortion.

- Creating a Virtual High School through the Virtual School Network.
- Putting a cap of \$10,000 on the cost of a Bachelor's Degree at a Texas school.
- Creating a way to credit veterans for their skills and service in the military, particularly in the health field.

2-8-2011

Georgia: Deficits and Priorities



Governor Deal

Governor Deal began his State of the State with a quote from an 1885 publication. *"In general productiveness, in salubrity of climate, in the incomparable blessing*

of good water, in facilities of transportation, in educational advantages, in the moral tone of her people, and the almost unbroken good order of society, what State

of our day and generation can justly claim a happier condition or a higher civilization." He remarked that it is comforting to know that this quote stands after 126 years.

He proceeded to outline his budget proposals for the remainder of FY 2011

"Some may have lost optimism, but I have not. I believe that the citizens of this great state are ready to rally in this time and to achieve great things...and to create a better Georgia."

and FY 2012. He reduced the revenue estimate for FY 2011 by \$27.5 million. **He also recommended that state agencies reduce their spending by 4% and that funds from the Reserve fund be utilized to cover deficits in the K-12 budget for FY 2011.**

His FY 2012 budget includes an increase for K-12 and a commitment to save the HOPE program which funds the Georgia Pre-K program. HOPE is funded through lottery proceeds.

1-12-2011

Mississippi: A New Image of Our State

Governor Haley Barbour delivered his 8th and final State of the State Speech to the Mississippi Legislature on January 11, 2011. The speech included a summary of his accomplishments while Governor and reiterated many themes that had guided him during his time in the Governor's office.

Prior to the recession, Mississippi had experienced significant economic growth and was "on a roll". Governor Barbour said that it was now time to

"...get back on that roll. The country and world have a new image of our state. They're giving us a chance, to let us compete. So it is up to us to meet the challenge;



Governor Barbour

no, the opportunity." Governor Barbour urged:

- To continue conservative fiscal policies and

build up a state surplus

- To use surplus funds from the Division of Medicaid to fund 7,800 additional slots for home based care.
- Continued consolidation and streamlining of state agencies.
- Reforming the Charter School law to increase the number of schools.
- To establish a Civil Rights Museum in Jackson. 1-12-2011

Virginia: Every Challenge Presents an Opportunity



Governor McDonnell

“It is said that with every challenge presents an opportunity. If that’s right, we have more opportunities than we know what to do with!”

He continued his speech with a description of smart government. It is:

- Respectful of the taxpayers hard earned dollars.
- Mindful of the fact that its authority comes from the people, not the other way around.

- Cognizant of the truth that the free market is the generator of wealth and opportunity in all recorded history.
- Humble enough to admit that Ronald Reagan was right— sometimes, government is the problem!

His philosophy of a smaller, more streamlined government has driven many of his initiatives in 2010 and his State of the State clearly articulated his priorities for 2011 and 2012.

- Another \$191 million in cuts and reprioritizations within the budget
- Creation of job-creating tools.

- Major reforms and more accountability in higher education.
- Allocation of \$4 billion to transportation over the next three years.
- Prioritization of state spending.
- Elimination of targeted agencies, boards and commissions.
- Reforms to the state pension and Medicaid systems.

“Ensuring that good paying and rewarding jobs are available for our citizens in every community is the foremost priority of this administration.”

1-12-2011

Kentucky: Work Harder, Spend Less

Governor Beshear made his 4th State of the State speech on February 1, 2011. He noted that the three years that he had been in office had been marked by a reduction of state government, including the executive branch, furloughs of state employees and increased efficiencies.

The Governor has opposed broad-based tax increases during that time,, considering them a threat to economic recovery. He has also created a state website

for taxpayers to find information about how state agencies are spending taxpayer funds.

His priorities include, among others:

- Job creation.

“In Kentucky, our families respond to economic pressures differently. They work harder and spend less. And for three years I’ve run Frankfort just like our families run their budget.”

- Preserving the equine & coal mining industries.
- Realigning early childhood programs.

2-1-2011



Governor Beshear

Oklahoma: “For too long, we’ve kicked the can down the road.”



Governor Fallin

Newly elected Governor Mary Fallin made her first State of the State speech on February 7, 2011. During that speech, she outlined two sets of challenges that are facing Oklahoma.

- Oklahoma faces a budget gap of \$600 million.

- With the budget deficit, what choices can be made to position Oklahoma to become more prosperous.

She stated that voters had “sent us a message. They told us to get serious about controlling spending, and that the growth of government shouldn’t outpace growth in the private sector. “

Governor Fallin proposed cuts in state government but stated that Oklahoma

could keep its “commitments to important public priorities, like keeping our citizens safe, building our transportation infrastructure, educating our children and caring for the less fortunate, the sick and the elderly.” She stated that agencies that dealt with these issues would receive less in cuts than the rest of state government. Additionally, there was a focus put on restructuring spending and educational programs to achieve savings. 2/7/2011

Florida: Bold Reforms are Underway

In his March 8th State of the State Speech, first term Governor Rick Scott focused on themes familiar in all the SECA states:

- Jobs are priority #1.
- Enhancing the business climate is necessary to attract new employers.
- Government has outgrown boundaries and needs to be pulled back and streamlined.
- Education reform is a necessity to prepare the workforce of the future.

The budget presented by the Governor was described as the “jobs budget” and he noted that it would have both supporters and detractors.

In education, Governor Scott listed **three principles** on which he had based his recommendations.

1. *Individual student learning must be the touchstone for all decisions.* Practices that impair student



Governor Scott

learning must be abolished and those that enhance learning supported.

2. *The single most important factor in student learning is the quality of teaching.*

Teacher tenure must be addressed.

3. *We all improve through competition.* An increase in charter schools was recommended.

3/8/2011

Arkansas: No Budget Crisis for Us



Governor Beebe

2010. The Governor addressed the State Legislature on January 11, 2011

Governor Beebe is one of a handful of Democratic Governors in the country and he was just re-elected to his second term in

and noted that , although Arkansas was not facing budget deficits, the budget for the next year would remain essentially flat. He did propose a budget increase for public education funding

“In many states, the budget process has become one of triage...That we do not face such bleak crises here is a source of pride.” Governor Beebe

and discussed improving higher education in the state

He also proposed an additional 1/2 cent reduction in the state sales tax on food, which would add to an earlier reduction in his first term in office.

Two major revenue issues were mentioned as non-sustainable, Medicaid and the growth in the prison population. 1/11/2011

Alabama: Not Enough Money to Sustain FY 2011 Budget

“Today we face great challenges in Alabama. ..We are at a time when we must make difficult choices...And what we choose to do today will have far-reaching effects on the future of Alabama and our citizens...As your Governor, I am ready to make those tough decisions.”

Governor Bentley noted that FY 2011 budgets for the Education Trust Fund and the General Fund Budget are facing a \$165 million shortfall in educa-

tion and a \$110 million shortfall in the general fund. The ARRA money is depleted and is no longer available to “backfill” the state budgets.

He announced a 3% proration in the Education Trust Fund and a 15% proration in the general Trust Fund. Additionally, he announced that both teachers and state employees will be asked to contribute more to their health and pension costs.

His budget reductions will not cost any



Governor Bentley

teachers their jobs or result in increased class sizes. Support personnel were also protected. His cuts also protected the state Medicaid program, the National Guard and Dept of Corrections.

3/1/2011

West Virginia: Top Priority is to Improve the Business Climate

Earl Ray Tomblin assumed the office of Governor of the State of West Virginia upon the election of then-Governor Manchin to the U.S. Senate from West Virginia. On January 12, 2011, he presented his first State of the State address to the West Virginia Legislature.

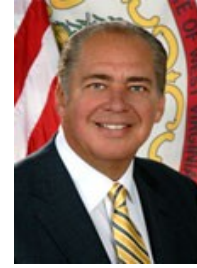
He began his address by asking legislators to “join me in making this Legislative Session one to remember for the positive things we achieved and how we worked together for the betterment of our state.”

Governor Tomblin presented a bal-

anced state budget for the next fiscal year. “Not only is it balanced...it raises no fees, it furloughs no teachers or state employees, neither cuts nor creates entitlement programs..it does not rely on any Rainy Day funds..and the budget that I submit to you today does not rely on any stimulus funding from the Federal Government as a backfill to State operations.”

Some of the Governor’s proposals included:

- A one-third reduction in the sales



Governor Tomblin

tax levied on food from 3 cents to 2 cents.

- An overhaul of the tax increment financing program.
- Develop solutions to keep coal relevant as an energy source.
- Teacher pay raises of 1.5% .
- Creation of the WV Dept of Veterans Affairs.

1/12/2011

South Carolina: Economic Development is Priority #1



Governor Haley

In her first State of the State address as Governor of South Carolina, Governor Haley focused her remarks on the need for economic development and improving the business environment in her state.

She invited those in attendance to provide her with ideas on how to close the budget gap facing the state and confirmed her intention to work with the

“It is time that we restore to the people of South Carolina a government that both knows and performs its intended role. The current budget situation demands it.”
Governor Haley

Legislature to move the state forward.

Some initiatives she mentioned:

- Restructuring of state agencies and reduction of state operational costs.
- Changes to Medicaid and health care solutions.
- Revising the school funding formula and privatizing the state school bus system. 1/19/2011

Louisiana: Short and Sweet!



Governor Jindal

Perhaps the shortest of the State of the State speeches that were given by SECA governors in 2011, Governor Jindal focused his remarks on the changing political make-up of the Legislature, redistricting, and the fact that Louisiana now has a Republican majority in the both the House and Senate.

This speech was given before a three week period dedicated to redistricting. (redrawing election boundaries based on the new Census data.) The regular session of the Legislature convened on April 25, 2011.

He pointed out the areas in which bi-

“When it is said and done, we will come together as one group to do what is best for our state.”
Governor Jindal

partisanship had triumphed in the selection of legislative leaders and encouraged the Legislature to move forward in that spirit.

His goals included

- Improving education.
- Growing the economy.
- Investing in infrastructure.
- Building a better Louisiana for our children and grandchildren. 3-2-2011

Tennessee: Three Key Questions

Governor Haslam delivered his first State of the State speech on March 14, 2011 in Nashville, Tennessee.

Governor Haslam focused his remarks on three key questions:

1. **Where are we?**
2. **Where do we plan to be?**
3. **How will we get there?**

His speech introduced a FY 2012 budget that included a \$63.4 million increase in K-12 spending. The Governor's budget also included a cut of \$20.2 million (about 2%) from the higher education budget.

His plan also includes the elimination of 1,080 state jobs, mostly through attrition but also including positions created through non-recurring and stimulus funds. In spite of the job reductions, he proposed a 1.6% salary increase for state employees, the first increase in four years.

His proposals also:

- Replenish the Rainy Day Fund.
- Direct the Department of Education to reduce teacher paperwork.
- Lift the cap on the number of char-



Governor Haslam

ter schools.

- Support paying for delayed maintenance on the state's schools.

"We are cheerleaders for great teachers. There is one underlying principle—learning begins with great teachers who are encouraged to teach and to spend more time in the classroom instead of filling out reams of paperwork."

3/14/2011

Southern Early Childhood Association



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Previous copies of the newsletter may be found at

http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/policy_newsletter_sign.php

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.