

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

Taking on Education

On March 10, 2009, President Obama made a major education policy speech to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The President answered critics that he is taking on too much, too fast.

President Obama explained why we cannot afford to wait. "By 2016, four out of every ten new jobs will require at least some advanced education or training."

The President promised to change the culture of reform, including the elimination of partisan "finger-pointing" and to ensure that new investments came with new reforms.

He told the audience that

"It is time to start rewarding good teachers and stop making excuses for bad ones."

He outlined his proposed four pillars of reform:

- **Investing in early childhood education**, like Head Start;
- **Encouraging better standards and assessments** by focusing on testing itineraries that better fit our kids and the world they live in;
- **Recruiting, preparing, and rewarding outstanding teachers** by giving incentives for a new generation of teachers and for new levels or excellence

from all our teachers;

- **Promoting innovation and excellence in America's schools** by supporting charter schools, reforming the school calendar and the structure of the school day.

Excerpted from "Taking on Education," The Briefing Room, www.whitehouse.gov, March 10, 2009.



2009 Omnibus Budget Bill Passes

The 2009 Omnibus Budget Bill that will fund federal agencies for the remainder of FY 2009, hit an initial snag in the Senate but finally got through and has been signed by President Obama. The debate over the bill centered around

the number of "earmarks", funding for local projects, that were included.

The bill includes significant increases this year for the Child Care & Development Block Grant (+65 million), Head Start (+235 million), IDEA Part C for

Infants and Toddlers (+3.7 million), Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants (+16.3 million) and 21st Century Learning Centers. +50 million). These funds are in addition to the stimulus funds.

Source: www.nwlc.org 1.

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Special points of interest:

- Stimulus Funds to be Released
- New Report on Homelessness
- GAYC Legislative Agenda
- Update on State Recovery Websites
- Obama Budget

Seven SECA States Have Submitted Certification Letters

Seven of the 14 SECA states have submitted a certification letter in order to receive funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus).

Texas was the first SECA state to submit, and the states of Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Kentucky, North Carolina and Virginia have now submitted their official letter and are eligible to receive funds under all programs enacted under the ARRA.

The act requires that :

SEC. 167 (a) CERTIFICATION BY GOVERNOR

Not later than 45 days after the date of enactment of this Act, for funds provided to any State or agency thereof, the Governor of the State shall certify that: (1) the State will request and use funds provided by this Act; and (2) the funds will be used to create jobs and promote economic growth.

Some Southern Governors are still debating whether to accept funds under specific portions of the stimulus, and Louisiana's Governor Bobby Jindal has continued to question whether these funds will create long-term commit-



Governor Bobby Jindal of Louisiana

ments on the part of the state. Louisiana's letter stated, "This certification constitutes our general certification as required by the Act; however, we will continue to examine fund-specific requirements to ensure that we are not growing government in an unsustainable way." He also asked that the "Administration provide clear guidance" to states. Governor Barbour of Mississippi, Sanford of South Carolina and Perry of Texas are also debating acceptance of all stimulus funds.

Source: www.recovery.gov

Six More SECA States Have Recovery Websites

Each state will create a "Recovery Website" to track the use of stimulus funds and to provide "transparency" to the process. These websites are designed to:

- Allow citizens to track projects that are funded through stimulus dollars
- Ensure transparency by posting all state contracts and information about recovery programs

Virginia was the first SECA state to have a website operating. Six more SECA states now have websites available.

In **Alabama** go to www.alabama.recovery.gov

In **Arkansas**, go to www.recovery.arkansas.gov

In **Georgia**, go to www..stimulus.georgia.gov.

In **Tennessee**, go to www.tnrecovery.gov

In **Oklahoma**, go to www.oklahoma.gov/recovery

In **West Virginia**, go to www.wvgov.org

Your state doesn't have a website yet? Go to www.recovery.gov to find information on new sites as it is available.

Child Care Policy Options for States

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) and the National Women's Law Center (NWLC) have issued a joint report entitled, *Making Use of Economic Recovery Funds: Child Care Policy Options for States*.

The report recommends that the most effective strategy for states, given the economic conditions, may be for a state to improve or expand in one or two

policy areas and document the effects that these changes have on children, families, and child care providers.

The report is a very readable 10 pages and includes a laundry list of suggested strategies. The strategies include suggestions for serving more families and

investing in initiatives to improve the quality of child care. You'll find discussions about child care waiting lists, eligibility determination, parent co-payments, supply, language access & outreach and QRIS systems.



Making Use of Economic Recovery Funds: Child Care Policy Options for States

Source: www.nwlc.org

Georgia Association's 2009 Legislative Agenda

The Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC), published a legislative agenda for 2009, including:

- Support funding for Georgia's 4-year-old Pre-K program and improve policies to increase quality, slots, outreach and supports.
- Increase the number of NAEYC accredited child care centers, NAFCC family child care homes and accredited school-age programs in Georgia.
- Support state licensing and other policies that increase quality stan-

dards and provide incentives to meet standards.

- Increase the number of families who receive child care subsidies.
- Develop a system of home visiting in Georgia.
- Strengthen families through funding and policies to promote family initiatives.
- Support efforts to research P to 16 alignment.
- Recommend and recognize policies that recognize Family, Friend and

Neighbor Care as a choice for families.

We'll give you an update on the agenda in a future issue of *Public Policy Notes*

Source: *Together For Children*, GAYC Newsletter, Winter 2009.



US Department of Education to Release Stimulus Funds

In a press release dated March 7, 2009, the US Department of Education announced that it would release \$44 billion in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) within the next 30-45 days.

The first round of funding is designed to prevent teacher layoffs in schools while including funds for significant education reforms. Guidelines for use of the funds were posted at www.ed.gov

on March 8, 2009. These guidelines authorize the release of half of the Title I funds (\$5 billion) and half of the IDEA funds (\$6 billion) without new state applications. By the end of

"These funds will be distributed as quickly as possible to save and create jobs and improve education..."

Arne Duncan, US Secretary of Education

March, Governors will be able to apply for 67% of the State Fiscal Stabilization Funds (\$32.5 billion). These funds will be released within two weeks of approval of the state's application.

For a brief description of these programs and funds, check out the *Special Stimulus Edition of Public Policy Notes*.

Source: www.ed.gov, March 7, 2009 Press Release

America's Youngest Outcasts: Homeless Children

The National Center on Family Homelessness has released a new report, *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness*, and most SECA states rank in the bottom tier of national rankings.

The report rates each state on the following criteria: child homelessness per capita, child well-being, risk for child homelessness and state policy and plan-

ning.

The bottom five states in the national ranking were Texas, Georgia, Arkansas, New Mexico, and Louisiana.

Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida, and Kentucky were ranked in the 41-50 tier nationally. Oklahoma, Alabama and South Carolina in the 31-40

tier, Tennessee in the 21-30 tier and Virginia in the 11-20 tier. With the challenge of the current economy, experts anticipate that the rate of homeless children and families will increase, placing an even greater strain on state systems and supports.



Source: www.familyhomelessness.org

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Southern Early Childhood Association



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.

President Obama Submits First Budget

President Barack Obama has submitted his first federal budget, and it includes significant additional investments in programs that affect children and families.

His budget proposal includes:

- An expansion and continuation of the child care tax credit.
- Making the \$2500 American Opportunity Tax Credit (to help families afford college) permanent.
- Providing \$1.1 billion for Early Head Start to double the number of children served.
- Creation of a Nurse Home Visitation Program.

- Additional funding for teacher performance systems that reward quality performance in the classroom.
- Strengthening nutrition assistance through Child Nutrition and WIC programs.
- Providing greater support for effective charter schools.
- Increasing health care coverage for children.
- Support of prevention of teen pregnancy programs.
- Assistance for additional police personnel in cities

and communities.

- Providing energy assistance to low-income families.
- For the first time, the cost of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars as a budget item.

The proposed budget has met resistance from both Congressional Republicans and conservative Democrats.

"...now is precisely the time for the country to make the long overdue investments..."
President Barack Obama on *Jumpstarting the Economy and Investing for the Future*.



Source: www.whitehouse.gov
