

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

The 2015 Presidential Budget Proposal

On March 4, 2014, President Barack Obama released his much awaited budget proposal for FY 2015. The budget outline included many of the President's policy priorities and immediately drew criticism from legislators who felt that it did not follow the bi-partisan budget guidelines agreed to earlier.

His release of the budget coincided with a visit to Powell Elementary School

in Washington, D.C. and he acknowledged, "**These kids may not be the most excited people in town on budget day, but my budget is designed with their generation and future generations in mind.**"

"Our budget is about choices," President Obama said. "It's about our values. As a country, we've got to make a decision if we're going to protect tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans, or if we're going to make smart

investments necessary to create jobs and grow our economy, and expand opportunity for every American."

Source:
www.whitehouse.gov

In this newsletter, we'll attempt to outline the major components of the President's budget, particularly as it relates to education.

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President Barack Obama talks with students during a classroom visit at Powell Elementary School in Washington, D.C. March 4, 2014. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza) Retrieved from www.whitehouse.gov/ March 12, 2014

Update on Arkansas' Private Option

The Medicaid expansion experiment in Arkansas was finally passed by the Arkansas Legislature after 5 votes (with one vote to spare) and the program will continue for another year.

If you'd like more information about the Private Option, go to the January & February 2014 issues of *Public Policy Notes*.

Opportunity for All: The FY 2015 Budget Overview

This information is excerpted from the *Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Overview* provided by the Office of Management and Budget and is available on the website of the White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/overview>

According to this document, the budget:

- ◆ “Provides a roadmap for accelerating economic growth, expanding opportunity for all Americans, and ensuring fiscal responsibility. It invests in infrastructure, job training, **preschool**, and pro-work tax cuts, while reducing deficits through health, tax and immigration reform.
- ◆ Adheres to the 2015 spending levels agreed to in the Bipartisan Budget Act and shows the choices the President would make at those levels. But it also shows how to build on this progress to realize the nation’s full potential with a fully paid for \$56 billion Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative, split evenly between defense and non-defense priorities.”

What’s in the Budget?

Stronger Growth & Job Creation

- ⇒ Investments in manufacturing, including a new national network of 45 manufacturing institutes.
- ⇒ Supports research to fight disease, protect the environment, develop new technologies and makes the R & D Tax Credit permanent.
- ⇒ Lays out a \$302 billion surface

transportation reauthorization proposal paid for with transition revenue from pro-growth business tax reform.

- ⇒ Promotes more efficient government services.

Opportunity for All

- ⇒ Doubles the value of the childless worker EITC.
- ⇒ Promotes **preschool** for all.
- ⇒ Invests in new workforce training programs.

Fiscal Responsibility

- ⇒ Builds on the savings and reform in the Affordable Care Act with new measures to strengthen Medicare and Medicaid.
- ⇒ Curbs inefficient and unfair tax breaks for the wealthy and ensures that everyone is paying their fair share.
- ⇒ Supports comprehensive reform of the current immigration system.
- ⇒ Reduces deficits to 1.6% of GDP by 2024.

The education components of the budget proposal that will be of particular interest to early childhood educators include:

- Increasing access to high-quality early childhood education through the **Preschool for All Initiative**, voluntary home visiting programs, and access to infant and toddler care through the Early Head Start-Child Care Partner-

ships.

- A new **Race to the Top for Equity and Opportunity** competition centered on increasing the academic performance of high need students.
- A new competitive program to redesign high schools.
- Professional development for teachers to help them make use of broadband connectivity.
- A new framework for STEM education.

Additional components under the education umbrella include 1) initiatives to enhance the affordability of a college education, 2) new investments in workforce training programs, 3) public/private partnerships to assist the long term unemployed and 4) education for the health workforce to improve access to health care services.

For more information on the President’s **Preschool for All Initiative**, access the February and April 2013 issues of *Public Policy Notes*.



President Barack Obama signs copies of the FY 2015 Budget as Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Director, Office of Management and Budget, and OMB staff look on in the Oval Office, March 4, 2014. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)
Retrieved from www.whitehouse.gov/March 12, 2014

Florida's Special Election: A Hint at the Outcome in the Fall?



Alex Sink



David Jolly

With the announcement of the outcome of the special Congressional election held on

Tuesday, March 11, 2014, the political pundits are on a roll.

David Jolly, a Republican and former lobbyist, defeated **Alex Sink**, a Democrat, former Florida Chief Financial Officer and Florida gubernatorial candidate. Jolly, a political unknown six months ago defeated a candidate with significant name recognition and a war chest to match.

The special election was held to

fill the Congressional seat in Florida's U.S. House District 13 in Pinellas County which has been vacant since the death in October 2013 of C.W. Bill Young who had held the office for 43 years.

Jolly had 48.8% of the vote, Sink received 46.6% and the Libertarian Candidate, Lucas Overby, received 4.8%.

Normally this type of race would attract little attention but this one gained national notoriety because of the presence of large amounts of outside money from political groups and a campaign that was filled with attack ads and distortion of the candidates' records, according to the St. Petersburg Tribune. Outside money to finance the campaign came in at nearly \$9 million.

Attacks focused on Sink were developed around her support for Obamacare...she promoted "fixing it", rather than repeal. Attacks on Jolly highlighted his career as a

lobbyist and support from ultra conservative groups.

On the national scene, the debate has begun about whether this type of campaign and outcome might be expected in the mid-term elections, when the balance of power in the U.S. Senate will be in play. Four Democratic Senators, including **Mary Landrieu of Louisiana** and **Mark Pryor of Arkansas**, are facing stiff re-election campaigns. If Democratic seats turn over to Republicans, the balance of power shifts to Congressional Republicans with Republicans controlling both the House and Senate.

In his victory remarks, Jolly "pledged to bring the community together in the wake of a bitter campaign." *"Where we can work together and build consensus and find common ground, we have to do that,"* he said.

Source: St. Petersburg Tribune, <http://tbo.com>

The SAT: Redesigned

The iconic test has undergone its second redesign of the last 100 years and, in the words of the President of the College Board, David Coleman, *"It is time for an admissions assessment that makes it clear that the road to success is not last-minute tricks or cramming, but the learning students do over years."*

This re-design has taken place as the college entrance testing indus-

try, including the ACT and SAT, is facing challenges from the growing test-optional movement. During recent years, some colleges have dropped the requirement to submit these scores for consideration for admission.

The announcement also came with a criticism of the test preparation industry that sells materials and courses that students hope

will raise their scores.

President Coleman repeated a pledge that he made at the White House in January. **The College Board will deliver four college application fee waivers to each test-taker meeting income eligibility requirements, allowing them to apply to schools for free.** Source:

The Washington Post, <http://washingtonpost.com>, 3/5/14



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"A Voice for Southern Children"

How to Use Public Policy Notes

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.

This monthly newsletter is produced by Glenda Bean, SECA Executive Director.

SECA strives to provide non-partisan and non-biased information

that is of interest to early childhood educators. Sign up at

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

to receive notice of its availability each month.

USDA & Childhood Obesity

On March 12, 2014, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced that USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) will make three grants totaling \$5 million to universities to develop childhood obesity prevention programs.

Two of those three universities are located in SECA states.

The **University of Tennessee at Knoxville** was awarded a grant of \$4,887,083 for the "**Get Fruved**" program—a "peer-led, train-the-trainer social marketing intervention to increase fruit and vegetable intake and prevent childhood obesity."

Winston-Salem State University,

Winston-Salem, North Carolina, received \$150,000 for the Childhood Health & Obesity Initiative: Communities Engaged for Success. This program is directed toward children ages 10-12 from low income families.

NIFA made the awards through the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Childhood Obesity Prevention program. "This year's funding is focused on supporting research programs aimed at generating new knowledge of behavioral, social and/or environmental factors that influence childhood obesity. All three projects funded this year were required to integrate all three functions of agriculture science: research, education and extension.

For more information about the **Tennessee** project, go to <http://tntoday.utk.edu/2011/11/11/student-campaign-healthier-eating-campus/>

Source: *USDA Press Release #0038.14, www.nifa.usda.gov, 3/12/14*



UT Students get "Fruved"!