

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

The State of the Union 2015



Photo retrieved from www.whitehouse.gov on 2/12/15

On January 20, 2015, President Obama delivered his sixth State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress. According to Education Week in an article entitled, *K-12 Issues Given Short Shrift in State of the Union Address* (January 28, 2015), some of the major issues of contention in education were overlooked in the address. One of those issues, reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, with its heated debates over high-stakes testing, was not mentioned.

The President chose to focus on two major issues in education:

- ◆ A proposal to make

the first two years of community college free for most students.

- ◆ Early childhood education, including a proposal to triple the Child Care & Dependent Tax Credit and a previous proposal to provide \$75 billion to enhance early childhood education throughout the country.

From the President's speech:

"We are fifteen years into this new century. Fifteen years that dawned with terror touching our shores; that unfolded with a new generation fighting two long and costly wars; that saw a vicious recession spread across our nation and the world. It has been, and still is, a hard time for many.....But

tonight, we turn the page..... At this moment – with a growing economy, shrinking deficits, bustling industry, and booming energy production – we have risen from recession freer to write our own future than any other nation on Earth. It's now up to us to choose who we want to be over the next fifteen years, and for decades to come." Source: www.whitehouse.gov

The address also contained proposals on tax increases, tax breaks for families, enhanced paid parental leave for federal workers, reductions in insurance premiums for federally backed mortgages, automatic retirement accounts, relations with the Middle East, Cuba & Iran, trade, and cybersecurity.

Additionally, the President announced veto threats for any attempts to roll back an executive order on immigration and the Affordable Care Act.

February 2015

Public Policy Notes

Inside this issue:

The President's FY 2016 Budget

Quality Counts: Preparing to Launch 3

Making the Case for Advocacy 3

News to Note 4

Missed the speech? Like to know more?

[Click here](#) to view a video of the address and get access to a photo gallery.

[Click here](#) to find excerpts from the address.

These links will take you to the official White House website.

The President's FY 2016 Budget

On February 2, 2015, President Obama released his proposed FY 2016 budget. As promised in his State of the Union address, it included commitments to early care and education and the funding proposals were the next step in the process. Following are those budget proposals that would impact our field. (*The following information was provided by the National Women's Law Center, www.nwlc.org*)

- The President's budget would provide \$82 billion over 10 years for the **Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG)**. This level of funding would be utilized to provide child care assistance to all children under age four in families with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level. This funding level would expand child care assistance to 1.1 million children by 2025. For states to receive additional funding, they would be required to develop plans for increasing the supply of high-quality infant/toddler care, for ensuring that provider payment rates are sufficient to provide that care and that parent copayments are reasonable.
- The **Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit** would be expanded to a maximum of \$3,000 for a family with one child under age five in child care and \$6,000 for a family with two or more children under age five. These credits would be available to families

with incomes up to \$120,000. (The current maximum credit is \$1,050 and \$2,100 respectively.) With incomes above \$120,000, the family's available credit would begin to decline. The credit would remain non-refundable. (A refundable credit is one that is allowed on the front-end, before tax returns are filed, with the result that less is deducted from a paycheck.)

- **Head Start/Early Head Start** would see an increase of funding to \$10.1 billion (from \$8.6 billion). The increase would be utilized to support enhanced Early Head Start/Child Care Partnerships, full-day/full-year programs and a cost of living increase for employees.
- **Preschool Development Grants** would be increased to \$750 million from \$250 million in the current fiscal year. This would increase state participation from the current 18 states to 40 states.
- **Preschool for All** would be funded at \$1.3 billion for the first year with a 10-year budget of \$75 billion. This program would be paid for with an increased tobacco tax.
- **Home Visiting** would receive expanded funding, from \$400 million to \$500 million in FY 2016.
- **Part C (Infants & Families) of IDEA**, the intervention program for infants/toddlers, would increase by \$65 million to \$504 million.

- **Preschool Grants under IDEA (Part B)** would be increased by \$50 million to \$403 million in FY 2016.
- **Campus-based child care services** that are supported by the Child Care Access Means Parents in School would receive level funding.
- **21st Century Community Learning Centers** would remain at current levels for FY 2016. These funds may be used for out-of-school time programs and expanded learning programs during school hours.

In general, the budget proposal eliminates the additional budget cuts that will take effect under the **sequester**, restoring \$37 billion in funding to the non-defense programs of the budget.

For information on the programs and initiatives mentioned in this article, check out these past issues of *Public Policy Notes* and *Policy Briefs* produced by SECA.

[Preschool Development Grants](#)

[Child Care & Development Block Grant](#)

[The Individual with Disabilities Education Act](#)

[Preschool for All](#)

[Home Visiting](#)

[Sequester](#)

[Head Start](#)

[Early Education for All: A Policy Brief](#)

Quality Counts: Preparing to Launch

According to a press release from Education Week, “The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts report—*Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown*—explores the complex landscape that defines early-childhood services and programs in this country. The report examines how new academic demands and accountability pressures are reshaping the learning environment for young children and the teachers and administrators serving them. Education Week journalists delve into the policy debates surrounding publicly funded programs, examine cutting-edge research on the early years, and highlight the academic and technological challenges that await the nation’s youngest learners.

In a politically polarized environment

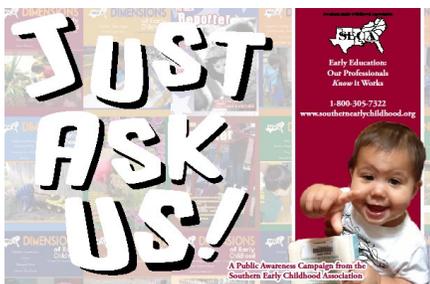
that has increasingly extended into education policy, an area once largely free of partisan skirmishing, support for early-childhood education has become a rare point of consensus along the ideological and political spectrum. From President Barack Obama’s push for a \$75 billion, 10-year federal preschool commitment to efforts by governors, mayors, and state legislatures for new and expanded programs, momentum continues to build. Yet, consensus around the importance of early education is just the starting point. Complications abound, and disagreements over funding strategies and policy approaches threaten to unravel tenuous alliances that have bridged the partisan divide.”

The report is divided into four sections: 1) Getting Prepared, 2) Into the Pipeline, 3) Stretching

the Fabric, and 4) State of the States. **Section 2** contains a snapshot of the San Antonio Pre-K program. **Section 4** contains a grading summary of the states and information on state rankings on the “chance for success index” and school finance. A copy of the report may be accessed on the [Education Week](#) website.



Making the Case for Advocacy by Non-profits



A recent article, *Charity Inc.: Advocacy for nonprofits*, by Marnie Taylor, president and CEO of the Oklahoma Center for Non-profits, made the case for active non-profit advocacy.

“This week marks the beginning of the 2015 legislative session in Oklahoma. As our state continues to face a major budget shortfall coupled with a drop in

oil and gas prices, both for-profit and nonprofit businesses are bracing for potential consideration of tough cuts and a rough road ahead....A holistic policy picture about impact should be the new paradigm and priority for nonprofits. Nonprofit leaders and volunteers should be able to show the public and our policymakers how their missions not only affect the lives they serve but how they save taxpayer dollars, help the economy and improve the state’s standards compared with other states.” For a copy of Marnie’s article, [CLICK HERE](#).

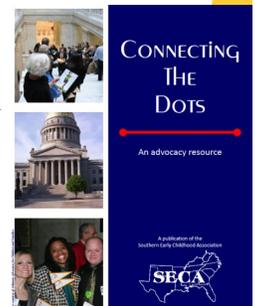
Who knows better than we that what we do makes a difference in

the lives of children? If you’re ready to step up to the plate, there are resources at SECA and also within your state that can support your efforts.

For a list of the advocacy contacts within the SECA state affiliates, [CLICK HERE](#).

For a copy of *Connecting the Dots....an advocacy resource*, [CLICK HERE](#).

Don’t forget the wealth of information archived in past editions of [Public Policy Notes](#).



Southern Early Childhood Association

1123 S. University, Ste 255
Little Rock, AR 72204

Phone: 800-305-SECA

Fax: 501-227-5297

E-mail:

info@southernearlychildhood.org

www.southernearlychildhood.org

Southern Early Childhood Association



"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.

News to Note

NCLB Waiver

According to a January 7th article in *Education Week*, the U.S. Department of Education has granted **Florida** some flexibility in the counting of scores of ELL students in accountability measures. The state had asked that ELL students participate in a U.S. school for two years before factoring their scores on the English/language and mathematics tests into school grades. This decision approves a part of the state's waiver request for NCLB. Florida is the first state to receive this flexibility.

New Leader of the Foundation for Excellence in Education

Condoleezza Rice, former U.S. Secretary of State, will replace

Jeb Bush as the leader of the Foundation. Mr. Bush has withdrawn from the Foundation to explore a candidacy for President in 2016. The Foundation has supported policies such as A-F accountability grades for schools and online learning.

Head Start

On January 21st, the Education and Workforce Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives released a white paper entitled, [Strengthening the Federal Investment in Early Childhood](#). "Our country has long invested in early learning and child care programs," said Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman John Kline (R-MN). "Congress has a responsibility to ensure this investment is meeting the needs of the vulnerable families we aim to serve, while balancing the interests of taxpayers. That is precisely what Congress

did when it reauthorized with bipartisan support the Child Care and Development Block Grant program. It is my hope we can build on this progress by reforming the Head Start program, and the feedback from concerned citizens and stakeholders will help us move forward in that important effort." A Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education has four members from SECA states: Dave Brat of Virginia, Buddy Carter of Georgia, Steve Russell of Oklahoma, and Carlos Curbelo of Florida.

It Does Make a Difference! [A](#)

[new study](#) found that children who participated in Head Start had significantly healthier weights at the end of two years. Improvement was shown in both overweight and underweight children.