

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

Finally—A Budget Agreement!

Finally, after years of partisan deadlock, Congress has passed a budget compromise. On December 10, 2013, Representative Paul Ryan and Senator Patty Murray announced that they had reached a “budget deal”, the **Bipartisan Budget Act**, that would avoid another shutdown of government and lay a path forward to reinstate the budget process that Congress has followed for decades.

This “budget deal” covers 2 years, FY 2014 and FY 2015, and is a blueprint for moving forward with appropriations for programs. With the passage of this “deal”, the automatic sequestration cuts that would have taken place in January 2014 are eliminated and Congress now has the opportunity to make targeted cuts to programs in order to fall within the guidelines set out by the budget compromise. (For more information on the sequester and the 2011 Budget Control Act, go to the August 2011 issue of



Representative Ryan and Senator Murray announce the 2013 budget deal. Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com>

Public Policy Notes.)

The deal includes a mix of spending cuts, new revenues and policy changes that are designed to decrease spending by \$78 billion and bring in \$7 billion in new revenues by 2023, with an overall effect of \$85 billion in deficit reduction, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

The biggest driver of deficit reduction will be an increase in aviation security fees—fees that will add to the cost of airline tickets. That increase is expected to cut the deficit by more than \$12 billion

over the next 10 years. Two other initiatives will support deficit reduction: 1) premium increases on pension insurance and 2) enhanced contributions to retirement plans by federal workers.

For information about the impact on early education, see the article on page 2 of this newsletter. For a summary of the Act, go to <http://budget.house.gov/uploadedfiles/bba2013summary.pdf>

Source: Congressional Budget Office: *Budget deal cuts deficit by \$85 billion*, <http://politico.com>

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Inside this issue:

<i>Early Education & the Budget Act</i>	2
<i>Budget Cuts and the Polls</i>	3
<i>NGA Summit</i>	3
<i>New Virginia Governor</i>	3
<i>BOOT</i>	3
<i>ISLS Collaborative</i>	4

What's Next?

On December 12, 2013, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Bipartisan Budget Act.

The U.S. Senate will take up the bill the week of December 16-20, 2013.

If the bill is passed by the Senate, the next step will be the passage of an appropriations bill that will allow the sub-committees to determine how much funding goes to individual programs.

The Bipartisan Budget Act: What Does it Mean for Early Childhood?

In the November 2013 issue of *Public Policy Notes*, we focused on the new proposal, **Strong Start for Children Act**, that includes significant new funding for child care and early childhood education. That proposal was put forth during the time when the sequester was still in place and automatic spending cuts were looming.

With the passage of the Bipartisan Budget Act, the automatic spending cuts (sequestration) that our programs would have experienced were nullified. Cuts were still enacted but the cuts are not as severe as they would have been with the automatic reductions.

There was also a “bright spot” in the Bipartisan Budget Act in regard

to early childhood education. The agreement included three “reserve funds” in the budget: one for the Child Care & Development Block Grant, one for Home Visiting and one for the new Strong Start program.

A reserve fund is simply a “priority” notice to Congress. According to the National Women’s Law Center, *“A reserve fund is a signal to Congress that these are important priorities but it is merely a marker. It does not guarantee actual new funding but is more of a recommendation for the Congress to provide or authorize increased mandatory funds for these programs. It would need new revenues (which could be a tax) to be raised to create those new dollars and enact a new learning program.”*

National advocacy groups are asking advocates to push for a sizeable “chunk of the pie” (or available revenues under the Bipartisan Budget Act) to be awarded to the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations subcommittee. This subcommittee is responsible for appropriations that impact child care, Head Start, Early Head Start and, potentially, the Strong Start program. They will be asking members of the subcommittee to maximize the funding available through the appropriations process to support these programs.

For more information on child care & early education, go to <http://www.nwlc.org/our-issues/child-care-%2526-early-learning>

Budget Cuts: What Do the Polls Say?

Rasmussen Reports, “a media company specializing in the collection, publication and distribution of public opinion information”, recently released information concerning the public’s opinions regarding the sequester budget cuts.

A national telephone survey was conducted on December 12 & 13, 2013 with 1000 Likely Voters. The survey asked these questions:

- 1) How closely have you followed recent news reports about federal budget talks in Washington, DC?
- 2) Which do you favor—a federal

budget that increases spending or one that cuts spending? Or should spending levels remain about the same?

- 3) A new budget proposal would restore some of the \$1.1 trillion in across-the-board sequester spending cuts that went into effect on March 30. Do you favor restoring some of these sequester spending cuts, or do you prefer letting those budget cuts continue?
- 4) Many of the spending cuts in the new budget proposal are projected to take effect several

years from now. How likely is it that those budget cuts will really happen?

- 5) Are additional tax hikes needed to fund the federal government?

Answers to #2

- ⇒ 15% of voters favor a budget with spending increases;
- ⇒ 61% like a budget that cuts spending;
- ⇒ 18% prefer a budget with the same spending levels.

Source: *Rasmussen Reports*, <http://www.rasmussenreports.com>, e-mail, 12-16-13

Oklahoma Governor Fallin Hosts Initiative Summit

In November, Governor Mary Fallin of Oklahoma and current Chair of the National Governors Association, convened the second summit on her year long initiative, **America Works: Education and Training for Tomorrow's Jobs**. The summit in Santa Fe, New Mexico, brought through state teams to discuss strategies to "help states overcome the gaps between their education systems and the workforce those systems

are preparing young people to enter." (For more information on this initiative, go to the September 2013 issue of *Public Policy Notes*.)

The first summit was held in Stamford, CT and the final summit will take place in the spring of 2014 in Oklahoma City. The summits are designed to "give state teams an opportunity to learn from one another, enact change in their states and provide the foundation for lessons to pass along to all governors."



Governor Fallin hosts the Summit in Santa Fe, NM. Photo retrieved from www.nga.org, 12/17/13



Virginia Elects New Governor

From **red** to **blue**: the state of Virginia elected a Democratic Governor to follow Republican Governor Bob McDonnell on

November 5th. Terry McAuliffe defeated Republican Ken Cuccinelli with 47.75% of the vote. Governor-Elect McAuliffe will take office on January 11, 2014.

McAuliffe served as Chairman of the Democratic National

Committee from 2001-2005, was co-chairman of President Bill Clinton's 1996 re-election campaign, and chairman of Hillary Clinton's 2008 Presidential Campaign. If you'd like more information about Governor-Elect McAuliffe, go to <http://terrymcauliffe.com/>

Florida: *BOOT, Be One of Twenty*

The Children's Campaign of Florida has launched a new recruitment campaign for children's advocates: **BOOT, Be One of Twenty**.

The campaign is designed to provide tools for advocates to help them learn how to connect with policymakers, get to know them and let them know you. According to the Campaign, "That's a key part of being a child advocate."

According to their website, "**The Children's Campaign** is a watchdog group founded to challenge the status quo and engage systems of care and the public and private sectors to approach issues in ways that result in better outcomes.... We report on trends and sound the alarm when warranted, reaching citizens, stakeholders and the media."

Be One Of Twenty, or "BOOT", is an elite group, for Children's Campaign members only, of passionate Floridians who create relationships and broker information with their local, state and federal policy makers."

For more information about the program go to www.iamforkids.org.



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Southern Early Childhood Association



"A Voice for Southern
Children"

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.

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.

Improving Student Learning at Scale Collaborative (ISLS)

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices joined with the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Council of State Legislators and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association to host the **Improving Student Learning at Scale Policy Collaborative**. Six states (Arizona, California, New Hampshire, Washington, **West Virginia** and Wyoming) were invited to participate.

The meeting was designed to focus on the implementation of the **Common Core State Standards** and specific topics included communications, assessment and accountability, and transi-

tioning from K-12 postsecondary education.

Each state provided a vision statement, and the statement from West Virginia follows.

"The vision for education reform in West Virginia is to create a seamless **PK-20 system** of education that permits students to engage in personalized learning experiences allowing them to lead full and productive lives in the careers of their choice while contributing positively to the state's economy and increasing the quality of life for all West Virginians."

The vision is to be guided by the principles outlined in the omnibus education bill of 2013 which includes the "expansion of the Early

Literacy Campaign, the alignment of the teacher preparation programs to meet the early literacy challenge, and agreement on the definition of and alignment of the metrics for College and Career Readiness."

The "key challenge that West Virginia is hoping to address through the ISLS

project is policy alignment and mutually agreed upon benchmarks for collaborative success in having all students college, career and citizenship ready."

