

# Public Policy Notes

## Southern Early Childhood Association

### Last Minute Compromise: Get Ready to Go At It Again!

Although we managed to avoid a more lengthy government shutdown and a default, the compromise simply bought some time for us to face the same deadlines in a few months.

**The government was funded through January 15, 2014 and the debt ceiling was raised until February 7, 2014. That will allow a budget conference committee to work in the interim to find a compromise solution to the budgeting and deficit reduction issues.**

The 16 day government shut down highlighted the partisan gridlock that has gripped the Congressional budget process. Here's how it's supposed to work:

- ⇒ The House of Representatives initiates budget bills, debates them, and sends the version that passes to the Senate.
- ⇒ The Senate passes its version of the budget bill.
- ⇒ A conference committee is formed to find

the middle ground in the bills and a final version is proposed.  
⇒ The bill goes back through the legislative process for final passage.



Ryan

As **Congressman Paul Ryan** (R), Chair of the House Budget

Committee, said during the press conference that announced the compromise reached on October 16th, *the proposal put forth with this compromise (a budget conference committee) is the way it's supposed to work.*

**Senator Patty Murray** (D), Chair of the Senate Budget Committee, will co-chair the conference committee with Representative Ryan.

The Ryan-Murray budget committee will be working



Murray

to hash out a long term budget deal. The committee will be composed of six (6) members from the House (three Republicans & 3 Democrats) and the entire Senate Budget Committee.

Members from the SECA states compromise ten (10) of the 29 members. Following is a list of the SECA state representatives who will be participating on the committee.

#### House

- ◇ **Tom Cole** (OK)
- ◇ **Tom Price** (GA)
- ◇ **Diane Black** (TN)
- ◇ **James Clyburn** (SC)

#### Senate

- ◇ **Jeff Sessions** (AL)
- ◇ **Lindsey Graham** (SC)
- ◇ **Roger Wicker** (MS)
- ◇ **Bill Nelson** (FL)
- ◇ **Mark Warner** (VA)
- ◇ **Tim Kaine** (VA)

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*Pivot Point: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2013*

On October 23, 2013, the National Women's Law Center released a new report that takes a look at state child care assistance policies in 2013. The report found that policies improved in 27 states but lost ground in 24 states. **For a copy of the report and to see how your state fared, go to [www.nwlc.org](http://www.nwlc.org).**

# Ryan-Murray Budget Committee: What You Should Know

This conference committee has a major task ahead of it....one that has been characterized by failure after failure over the last few years as various groups have tried to come to agreement on a long-term budget deal.

Basically, the issues are these:

- ◆ The Republicans are insisting on budget cuts to reduce spending and bring the deficit down. In the previous budget agreement, this took the form of the sequester which neither party is pleased with after the first year of implementation. (Democrats don't like them and Republicans think there is a better way to implement budget cuts.)
- ◆ The Democrats are concerned about budget cuts to domestic programs and have proposed increases in those programs. They prefer to institute tax increases to fund enhanced budgets.
- ◆ ObamaCare remains a major sticking point: defunding proposals from a segment of the Republican delegation and protection from the Democratic side and White House.

The Washington Post published an interesting article, *Five Things to Know About the Ryan-Murray Budget Committee*, that gives some insights into the challenges facing the Committee.

- 1) **The Committee is composed of 29 members**—a large number to bring to agreement. It's a little lopsided with 6 members from the House and the remaining 23 members from the

Senate.

- 2) **Chairman Ryan voted against the compromise of October 16th, as did Tom Price, Diane Black, and Jeff Sessions**, all members of the compromise committee. They represent the most conservative members of the panel and you will note that they, with the exception of Chairman Ryan, represent Southern states. They will likely reflect the position that conservative members of both houses will take regarding any compromise reached by the committee.
- 3) **There's a wide distance between the two committee chairs right now.** As Chairman Murray said, "Chairman Ryan knows I'm not going to vote for his budget. I know that he's not going to vote for mine. We're going to find the common ground between our two budgets that we both can vote on. That's our goal."
- 4) **A major point of discussion will be the automatic spending cuts under the sequester.** (Another \$19 billion in across the board cuts is due to take place on January 15, 2014.) You'll hear a lot about revenues and entitlements and how to replace the sequester cuts. Both parties are "under the gun" to deal with the sequester and find a more sensible way to implement budget cuts, rather than the indiscriminate, across the board cuts now being implemented.
- 5) In 2011, a deficit reduction "supercommittee" met to reach

a long term budget deal. That attempt ended with an impasse and no agreement. Some of the members of this conference committee also participated on the "supercommittee": Murray, Van Hollen, Portman and **Clyburn** (SC) were all members of that group. Senator Murray expects a different result from the group as the conference committee works toward the goal of long term budget agreements. (For more information about the supercommittee, go to the August 2011 issue of *Public Policy Notes*.)



Rep. Clyburn

Source: *Five Things to Know About the Ryan-Murray Budget Conference Committee*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs>, 10/17/2013

**From Representative Ryan:** "I hope both sides will work together in the months ahead to pay down the debt, provide relief for families, and grow the economy. I look forward to convening the first conference on a budget resolution since 2009.....I'm committed to making a bipartisan budget conference a success."

Source: Press Release, <http://paulryan.house.gov>, 10/16/2013

**From Senator Murray:** "My hope is that in the weeks and months ahead, we can heal many of the partisan divides that keep us from addressing the big challenges we face, including returning our focus to creating jobs and improving our economy.....I am absolutely committed to finding common ground." Source: News Release, <http://www.murray.senate.gov>, 10/16/2013

# The President Weighs In

President Obama weighed in on the agreement and process at a press conference on October 17, 2013.

*“Let me be specific about three places that I think we can make progress right now. **First**, in the coming days and weeks, we should sit down and pursue a balanced approach to a responsible budget, a budget that grows our economy faster and shrinks our long-term deficits further. ...The good news is that the legislation that I signed yesterday now requires Congress to do exactly that....And we shouldn’t approach this process of creating a budget as an ideological exercise—just cutting for the sake of cutting. The issue is not growth but fiscal responsibility—we need both. We need a budget that deals with the issues that most*

*Americans are focused on: creating more good jobs that pay better wages.*

*....**Number two**, we should finish the job of fixing our broken immigration system.....There’s already a broad coalition across America that’s behind this effort of comprehensive immigration reform—from business leaders to faith leaders to law enforcement....The majority of Americans think this is the right thing to do.*

*....**Number three**, we should pass a farm bill, one that American farmers and ranchers can depend on; one that protects vulnerable children and adults in times of need; one that gives rural communities opportunities to grow and the long-term certainty that they deserve.*

*....**So, passing a budget; immigration reform, farm bill.** Those are*

*three specific things that would make a huge difference in our economy right now....I understand we will not suddenly agree on everything now that the cloud of crisis has passed. Democrats and Republicans are far apart on a lot of issues....We can debate those differences vigorously, passionately, in good faith, through the normal democratic process....I will look for willing partners wherever I can to get important work done.”*

Excerpted from Remarks by the President on the Reopening of the Government, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office, 10/17/2013](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/10/17/2013)



**Senator Ted Cruz (TX)**, one of the newest Con-

gressional representatives from the SECA region, became a media star overnight with his stance to support the “defunding” of Obamacare, the government shut-down and the initiative to maintain the debt ceiling at current levels.

Calling Obamacare “the nation’s number one job killer”, he became the voice of the opposition

## The Fight Isn’t Over

to a budget bill that would maintain funding for the health care initiative. His position was that no budget should go forward until the funding for the health initiative was removed.

On October 16, 2013, he commented on the proposed budget deal: *“Washington’s indifference to the plight of the American people has never been more apparent. Countless Americans all over the nation are being notified their premiums are skyrocketing. Others are losing jobs or seeing their work hours reduced,...”*

Source: Press Release, <http://www.cruz.senate.gov>, 10/16/2013.

**Senator Marco Rubio (FL) has**

announced that he will introduce a bill to delay the individual mandate under Obamacare and criticized the White House for problems with the enrollment website. *“How are you going to go after people next year using the IRS to punish them if the thing you’re forcing them to buy isn’t available for them?”* (Individuals who don’t have health insurance in 2014 will be assessed a fine by the IRS, according to the law.)

**More to come!**



**Senator Rubio**

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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](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/policy_newsletter_sign.php)*

*to receive notice of its availability each month.*

## Four SECA States Submit Grant Proposals

The U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services announced on October 18, 2013 that 16 states had submitted applications for the **2013 Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge** grant program. The 2013 competition is a \$280 million state-level grant program to improve early learning and development.

Applicants from the SECA region are:

- ♦ **Arkansas**
- ♦ **Georgia**
- ♦ **Kentucky**
- ♦ **Mississippi**

The competition focuses on five key areas of reform:

1. **Establishing successful state systems by building on the state's existing strengths.**
2. **Defining high-quality, accountable programs.**
3. **Promoting early learning and development outcomes for children.**
4. **Supporting a great early childhood education workforce.**
5. **Measuring outcomes and progress so that data can be used to inform early learning instruction and services and to assess whether children are entering kindergarten ready to succeed in elementary school.**

Grant awards will last for four

years and range from \$37.5 million up to \$75 million, depending on the state's share of the national population of children ages birth through five-years-old from low-income families and their proposed plans.

Current grantees are not eligible to apply in the FY 2013 competition. (North Carolina was the only SECA state to be awarded a grant in the first two rounds of grant funding.) **Awards will be announced in December 2013.**

The grant application and additional information can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/16-states-and-dc-submit-applications-race-top-early-learning-challenge>