

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

On the Brink: Again!

It's sad to sing the same old song again but, we're

- ◆ Within a few days of the end of the federal fiscal year,
- ◆ No budget has been passed, and
- ◆ A continuing resolution to keep the federal government operating beyond October 1st is under debate.

Since 2011, we've been regularly reporting about budget debates, threats to shut down the federal government, debt ceilings and continuing resolutions.

This year, the debate has taken a little different turn. This month, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a CR (continuing resolution) that would keep the federal government operating; however, it also contained a provision to repeal the Affordable Care Act (often called ObamaCare).

Since the health law is scheduled to go into full effect on October 1, 2013, the action comes at a time

of the law's implementation.

The House bill has gone to the Senate, where no one expects it to pass. Senate Republicans have essentially conceded that the CR will not pass with the health provision included. What is expected to happen is that the Senate will pass a CR without the health provision and return that measure to the House.

It also means that the budget deal reached to reduce federal spending under the "sequester" would stay in effect. President Obama has said that he would be willing to accept a short term budget at current spending levels to allow for time to negotiate a broader deal.

Perhaps a bigger danger is the looming debt-ceiling debate. Raising the federal debt-ceiling to allow the government to continue to borrow money to pay bills

that are due is on the horizon and will closely follow any resolution to the budget debate. By the latter half of October or early November, the authority for the federal government to borrow funds beyond the current \$16.7 trillion cap will be reached. House Republicans have vowed to carry the health debate into the discussion about the debt-ceiling.

Two Senators from SECA States, **Ted Cruz of Texas** and **Marco Rubio of Florida**, have been two of the most



Cruz

Rubio

vocal opponents of ObamaCare, praising the House's action. Source: Press Release, www.cruz.senate.gov/ 09/18/13

September 2013

Volume 6, Issue 9

Inside this issue:

Food Stamps	2
Median Income and Poverty	2
CCDBG Reauthorization	3
NGA Chair from Oklahoma	3
News to Note	4

Want to Know More About the Past History of the Budget Debates?

These issues of *Public Policy Notes* can tell you more.

July 2012

May 2012

March 2012

November 2011

August 2011

Available on the Public Policy page of the SECA website.

Food Stamps: The House Takes Action

The U.S. House of Representatives continued on a path of program and budget cuts, adopting a bill by a vote of 217-210 on September 19th, to cut nearly \$4 billion per year from food stamps. This amounts to a 5% reduction in the nation's main program aimed at ensuring food sufficiency for poor Americans.

The vote included unified Democratic opposition but also garnered votes from some conservative/moderate Republicans who felt the cuts were too severe.

The **Nutrition Reform and Work Opportunity Act of 2013** presented a departure from previous Congressional action by splitting the farm bill into two parts: one dealt with agricultural subsidies and farm supports and the second was focused solely on the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (more commonly referred to as food stamps).

The bill included these new provisions for recipients:

⇒ Work requirements that in-

clude 20 hours per week of work activities for able-bodied adults with a child over age 1, providing child care is available. The requirements would be applicable to all parents with children over the age of 6 and attending school.

⇒ Drug tests.

Additionally, the bill would end state waivers that have allowed able-bodied recipients to receive food stamps indefinitely and modified categorical eligibility. President Obama has threatened to veto the bill.

For those of you who were around during the Welfare Reform debate and passage in 1996 under President Bill Clinton, the work requirements and philosophical trend toward recipient responsibility are closely aligned with the welfare law.

Representative Eric Cantor (R), Speaker of the House, was an architect of this approach to the program.

"This bill is designed to give people a hand when they need it most..... There are workfare programs, there are options

under the bill for community service.... This is a bill that points to the dignity of a job."

Eric Cantor, Remarks to U.S.

House,

<http://cantor.house.gov/press-release>

09/19/13

Representative **Lloyd Doggett (D) of Texas** called it "*the let them starve bill*".



Doggett

Representative Doggett serves as the ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Human Resources, which has jurisdiction over issues that relate to child care, child and family services, child support, foster care,

adoption, and unemployment compensation.

In order to negotiate the bill with the Senate, the House will need to hold a procedural vote to allow both bills to go to a House/Senate conference together.

Source: *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*,



Cantor

Median Income & Poverty: No Worse, No Better for Most

The Census Bureau issued a report on September 19th from the American Community Survey...2012 statistics that provide state level information on income, poverty & health insurance.

The report found that **median income slippage had stopped and the poverty rate remained consistent in 2012**, after significant

changes in the period of 2008-2011.

Louisiana demonstrated an *increase* (4.2%) in **median income** in 2012: *declines* were found in **Georgia** (13.7%), **Mississippi** (15%), and **Tennessee** (12.2%). **Virginia** and **Missouri** were the only two states where median income decreased from 2011 to 2012. The **Tampa-St. Petersburg** area had the lowest me-

dian income of the 25 most populous metropolitan areas.

The number of people in **poverty** showed no statistically significant change in 43 states. **Mississippi** showed an *increase* in 2012. In **Texas**, the percentage of people in poverty *declined*.

For more information go to <http://www.census.gov/newsroom>

Senate HELP Committee Passes CCDBG Act of 2013

On September 18, 2013, the Senate HELP (Health, Education, Labor & Pensions) Committee passed S. 1086, the CCDBG Act of 2013.

This bill would reauthorize the Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG) for the first time since 1996 with significant changes to the quality measures contained in the current act.

The bi-partisan bill would require providers to undergo comprehensive background checks, receive orientation training and ongoing professional development and be subject to initial and annual



Burr
inspections.



Alexander

Senators Richard Burr (R-NC) and Lamar Alexander (R-TN) were co-sponsors of the Act.

“The Child Care & Development Block Grant is an important federal program to ensure that low-income parents have access to child care so that they can work....For parents to choose child care

effectively, they need quality information about who is providing good care and who is not. The transparency we incorporate in this law will go a long way toward making parents well-informed consumers of child care.” Senator Burr

“Access to quality child care can make all the difference in a child’s early years, and this program has helped nearly 30,000 Tennessee families not only afford to enroll their children in child care but be able to choose the type of care that’s best for their family.”

Senator Alexander

For a copy of the bill, go to <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/s1086>

NGA Welcomes New Chair

At the conclusion of the summer 2013 annual meeting of the National Governor’s Association, **Governor Mary Fallin of Oklahoma** assumed the position of chair of the Association for 2013-2014.

Each chair of the Association announces a “chair’s initiative” during their term and Governor Fallin has chosen to focus on work training and education.

America Works: Education and Training for Tomorrow’s Jobs will “spotlight improving education and workforce training systems, including aligning those systems with the needs of individual state economies.”

The focus will be specifically on the following:

- ◆ “Engaging education, business and government leaders in a dialogue about what governors can do to more closely align K-12, universities, community and technical colleges and workforce training providers with future labor demands, and
- ◆ Supporting governors and their staff in using data and information to identify states’ future labor demands and prioritize changes in state education and workforce training systems to meet those demands and take action to achieve desired results.”

“Preparing America’s 21st century workforce to keep pace and stay com-

petitive is an issue that not only calls for national attention, it also demands gubernatorial leadership.”

Governor Fallin



Five key elements will be explored:

- 1) A statewide vision.
- 2) Integrated & improved data systems.
- 3) High-quality public/private partnerships.
- 4) Alignment of federal & state funding & other resources.
- 5) State incentives to support cross-system integration.

Source: *America Works: Education and Training for Tomorrow’s Jobs*, www.nga.org

Southern Early Childhood Association

1123 S. University, Suite 255
Little Rock, AR 72204
Little Rock, AR 72215-5930

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 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.

News to Note

Progress on Childhood Obesity

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a report in August that showed a decrease in 19 states of the rate of childhood obesity during the period 2008-2011.

For the SECA States:

No change/Arkansas, Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina, West Virginia

Decrease/Mississippi, Georgia, Florida

Increase/Tennessee

Not Included/Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/VitalSigns/ChildhoodObesity>

Florida Ends Participation in Education Consortium

We recently reported that **Georgia** had withdrawn from participation in a national consortium (PARCC) developing exams for the Common Core standards. Florida's governor, **Rick Scott**, announced this month that Florida would "end its fiscal agent relationship with PARCC" and would "issue a competitive solicitation to select Florida's next state assessment." For a copy of Governor Scott's letter to US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, go to <http://www.flgov.com/2013/09/23/governor-rick-scott-announces-path-forward-for-high-education-standards-decision-to-withdraw-from-parcc/>

Testing Opt-out Movement Growing

Parents have entered the arena of high stakes testing by refusing to allow their children to participate in state tests that have become the standard to measure the performance of teachers and success of local schools. This movement has been fueled by social media, particularly Facebook, and is small but growing. The Long Island, New York opt-out Facebook page has 9,200 members.

If you're interested in learning more, try these sites:

www.fairtest.org or www.unitedoptout.com

Source: www.npr.org