

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

100 Days—100 Projects: A Recovery Report

The White House recently released a report on projects that were begun with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The report was divided by region and the South had a number of projects funded in the first 100 days. These projects can be grouped into several areas:

- Infrastructure
- Renewable Energy
- Environmental
- Jobs & Job Training
- Supporting Teachers
- Direct Farm Loans
- Supporting Communities
- Advanced Technology
- Supporting Research.

Some highlighted projects from the South:

- ⇒ Darlington County, South Carolina, will build a new library in the town of Society Hill.
- ⇒ Ecumenical Faith in Action, Inc. in Washington County, VA will add space to its food distribution facility.
- ⇒ The Family Health Clinic in Pearl, MS will open three new health clinics in Lincoln, Franklin and Wilkinson counties.
- ⇒ The Wounded Warrior Recovery Facility will be built at Fort Bliss, TX.
- ⇒ The Alachua County School District in Florida will use funds to support the contracts of

250 teachers for two years.

- ⇒ Salisbury, NC will provide summer job opportunities for teens and young adults.
- ⇒ Macon County, AL will put up to 89 youth & young adults to work this summer.
- ⇒ Colquitt County School Board, GA will fund 12 positions within the school system.
- ⇒ Family farms in Tennessee and Virginia have received direct farm loans.

Source: www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/100-days.pdf



New Funds for Community Health Centers

On May 28, 2009, DHHS released funds under the Expanded Medical Capacity Grant program. These funds will assist community health centers (the source of primary health care for many uninsured in the South) in serving more clients. Centers in the

South that received funds are: *Mobile County Health Dept*, Mobile, AL; *White River Rural HC*, Augusta, AR; *FHCs of SW Florida*, Fort Myers, FL; *Union Mission, Inc.*, Savannah, GA; *Piedmont Health Services*, Carrboro, NC; *Gaston Family Health Services*, Gastonia, NC; *Rural*

Health Group, Inc., Roanoke Rapids, NC; *FHC of Southern OK*, Tishomingo, OK; *Little River Med Center*, Little River, SC; *Centro De Salud Familiar La Fe*, El Paso, TX; *Su Clinica Familiar*, Harlingen, TX. **Total grants: \$5,263,756.** Source: www.hhs.gov/news/press

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Congratulations to West Virginia!

We reported in the May 2009 edition of *Public Policy Notes* that a **QRIS bill** had passed the West Virginia Legislature and was awaiting the Governor's signature. Governor Manchin signed the bill on May 28, 2009; however, funding to implement the system is still not in place. We'll keep you posted.

It's Finally Over! South Carolina Accepts Stimulus Funds

Last month, Governor Sanford filed suit against the South Carolina Attorney General, seeking to achieve a federal court injunction that would support his refusal to apply for the \$700 million in disputed stimulus funding for education.

Two groups filed countersuits requesting that Governor Sanford be forced to abide by the actions of the South Carolina Legislature. One of those suits and that of Governor Sanford were filed in federal court and on Monday, June 1, 2009, Governor Sanford lost the decision in federal court when the court returned the suits to the South Carolina Supreme Court.

Governor Sanford stated that he would not make any state or federal appeals of the state's Supreme Court ruling and would abide by their decision regarding the disputed stimulus funds. If the case was decided against him, Governor Sanford stated that he hoped it would serve as a wake-up call for fixing South Carolina's antiquated government structure. "We continue to believe that this issue is fundamentally about the balance of power and separation of powers in our state,...Legislative dominance in our state costs all of us in very real terms for the way it breeds duplication and waste."

Source: www.scgovernor.com/news/releases/6-1-09.htm.

The final result: The South Carolina Supreme Court decided against Governor Sanford, and he submitted an application for the disputed funds on June 8, 2009. The Governor's application letter included an acknowledgment of his continuing objections to the federal stimulus. "It's important to state one last time for the record what a monumentally terrible idea I believe the entire so-called stimulus act is, and why in particular, utilizing this money as our General Assembly has done is ultimately going to cause more harm than good."



Health Care Reform: The Debate Begins

Because of the importance and complexity of the current health care reform debate at the federal level, SECA has produced a short Policy Brief on Health Care Reform.

Available on the Public Policy page at www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org, the paper provides a brief overview of the issue in "plain English" and strives to make the current debate and discussion understandable to the layman.

The Policy Brief includes:

- ⇒ A background section on health care in the South.
- ⇒ Information on the President's initiatives to date.
- ⇒ Information on proposals by the health care industry.
- ⇒ A glimpse of the Southern connection in the debate in the form of the **Blue Dog Coalition** of the House of Representatives.
- ⇒ A discussion of financing of any system for the uninsured.
- ⇒ Statistics on the number of uninsured children and adults in your state.

Congressional leaders have stated their intention to have a draft bill available this summer.

All Americans must have quality and affordable health care.

President Obama, May 11, 2009

ARRA In Arkansas—Policy Recommendations

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families has released two new white papers that include simple recommendations on spending the state's share of the stimulus money.

ARRA Funding for Education in Arkansas: A Jump Start for Moving from Adequacy to Excellence discusses options for spending education funding. Arkansas Advocates recommends using one-time money to boost after-school and summer school programs,



ARRA in Arkansas: Recommendations for Improving the Health of Children and Families includes a discussion of how to maximize the federal match rate. Recommended strategies

buy books, strengthen school health initiatives and turn around schools that aren't working.

include strengthening outreach to children eligible for ARKids First (the state's CHIP program), extending care to more pregnant mothers, investing in school health initiatives and increasing the reimbursement rate for doctors that perform well-child screens.

Copies of the papers are available at www.aradvocates.org. You may find many recommendations that could work in your state as well.

US Senate Passes Tobacco Control Bill

The US Senate passed landmark legislation on Thursday, June 11, 2009 that would allow the Food and Drug Administration to regulate the production and marketing of tobacco products.

The legislation:

- ◆ Creates a tobacco control center within the FDA.
- ◆ Gives the FDA the authority to regulate the content, marketing and sale of tobacco products to protect public health.

- ◆ Requires tobacco companies and importers to reveal all product ingredients and seek FDA approval for any new tobacco products.
- ◆ Bans the use of flavors, including candies and fruit flavors in tobacco products.
- ◆ Calls for new rules that would prevent sales to minors except through direct, face-to-face exchanges between a retailer and a consumer.
- ◆ Limits advertising that could attract young smokers.

The bill has passed the House and is awaiting President Obama's signature.

This measure is especially important for the Southern states because of our high number of smokers, and the health problems that arise from smoking.



For more information on smoking, go to www.americanheart.org

White House Task Force on Middle Class Working Families

In January 2009 the *White House Task Force on Middle Class Working Families* was established. The Task Force is a major initiative focused on raising the standard of living of middle-class, working families in America. The Task Force is chaired by Vice-President Joe Biden and is comprised of top-level administration policymakers.

Goals of the Task Force are:

- Expanding education and lifelong training opportunities.
- Improving work and family balance.

- Restoring labor standards, including workplace safety.
- Helping to protect middle-class and working family incomes.
- Protecting retirement security.

As a new initiative of the Task Force, agency partnerships were recently announced, and the Departments of La-

“A strong middle class equals a strong America. We can't have one without the other. “

Vice President Joe Biden

bor, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Energy, and Education are working to establish collaborative working relationships that will help meet the goals of the Task Force.

These agencies are 1) leveraging resources to connect workers to green career pathways and sustainable employment, 2) advancing existing and future training and education programs and 3) helping to ensure employers have access to a qualified workforce for the green economy of the 21st century.

Source: www.AStrongMiddleClass.gov

Tennessee Defeats Attempt to Create New Credentialing System

SB 0721 (companion bill HB 1646) was filed with the 2009 Tennessee Legislature to create the Tennessee Board of Credentialing for Child Care Professionals. This board would:

- * Adopt professional assessment criteria for child care professionals.
- * Develop training and performance standards.
- * Award all certification and creden-

tial requirements for child care professionals under the current Tennessee child care licensing and evaluation system.

The proposed Board would consist of 9 members appointed by the Governor: five of them would be the members of the Memphis early childhood education committee. Two members would be required to hold a BA degree, one member would be an instructor in early childhood education and one member

would be an owner of a licensed child care center.

The bill was opposed by the Tennessee Association for the Education of Young Children (TAEYC), the SECA affiliate, and defeated in committee.

For more information about Tennessee's current credentialing system, go to the website of the Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance .

<http://www.tecta.info>

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Southern Early Childhood Association



A Voice for Southern Children

We're on the Web!
www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org

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.

Texas Legislature Authorizes High-Quality, Full-Day Pre-K

On June 3, 2009, the Texas Legislature forwarded HB 130 to Governor Rick Perry and currently awaits his action. This bill represented a major victory for advocates in creating the Enhanced Quality Full Day Prekindergarten grant program, a new funding stream for early childhood education.

The Enhanced Quality Full Day Prekindergarten grant program would allow school districts to serve students (at least 3 years old) meeting current Prekindergarten eligibility requirements in a full-day program, rather than the current half-day programs. Advocates contended that full-day programs would assist in closing the achievement gap between students and would alleviate the need for midday transportation for working families.

Priority among school districts for

the grants would be:

1. Schools that receive less funds for prekindergarten in the current year than in the previous year.
2. Schools districts that were not eligible to receive any other early childhood grants.
3. School districts with a high percentage of educationally disadvantaged students.

The Commissioner of Education would determine the amount of each grant awarded to school districts and the amount per child would equal 70% of the statewide average funding per student in an open-enrollment charter school. **Grant funding will be in addition to any funding appropriated under the Foundation School Program.**

Some things to note in the legislation:

- ◆ A district could not enroll more

than 22 students in a class and would have to maintain an average ratio in the program of not less than one certified teacher or teacher's aide for each 11 students.

- ◆ A certified teacher (an individual with at least nine semester credit hours of college education courses emphasizing early childhood education) would be required for each class.
- ◆ A school district would be required to use at least 20 percent of the grant funds to contract with one or more eligible community providers.

The Texas Legislature appropriated \$25 million to initiate this program.

Sources: www.uvutexas.org
www.capitol.state.tx.us/Bill_Lookup

Fiscal Notes/TX Leg Budget Board