

# Southern Early Childhood Association

## Public Policy Notes

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### SECA Introduces a New E-Newsletter

The Southern Early Childhood Association introduces you to *Public Policy Notes*, a new e-newsletter that is available to the leadership of the SECA state affiliates and SECA members.

The newsletter will highlight public policy news for the region and nation that's of interest to you as an early childhood professional. We know that you are committed to improving the lives of children and families in your state and South, and we want to help provide the tools and information that will assist you with that process.

As a national organization, SECA receives information from various sources about the latest in public policy news, and we're going to be sending that information along to you. We'll help you find the sources that can give you in-depth information about issues that are of interest, to you as an individual and to you as a leader in your state early childhood organization.

### SECA's Mission

The SECA Board of Directors adopted a new mission statement in November 2007.

*"The Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) is committed to improving the quality of care and education for young children and their families through advocacy and professional development".*

As a member of the leadership group of your state affiliate, you'll receive three e-newsletters from SECA.

- *The Affiliate Newsletter* (monthly)
- *The Leadership Letter* (bi-monthly)
- *Public Policy Notes* (bimonthly)

The *Affiliate Newsletter* will bring you up to date on activities in the SECA office and actions by the SECA Board of Directors.

The *Leadership Letter* is produced by the SECA Leadership Commission and is designed to enhance and improve your skills as a leader in your organization. *Public Policy Notes* is designed to assist SECA in meeting its mission of promoting advocacy for children and families in the South.

We hope you are pleased with the information that we're providing, and you'll let us know if it's helpful in your work.

We think it reflects who we are and what we want to accomplish. The SECA Board of Directors is committed to ensuring that SECA is a strong voice for the children of the South, and to giving you the tools to be effective advocates is one of the first steps.

*"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader". John Quincy Adams*

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#### Special points of interest:

- Calendar of 2008 State Legislative Sessions
  - Calendar of 2008 State of the State Addresses
  - 2008 White House Initiatives
  - 2008 Presidential Election
  - Resources from SECA
  - State budgets
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# Every Child Matters: The 2008 Election

The 2008 Presidential campaign is providing a real choice with candidates that have varying positions and views on what the Presidency of the US should be. All of the candidates have positions on the well-being of America's children and families.

The organization, *Every Child Matters*, is a group that is very involved and active in the political process. They provide a wealth of information on the candidates, their positions on children's issues and information on cam-



paign events that may be coming to your area. They are also developing organizations in states to ensure that children's issues are in the debate and have designed a candidate questionnaire concerning positions on children's issues. They are posting information from the candidates as those questionnaires are received.

Go to [www.everychildmatters.org](http://www.everychildmatters.org) to find:

- Links to the candidates' websites.
- Bios of the candidates.
- Responses to the *Every Child Matters* questionnaire.

They are asking the candidates to let us know where they stand on children's issues. Take the time to find about the candidates and make an informed decision when you vote.

## Ensuring High-Quality Pre-kindergarten

In 2002, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) released a report entitled, *Challenge to Lead*, and set goals for the South to ensure that all children are ready for school. In 2007 the organization took a look at the progress to date and released, *Ready to Start: Ensuring High-Quality Pre-kindergarten in the SREB States*.

The Southern states have heeded the call to establish significant early childhood systems, including pre-K, throughout the region. The challenge remains to ensure that these programs meet quality standards and that funding challenges do not impact the progress made to date.

*Ready to Start* provides invaluable data about the status of pre-kindergarten in the SECA states, and outlines some key questions for policymakers. These questions can serve as a springboard for your advocacy efforts to improve the quality of your state's program.

For a copy of the report go to [www.sreb.org](http://www.sreb.org).

**'Southern states have been called the "nation's trailblazers" in providing access to pre-kindergarten.'**

## Expulsions from Pre-K

*Implementing Policies to Reduce the Likelihood of Preschool Expulsion* was released in January 2008 by the Foundation for Child Development. Data from the National Pre-kindergarten Study was used to develop the report that contains recommendations on how to structure programs to avoid expulsions.

The report identifies three ways that policymakers can reduce pre-kindergarten expulsions:

1. Require classrooms to have no more than 10 children per teacher.

2. Require adequate time for teachers to relax during the school day
3. Provide teachers access to early childhood mental health consultants to help them manage the behavior of challenging children.

For a copy of the report go to [www.fcdd-us.org](http://www.fcdd-us.org).



## State Legislatures Meet in 2008

The State Legislatures of the SECA states (except Arkansas and Texas) are scheduled to meet in 2008. Many of these state legislatures will be grappling with funding shortfalls and decisions will be made about how state funds will be allocated in the next state budget. Following is a list of states and the dates that your legislatures will convene and adjourn. (Source: [www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org))

As a children's advocate, it's imperative that you take the time to find out what children's programs are being discussed, if any new initiatives are being proposed, and how funding will be allocated.



State	Convene	Adjourn
AL	2-5-08	5-19-08
FL	3-4-08	5-2-08
GA	1-14-08	Mid March
KY	1-8-08	4-15-08
LA	3-31-08	6-23-08
MS	1-8-08	5-11-08
OK	2-4-08	5-30-08
SC	1-8-08	6-5-08
TN	1-8-08	Late April
VA	1-9-08	3-8-08
WV	1-9-08	3-8-08

## SECA Governors Address Their State Legislatures in 2008

If your Legislature is meeting in 2008, your Governor will address your state legislature sometime during the first few months of 2008. In the State of the State Address, the Governor usually includes his priorities for both programs and budget for the next year. In order to be an informed advocate for children, you need to know what your Governor is proposing and decide if it's something you can support. Following are the dates that your Governor's speech is scheduled in your state. (Source: [www.stateline.org](http://www.stateline.org))

AL / February 6, 2008      FL/March 4, 2008  
 GA/June 16, 2008      KY/January 8, 2008

LA/April 18, 2008      MS/January 21, 2008  
 OK/February 4, 2008      SC/January 16, 2008  
 TN/January 28, 2008      VA/January 9, 2008  
 WV/January 9, 2008

**To find the texts and a recording of your Governor's address, go to [www.stateline.org](http://www.stateline.org). Governor's speeches from 2000-2008 are archived on this site.**

## President Bush Delivers His Last State of the Union Address

**The President shall from time to time give to Congress information on the State of the Union and recommend to their Consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.**

Article II, Section 3, U.S. Constitution

On January 28, 2008, President George W. Bush delivered his last State of the Union address to the Congress and the nation. The speech contained a retrospective on his time in office, a perspective on the current status of the Nation's well-being and his proposals for White House Initiatives dur-

ing 2008. Initiatives of particular interest to early childhood educators are: 1) Reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, with increased flexibility for states and districts, 2) Pell Grants for Kids that would support school choice, and 3) A White House Summit on Inner City Children and Faith-Based Schools.

For the full text of the speech and supporting information, go to [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).



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We're on the Web at  
[www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org](http://www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org)

## Public Policy Resources Available from SECA

- **Position Statements** on issues that are pertinent to the field of Early Childhood Education
- **Summaries** of reports and data for the SECA states

You'll find all of this on the SECA website at

[www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org](http://www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org).

Check out the Public Policy and Position Statement pages. This information is not copyrighted and is available for your use. You'll also find links to the public policy pages of your state affiliate websites. Be an informed and prepared advocate for children!

## Looking for Money: State Budgets and Pre-K

As the 2008 State Legislatures begin work to develop programs and budgets, some of the SECA states are facing significant revenue challenges and maintaining or increasing funding for pre-K will be a challenge. Children's advocates have their work cut out for them.

In **Kentucky**, Governor Steve Beshear has warned lawmakers that the state could be facing a \$900 million shortfall over the next two years. The state's public school funding remains intact at this point; however, state universities have been asked to cut \$34.5 million from their budgets. A movement to extend kindergarten to a full day may hinge on whether the budget forecasts improve. (Source: *Glasgow Daily Times*, January 12, 2008.)

Governor Timothy Kaine of **Virginia** wants to expand the state's pre-kindergarten program by adding about \$56 million to the program but the state is expecting a budget shortfall of \$600 million. The Prince William County School Board adopted a motion on January 2nd that opposed the proposal, preferring that the proposed funding go toward enhancing teacher's salaries and pro-

grams already in existence. (Sources: *Potomac News*, January 8, 2008.; *The Virginian Pilot*, January 1, 2008)

**Mississippi** will be debating the *Quality Education Act*, endorsed by the Mississippi Board of Education and the Parents Campaign, that includes a pilot pre-kindergarten program with an initial \$20 million appropriation. Governor Haley Barbour has not endorsed the Act. (Sources: *NE Mississippi Daily Journal*, January 3 & 6, 2008;)

**Florida's** Governor Charlie Crist has asked agencies to prepare for budget cuts as deep as 10% because of anticipated revenue shortfalls. As the state grapples with how to fund basic services, funding the constitutionally mandated universal pre-K program may be challenging. (Source: *St. Petersburg Times*, January 4, 2008)

Bob Riley, Governor of **Alabama**, wants to establish a pre-K program, *First Class*, for 60,000 four-year-olds, with an initial funding level of \$30 million. With expected cuts in the Education Trust Fund Budget, the development of *First Class* is uncertain. (*Daily Mountain Eagle*, January 13, 2008)