

# Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

## Election 2016: The Debates

During the past few months, the dynamics of the Democratic and Republican races for the party nominations have changed significantly. As reported in the [October 2015](#) issue of *Public Policy Notes*, a series of debates were scheduled for both the **Republican** and **Democratic** candidates and we've watched the candidate field dwindle on the Republican side.

The Republican debates have selected candidates based upon polling numbers and some candidates that initially appeared in the "top tier" debate have now been relegated to the "undercard" debates that occur prior to the more highly touted top tier debate. (*The "undercard" debate is sometimes referred to as the "kiddie table."*)

The Republicans held another debate on **Thursday, January 14, 2016** in North Charleston, South Carolina and this debate featured seven candidates: **Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Ben Carson, Jeb**

**Bush, Chris Christie** and **John Kasich**. The debate was aired live by Fox News and a [video](#) of the "top tier" debate is available on the Fox News website.

Candidates **Carly Fiorina, Mike Huckabee** and **Rick Santorum** participated in the "undercard debate". For a video that analyzed the potential impact of the undercard debate, [click here](#).



**Senator Rand Paul,**

who was invited to participate in the "undercard" debate protested his removal from the "top tier" debate and instead hosted his own event via Periscope video livestream from the Twitter offices. The event was called the **Rand Rally**.

Although most of the

media attention has been focused on the Republican candidates, the race for the **Democratic nomination** is beginning to heat up as well. **Hillary Clinton**, who once commanded a significant lead in the polls, is seeing that position narrow as **Senator Bernie Sanders** has come within a few polling points.

The last Democratic debate was held on December 19th and featured three announced candidates: **Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders** and **Martin O'Malley**. [Click here](#) to watch the video. Another Democratic debate is scheduled for Sunday, January 17th in Charleston, South Carolina. [Click here](#) for information.

Take some time to become knowledgeable about the candidate's policy positions. *Be an informed voter!*

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**Public Policy Notes**

**Inside this issue:**

*2016 State of the Union* 2

*Every Student Succeeds Act* 3

*News to Note* 4



**Another Republican Drops Out**

On December 21, 2015, **Senator Lindsey Graham** of **South Carolina** suspended his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination. [Click here](#) to view Graham's announcement video.

On **January 14, 2016**, **Senator Graham** endorsed candidate **Jeb Bush** for the Republican nomination.

# The State of the Union 2016



President Barack Obama delivered his final **State of the Union Address on January 12, 2016.**

His speech was centered around four main questions:

- ◆ “How do we give everyone a fair shot at opportunity and security in the new economy?”
- ◆ How do we make technology work for us, and not against us, as we solve our biggest challenges?
- ◆ How do we keep America safe and lead the world without becoming its policeman?
- ◆ How can we make our politics reflect the best in us, and not the worst?”

According to the information posted on the White House website:

- ⇒ “President Obama put forward the **building blocks of a social compact for the 21st century.** His plan would lead to a growing economy while upholding a basic American belief: that everyone who works hard should get a fair shot. And it builds on steps we’ve already taken over the past seven years.
- ⇒ President Obama put forward

**ideas to reignite our spirit of innovation.** His plan is a path to new jobs, new businesses, a stronger economy, and a safer planet and builds on a number of steps he has taken over the past seven years.

⇒ The President laid out a **strategy for keeping America safe and strong without isolating ourselves or trying to nation-build all over the world.** We live in dangerous times, but if we make the right decisions, America will lead the world in the 21st century just like we did in the last one.

⇒ President Obama called on all of us **to overcome our worst impulses, reject corrosive attempts to rig the system and sideline citizens, and to strengthen the bonds that unite us no matter the political views we hold....**the President reaffirmed his faith in the politics of hope, building on seven years of progress.”

If you would like to see the full text of the accomplishments and ideas put forth in the speech, [click here](#).

**South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley** was chosen to provide the Republican response to the President’s Speech. The beginning text of her response follows:

“Barack Obama’s election as

*president seven years ago broke historic barriers and inspired millions of Americans. As he did when he first ran for office, tonight President Obama spoke eloquently about grand things. He is at his best when he does that.*

*Unfortunately, the President’s record has often fallen far short of his soaring words.*

*As he enters his final year in office, many Americans are still feeling the squeeze of an economy too weak to raise income levels. We’re feeling a crushing national debt, a health care plan that has made insurance less affordable and doctors less available, and chaotic unrest in many of our cities.*

*Even worse, we are facing the most dangerous terrorist threat our nation has seen since September 11th, and this president appears either unwilling or unable to deal with it.*

*Soon, the Obama presidency will end, and America will have the chance to turn in a new direction. That direction is what I want to talk about tonight.*

*At the outset, I’ll say this: you’ve paid attention to what has been happening in Washington, and you’re not naive.”*

For the full text of her remarks, [click here](#).



# The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

S. Bill 1177, the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) was passed in 2015 and signed into law by President Obama on December 10, 2015. This bill reauthorizes and amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and its later version called the No Child Left Behind Act.

“The bill addresses issues such as accountability and testing requirements, distribution and requirements for grants, fiscal accountability requirements, and the evaluation of teachers.

The bill provides states with increased flexibility and responsibility for developing accountability systems, deciding how federally required tests should be weighed, selecting additional measures of student and school performance, and implementing teacher evaluation systems.

It includes grants for providing language instruction educational programs, improving low-performing schools, and developing programs for American Indian and Alaska Native students. The bill provides rural school districts with increased flexibility in using federal funding. It also revises the Impact Aid formula.

The bill requires school districts to consult stakeholders in planning and implementing programs to improve student

safety, health, well-being, and academic achievement.

It combines two existing charter school programs into one program that includes grants for high-quality charter schools, facilities financing assistance, and replication and expansion.

The bill provides states with flexibility in meeting maintenance of effort requirements for state and local education funding to supplement federal assistance.

The bill prohibits the Department of Education from imposing certain requirements on states or school districts seeking waivers from federal laws.

**It provides that ESEA dollars may be used to improve early childhood education programs** and specifies requirements to ensure that homeless youth have access to all services provided by the states and school districts.”

Source: *Bill Summary*—<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177>

**Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN)**, Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee was the sponsor of the Senate bill and the legislation reflects a rare bi-



partisan and bicameral effort.

“Today we are unleashing a new era of innovation and excellence in student achievement—one that recognizes that the path to higher standards, better teaching and real accountability is classroom by classroom, community by community, and state by state—and not through Washington, D.C.,” said Chairman Alexander. “We have reversed the trend toward a national school board, repealed the federal Common Core mandate, and enacted what the *Wall Street Journal* called ‘the largest devolution of federal control to states in a quarter century.’”

**Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA)**, the ranking member of the House Committee



on Education and the Workforce said, “The Every Student Succeeds Act .... Today, the President signed into law an embodiment of what we can achieve here in Washington – a workable compromise that does not force either side to desert its core beliefs.” For a copy of the press release that contains these remarks, [click here](#).

The **First Five Years Fund** has created a [summary](#) of the opportunities for early childhood education that are included in the act.



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"A Voice for Southern  
Children"

## How to Use Public Policy Notes

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/public-policy/public-policy-notes/>  
*to receive notice of its availability each month.*

## News to Note

### Omnibus FY 2016 Appropriations Bill Includes Funding Increases for Early Education

The passage of the FY 2016 Appropriations bill that was reported in last month's *Public Policy Notes* includes the following increases for early education:

- ⇒ \$326 million for CCDBG, maintaining a set-aside of \$127 million for infants and toddlers.
- ⇒ \$570 million for Head Start
- ⇒ \$15 million in IDEA Part B
- ⇒ \$20 million in IDEA Part

The bill also includes \$250 million, to continue the Preschool Development Grants through the Department of Education

and makes improvements in the tax credit structure that currently supports low-income families. *Source: Big Win for Children & Their Families, e-mail 12-16-15, www.nwlc.org*

### The National Governor's Association Welcomes Scott Pattison



Scott Pattison, the former Executive Director of the National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO) has joined NGA as the new Executive Director. He is a graduate of George Washington University and the University of Virginia School of Law.

### Louisiana Governor Reverses Decision on Medicaid Expansion

With the departure of Republican Governor Bobby Jindal, the new Democratic Governor of Louisiana,



**Jon Bel Edwards**, has begun the process of expanding the state's Medicaid program. Governor Jindal had refused the expansion, citing the cost to the state and an inappropriate growth of federal spending. On Tuesday, January 12th, Governor Edwards signed an [Executive Order](#) to make the administrative changes necessary to support the expansion.