

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

New Leadership in the U.S. House

November 2015

Public Policy Notes

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Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI)

In the October issue of *Public Policy Notes*, we shared with you some of the drama that was unfolding in the U.S. House of Representatives as Speaker John Boehner prepared to leave Congress and the House moved to elect a new Speaker.

Representative Paul Ryan of Wisconsin was elected Speaker and has assumed that role in the last month. From all indications, the transition has been a fairly smooth one and the concerns of groups like the Freedom Caucus which was profiled in the October newsletter are being considered.

Paul Ryan is known as a “policy wonk” who has routinely submitted plans for

modifying and controlling the federal budget. He has proposed modifications to entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare and was a candidate for Vice-President in the last presidential election. (Mitt Romney was the presidential candidate.)

He brings a wealth of procedural experience with him to the position as Speaker and, with Mr. Ryan’s assumption of the position of Speaker, a powerful Committee chairmanship was available for new leadership. As chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Ryan held a position of power and control over issues such as tax, health, welfare and trade in the House.

Representative Kevin Brady of Texas has assumed the position of Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee with the support of his fellow House Republi-



Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX)

cans and Speaker Ryan. Representative Brady is a 10-term congressional veteran. *“I’m honored to lead this talented committee because House Republicans and Speaker Paul Ryan are advancing a pro-growth agenda to get this country back on track. This includes taking real steps toward fixing this broken tax code, reforming welfare, saving Social Security and Medicare for the long term and enlarging America’s economic freedom to trade.”* [Click here](#) to read his full statement.

For more information about the Speaker transition, go to the [October issue](#) of *Public Policy Notes*.



One Less Republican Candidate

On November 18, 2015, **Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal** withdrew from the race for the Republican presidential nomination. “I’ve come to the realization that this is not my time,” Jindal said in an interview on Fox News. [Click here](#) to read Jindal’s “thank you” blog post.

Health Insurance Co-ops: The News Isn't Good

The fall of 2015 has seen a wave of closings of the non-profit health care co-ops that were created under the Affordable Care Act. The year started with 23 co-ops across the nation before concerns about fiscal solvency caused regulatory action against 12 co-ops that will not be selling insurance next year. Persons with policies through those co-ops will need to find another insurer at the end of 2015.

The co-ops were created under the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare in popular jargon) and were designed to “infuse competition, lower prices, and provide a variety of choices for consumers.” They were an alternative to corporate insurers and were designed to provide options on the insurance exchanges. The initial operation was funded through about \$2.4 billion in low-interest loans from the federal government.

Co-ops have failed, or are being closed in Colorado, Iowa, **Kentucky**, **Louisiana**, New York, Nevada, **Tennessee**, Oregon, **South Carolina**, Utah, Arizona and Nebraska.

The financial insolvency has been blamed to a great extent on the failure of a promised federal sharing program (risk adjustment formula). This component of the Affordable Care Act required companies that demonstrated revenue that exceeded expenses to pay fees to help cover the losses posed by

sicker patients who signed up with established carriers. At the same time that this “risk sharing” was implemented among carriers, the federal government announced that insurers would get only a fraction of money from a program, risk corridors, that aims to ease financial risk.

For **Kentucky**, this meant that instead of the \$77 million they were anticipating receiving, they would receive \$9.7 million, a shortfall too significant to overcome. On October 9th, **Kentucky Health CO-OP** announced its closure, meaning that about 51,000 people in the state will need to shop for new coverage for 2016.

In **Tennessee**, regulators announced the closure of **Community Health Alliance** which had stopped selling policies in January 2015.

On October 22, **Consumers Choice of South Carolina** was closed by regulators and 67,000 purchasers of policies through Consumers Choice will need to find new coverage for 2016.

If you're interested in learning more about the details of this program, you'll find a wealth of information in [CO-OP Health Plans: Patients Interests' First](#).

For many of the families with whom you work, the move to close these co-ops has resulted in

sending current policyholders back to the system to find other alternatives, some of which may not be as affordable as the coverage initially purchased. If you need resources to share that explain what is happening and how to proceed, you can find them for your state here.

Kentucky

[Frequently Asked Questions for Kentucky Health Cooperative Members](#) Look under Kentucky Health Cooperative Rehabilitation

Louisiana

The [Office of Consumer Advocacy and Diversity](#) is available to answer insurance questions.

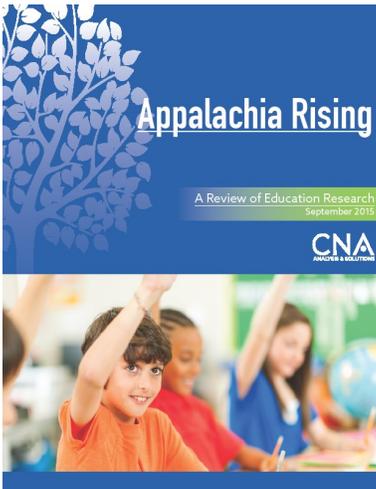
South Carolina

[FAQs: Information for CCHP Members and Providers](#). [Click here](#) for access to the ACA information page on the website of the South Carolina Department of Insurance.

Tennessee

[Tennessee CO-OP Community Health Alliance Voluntarily Enters Runoff](#) This page on the Insurance Department's website includes answers to consumers' questions concerning the closing of the Co-op.

The open enrollment period began on November 1st and these former co-op members will have until December 31st to find new coverage.



[CNA Education](#) recently released a report, *Appalachia Rising*, that took a hard look at 275 research studies relevant to education conditions in middle Appalachia over the last 20 years. The report provides a summary of this research and includes a set of findings and implications for research and practice.

Appalachia is a region that has experienced generational poverty and was the focus of many attempts to address the factors of geographic isolation, poverty and depressed economies. The “middle Appalachian” region encompasses portions of **Kentucky, North Carolina**, Ohio, **Tennessee, Virginia** and **West Virginia** and is known for its rich cultural history.

This report discusses five topics that are currently being debated in education circles today: 1) career readiness, 2) educator effectiveness, 3) access to high quality curriculum and instruction, 4) systemic capacity, and 5) health and wellness.

Appalachia Rising

FINDINGS

- ⇒ “In comparison with the rest of the United States, the student population in middle Appalachia is, in general, poorer, less ethnically diverse, and has a higher proportion of special education students.
- ⇒ Employment indicators show a lower percentage of adults in the workforce, a high percentage of whom work in extraction industries.
- ⇒ States in the region are focused on students’ college and career readiness and research suggested improved high school graduation rates.
- ⇒ There is a potential misalignment between high school career and technical education programs and career opportunities.
- ⇒ Attracting and retaining school leaders and teachers to geographically remote school districts is difficult and concerns exist about whether native candidates may have had inadequate preparation to teach to rigorous standards.
- ⇒ Local definitions of educator effectiveness go beyond academics to include the ability to build trusting relationships and support students in overcoming barriers to learning.
- ⇒ There is a need to build capacity at several levels of the education system. These include improving resource infrastructure, forming regional partnerships and implementing systemic improvement initiatives.
- ⇒ Childhood obesity and substance abuse are of increasing concern. Little research connects the role of schools to health and wellness in the region.

According to the report, the region mirrors the rest of America in the current focus on college and career readiness, including an emphasis on more rigorous academic standards. “Local initiatives are emerging that seek to reconcile attachment to place and geographic isolation, both common rural characteristics, by developing local capacity to teach to rigorous standards and generate innovative career pathways for youth. At the same time, persistent poverty results in ongoing and new challenges for educators to inspire and prepare youth for a future different from that of their parents....Overall, the findings suggest that middle Appalachia is closing the education and economic gaps with other parts of the country.” For a copy of the report, [click here](#).

Southern Early Childhood Association

1123 S. University, Ste 255
Little Rock, AR 72204

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 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.

From Our States

Kentucky Elects Republican Governor and Lieutenant Governor



On November 3rd, [Matt Bevin](#) became the Republican Governor of Kentucky and [Jeanean Hampton](#) won the race for Lieutenant Governor. Republicans now control four of the six state constitutional offices in Kentucky. (Former Governor Beshear, a Democrat, was term limited and could not run for another term.)

Both are newcomers to politics and neither have previously held political office. Bevin is a former U.S. Army officer, successful businessman and Tea Party activist. Hampton is a former U.S. Air Force captain, a businesswoman and Tea Party favorite.

With her election, Hampton became the first African American in Kentucky to be elected to a statewide office and the second African American woman to be elected Lieutenant Governor in United States history.

Teacher Shortage in Oklahoma



Joy Hofmeister, Oklahoma's 14th State Superintendent of Public Instruction, has formed a [Task Force](#) to provide recommendations about how to

address Oklahoma's teacher shortage. (This year, the Oklahoma Board of Education approved 503 emergency teacher certifications. In comparison, in 2011 fewer than 40 were issued.)

"Oklahoma's critical teacher shortage is well documented. It's time to stop talking about the problem alone and start offering real solutions," Hofmeister said. "By applying their own knowledge, researching successful strategies and assessing the effectiveness of proposed solutions in action, the volunteers on this task force undoubtedly will help create the high-quality classrooms our schoolchildren deserve."

A final report from the Task Force is expected in the fall of 2016.