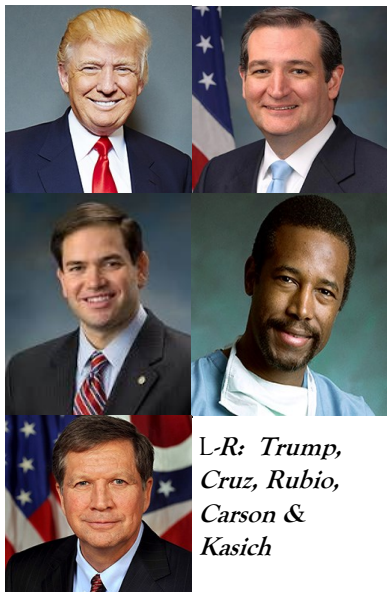


# Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

## The Presidential Primaries are Upon Us!

If you've been following the election news, you know that the election process has begun and there have been several surprising developments.



L-R: Trump, Cruz, Rubio, Carson & Kasich

- ◆ **Donald Trump** has so far dominated the field in the **Republican** primaries.
- ◆ The Republican field has narrowed considerably. From an original field of 12 candidates, just 5 are now in the hunt for delegates.
- ◆ **Jeb Bush**, the presumed Republican front runner last year, suspended his

campaign this month.

- ◆ **Rubio and Cruz** are currently battling for second place behind front runner Trump.



Clinton, Sanders

In the **Democratic** contest, **Hillary Clinton** has met a formidable challenger in **Senator Bernie Sanders** but is leading in the delegate count.

As the **SEC Primary** approaches, candidates are battling to get their message out throughout the South. You'll remember that this is a group of Southern states that will all hold their primaries on March 1st. The South is now solidly "red" /Republican and these contests may help to determine who the eventual nominee will be. If you'd like more

detailed information on the SEC Primary, check out the [August 2015 edition](#) of *Public Policy Notes*.

**South Carolina** held its Republican primary on February 20th with the Democratic primary on February 27th. **Donald Trump** was the winner of the Republican primary with **Marco Rubio** finishing second and **Ted Cruz** in a close third.

In the primaries scheduled for March 1st, the following number of delegates are "up for grabs" in the SECA states.

**Alabama** (60 D/50 R)  
**Arkansas** (37 D/40 R)  
**Georgia** (117 D/76 R)  
**Oklahoma** (42 D/43 R)  
**Tennessee** (75 D/58 R)  
**Texas** (251 D/155 R)  
**Virginia** (109 D/49 R)

A total of 691 Democratic delegates and 421 Republican delegates will be awarded on a proportional basis.

February 2016

### Public Policy Notes

#### Inside this issue:

*AAP Policy Statement* 2

*Hunger Free Summer for Kids* 2

*The Energy Sector: Boom to Bust* 3

*One Billion for School Choice* 4

**Are You a Policy Nerd? Here's a Resource for You!**

Some interesting trends have developed as voters cast their ballots, particularly among voters in the millennial category. If you're interested in accessing an in-depth analysis of what's happening on the political scene in real time, you won't do better than [Larry Sabato's Crystal Ball](#) at the University of Virginia Center for Politics.



The American Academy of Pediatrics has issued a [policy statement](#) to “ensure medical countermeasures are available for children in disasters.” In conjunction with the pediatric community, they have recognized that health care entities are threatened by “a variety of threats, including emerging infectious diseases, mass shootings and chemical-biological-radiological-nuclear-explosive threats secondary to terrorism, environmental accidents and natural disasters.”

According to the policy statement, “Events over the past 2 decades are a stark reminder that disasters, human-caused or natural, can affect children directly. Despite our best efforts to protect children, this population may be the chance target of natural disasters or the intended target for acts of violence or terrorism. Children represent a particularly

vulnerable population during a pandemic, natural disaster, or act of terrorism. Medical countermeasures (MCMs), defined as medications, antitoxins, vaccines, immunoglobulins, medical devices, and pediatric age-appropriate life-saving medical equipment and supplies required to protect or treat children for possible chemical, biological, radiologic, or nuclear (CBRN) threats, are of paramount importance to the health security of children and the nation as a whole.<sup>1-3</sup> Children have unique needs that must be taken into consideration for communities to be truly prepared to respond to disasters and public health emergencies and to remain resilient in their aftermath.<sup>4</sup>”

Although this statement is intended for policymakers, public health officials and the medical community, it is important that children’s advocates ask the following questions of

the officials in their states.

- ⇒ Does our state have adequate amounts of medical countermeasures for children of all ages in caches in the event of a disaster?
- ⇒ Has our state considered schools, child care programs & other community programs as potential storage and distribution facilities for these supplies?
- ⇒ Has our state developed easy-to-follow instructions for caregivers on the proper preparation, dosing and administration of MCM’s?

Source: AAP News, Policy: Ensure medical countermeasures are available for children in disasters, 1-4-16 , <http://www.aappublications.org/news>

## Hunger Free Summer for Kids Act Becomes a Part of a Comprehensive Nutrition Act



**Senator John Boozman** (R-AR) introduced the [Hunger Free Summer for Kids Act](#) (S. 1966) in 2015 to “make child nutrition programs more efficient and flexible

to reach children in need during the summer months when school meals are not available.” The changes were designed to serve children, particularly in rural areas, who might have difficulty reaching centralized feeding sites during the summer months when school is not in session. The Act proposed the following:

- “Authorizing summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) and providing eligible families up to \$30 per summer month per child to purchase eligible food items. In USDA pilot programs, Summer EBT reduced the most severe forms of food insecurity for children by 33%.
- Allowing states the flexibility to choose what makes the most sense in their communities by giving states the option to provide summer meals without a centralized feeding

site when certain conditions exist in rural and high poverty areas.”

On January 20, 2016, the Senate Agriculture Committee passed the [Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access Act of 2016](#) which included the language from Boozman’s act. This bill reauthorizes child nutrition programs under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966.

**Senator Mitch McConnell** of Kentucky was a co-sponsor of S. 1966.

# The Energy Sector: Boom to Bust and The Impact on State Budgets

As consumers celebrate the price of gas when filling up the family car, policymakers in several of the SECA states are facing significant and daunting budget deficits because of the loss of revenue, both from taxes and the elimination of jobs within those industries.

Several of the SECA states have economies that are being significantly affected by the current downturn in the energy sector: oil, gas and coal. We'll share a little information from some states to give you a picture of how they plan to "plug" these holes in their budgets.

The **Louisiana Legislature** is currently in emergency session, trying to determine how best to deal with a looming budget deficit in this



fiscal year which ends on June 30th. State officials are projecting a budget deficit of \$900 million in the next four months and a \$2 billion deficit for FY 2017.

Governor John Bel Edwards, made \$21 million in cuts to the current spending plan by Executive Order and the Joint Budget Committee voted to slash another \$38 million on Monday, February 15th. These cuts have pared the deficit down by \$60 million.

Cuts already made include:

- ◆ \$1.4 million to coastal protection

- ◆ \$1.1 million for the budgets of various elected officials
- ◆ \$4 million to higher education
- ◆ \$18.8 million to the Department of Transportation & Development
- ◆ \$1 million for the State Police

An immediate hiring freeze for the executive branch and on travel, operating services, supplies, acquisitions and major repairs is in place.

The Governor has offered proposals for tax increases, including a one-cent sales tax increase and a 22-cent cigarette tax increase.

The special session ends March 9th and the regular legislative session begins March 14th. *Source: [The Advocate](#), 2/15/16*

On February 1, 2016, **Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin** delivered her [State of the State Address](#) and acknowledged that the state faced significant budget deficits, due to "the collapse of oil prices and decades-old structural budget problems" which have caused a \$1 billion budget deficit.

Fallin noted that "if lawmakers take no action and don't change the way the state apportions and collects revenues, most state agencies would face a 13.5 percent cut for the upcoming 2017 fiscal year. If lawmakers



drained the state's savings account, the Rainy Day Fund, agencies would see a 10 percent cut." She outlined Education as her number one priority and her proposed budget called for a pay increase for teachers. *Source: News Release, OK Governor's Office, 2/1/16*

**West Virginia** is working to close significant budget gaps, a gap of \$353 million as of February 22nd.



The House Finance Committee is trying to determine the potential impact of an increase to 6.5 percent in budget

cuts across state agencies. (A 4% cut was implemented last fall.) The additional cuts could include 350 positions in higher education and the layoffs of 87 state troopers. *Source: [West Virginia's Budget Crisis May be Worse Than First Thought](#)*

As we look around the region, you'll find similar stories in Texas, Kentucky and other states that have economies that are dependent upon revenue from oil, gas or coal production.

If you'd like to see a copy of your state's budget, the National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO) publishes those documents. [Click here](#) to find a "clickable" map and lists of state budget documents.

(Note: Not all budget woes can be attributed to the decline in the energy sector: bad policy decisions have also contributed.)

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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.*

## One Billion for School Choice Initiatives

The [Walton Family Foundation](#), based in Bentonville, Arkansas, recently announced that it would invest \$1 billion to help [expand the charter school sector and other choice initiatives over the next five years](#).

This new commitment will equal its philanthropy over the past 20 years, and these funds will be utilized in 13 cities across the country, including these in the SECA region: **Atlanta, Houston, Memphis, New Orleans, San Antonio** and our next-door neighbor, **Washington D.C.**

*"The Walton Family Foundation began supporting K-12 education in the mid-1990s. Since the beginning, the foundation has invested more than \$1 billion to improve educational opportunities for America's children – and to prove wrong the prevailing wisdom that poverty and ZIP code determine destiny.*

*Since the Walton Family Foundation committed to improving education, more than a third of the foundation's total education giving has supported the creation of high-quality school options. To date, 1 in every 4 charter schools created nationally have received support from the Walton Family Foundation."*

To access a copy of the 2015-2020 K-12 strategic plan, [click here](#).  
Source: Walton Family Foundation  
[www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org](http://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org)

