

Child Advocate Groups Push New 'Sandbox' Party

There are the Republicans, the Democrats and the Tea Partiers -- and now there will be the Sandboxers -- according to a coalition of groups who argue that the voices of Michigan's youngest learner needs its own political party.

"Early childhood investment is all about economics," said Judy **SAMUELSON**, CEO of the Early Childhood Investment Corp. (ECIC), a nonprofit public corporation working at putting in place a comprehensive early childhood system in Michigan. "Mounting evidence has convinced us that Michigan's economic future will be determined by resources the state puts into its young children today."

The new party will be holding a convention at the Breslin Center on the campus of Michigan State University from 1 to 4 p.m. on August 26. The convention will feature the Michigan rock band Verve Pipe, which is now dabbling into family music. The convention will also be inviting gubernatorial candidates to speak.

"We plan to fire up the troops to send home the message that all aspects of early childhood -- from physical and emotional health to quality child care and prekindergarten -- are crucial to Michigan's next generation," Samuelson added.

Speaking at the event, House Majority Floor Leader Kathy **ANGERER** (D-Dundee) noted that the House and Senate conference committee on the K-12 budget that reported out the FY 2011 School Aid Budget last night included in the budget an increase of \$1 million for early childhood education. (See "[Deal Gives Schools \\$11 More Per Pupil](#)," 06/30/10).

"One of the things that is key in this year's budget is it's allocated for early childhood and early childhood education alone," Angerer said.

While not in attendance at the kick-off the new political party, state Superintendent Mike **FLANAGAN** said Michigan "can't let this election sidestep our most important special interest group -- our children. The creation of the Sandbox Party means voters will not have a focal point for directing their concerns about early childhood issues."

The party which includes the likes of Fight Crime: Invest in Children, Michigan's Children, Children's Trust Fund, Michigan League for Human Services, Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children, the Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health and the Michigan Association of United Ways.
