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The following memo provides a summary of recent developments in public policy issues of interest to Early Childhood advocates.

This Week in Washington

April 15th –tax day—came and went without an FY 2011 Budget Resolution in sight. Conflicting reports have been circulating about whether Congress intends to pass a budget resolution or simply “deem” spending allocations to each appropriations subcommittee so they can get on with their work. Some Members, such as Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND), are insisting that Democrats pass a budget resolution or be accused of shirking their leadership responsibilities. As such, the Senate Budget Committee began the process today of debating its Budget Resolution with opening remarks. Tomorrow, the Committee will begin marking up its proposal. Chairman Conrad’s budget plan assumes President Obama’s freeze on non-security discretionary spending and the same level of spending for defense, but cuts \$4 billion from international relations and foreign aid funding compared to FY 2010. It is important to note, however, that Conrad’s budget still makes room for important investments in education and energy. According to Conrad, “These investments help lay the foundation for long-term economic strength and prosperity.” In addition, the plan prioritizes early learning within education funding by providing increases for early education, allowing for reforms to improve teaching and student learning, and funding programs to educate, support, and prepare students for college and career.

Across Capitol Hill, the Democratic Leadership in the House is still debating whether to start its own budget resolution process. Many House members believe the tension between those who want to increase domestic spending and those who want to cut the deficit would make passing a budget resolution impossible, particularly with mid-term elections on the horizon. While the debate continues, the only number that really has any meaning at the end of the day is the overall discretionary spending proposed in each of the budget resolutions. It is from this amount that the 302(b) allocations to the twelve Appropriations’ Subcommittees is made. So, if the Budget Committee and the Senate ultimately approve a resolution that outlines federal spending that falls \$4 billion short of what President Obama requested earlier this year, the Senate Appropriations Committee has complete discretion on how to divide that pot among its 12 subcommittees. The Budget Resolution assumptions are not binding, nor is there any requirement that it mimic the President’s plan.

Sebelius Testifies Before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies

Today, Secretary Kathleen Sebelius testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (LHHS) where she discussed the President's budget proposal for FY 2011. According to Sebelius, this proposed plan "is a major step toward a healthier, stronger America" and compliments the health insurance reform legislation that was passed last month. In an attempt to highlight the efforts made in the President's budget proposal to support children, Sebelius discussed the push to reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant and entitlement funding for child care. These proposed totals include \$6.6 billion for the Child Care and Development Fund, an increase of \$800 million in the Child Care and Development Block Grant, and \$800 million in the Child Care Entitlement. Additionally, the Administration is proposing to increase funding for the Head Start program by \$989 million. Part of the increase for Head Start will include \$118 million to improve program quality and key provisions the Administration plans to implement. A copy of this testimony can be found at http://appropriations.house.gov/Witness_testimony/LHHS/Kathleen_Sebelius.4.21.10.pdf.

ED Announces the Listening and Learning About Early Learning Tour

This week the Department of Education (ED) announced a series of *Listening and Learning About Early Learning* meetings that will take place in Washington, DC, Denver, Orlando and Chicago. Over the next two months, ED and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will hold a series of meetings that will focus on topics related to early learning (which will include birth to 3rd grade) that include: Understanding Preschool – Grade 3 Structures; Workforce and Professional Development; Family Engagement; and Standards and Assessments. These meetings, led by Secretary Arne Duncan's Senior Advisor on Early Learning, Dr. Jacqueline Jones, and HHS' Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development for Children and Families, Joan Lombardi, will help inform the work of ED and HHS that surrounds early learning. Each meeting will include opening statements by offices from ED and HHS, input from invited panels of experts, an opportunity for public speakers to share input, and a time for questions and written submissions. For more information on this meeting series or to register to attend, please visit <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2010/04/listening-and-learning-about-early-learning-tour-announced-for-dc-denver-orlando-and-chicago/>

NGA Announces New Initiative to Develop State Early Childhood Infrastructure

In collaboration with six states - Kansas, Louisiana, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington - the National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices will work over a 10- month period to develop high-quality early childhood education systems. This new initiative, *Ready States: A Project to Develop Key Components of State Early Childhood Infrastructure*, is "designed to give states support in developing innovative policy strategies and implementing data-driven solutions to maximize resources and create the highest quality early childhood systems." These selected states, will be part of an organizational Policy Academy that will help them shape plans around governance, program quality, professional development and

data systems, according to an NGA press release announcing the initiative last week. Over the 10 months of the project, these states will have access to a wide range of experts on early-childhood issues. For more information on this initiative please visit:

<http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.6c9a8a9ebc6ae07eee28aca9501010a0/?vgnnextoid=1cf04914064e7210VgnVCM1000005e00100aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=6d4c8aaa2ebbff00VgnVCM1000001a01010aRCRD>.

ED Releases Guidance For Race To The Top (RTTT) – Phase Two

On Friday, April 16 the Department of Education (ED) released the application and guidelines for the second phase of the competition where states will compete for a portion of the \$4 billion Race to the Top Fund. After this second phase of RTTT concludes it is expected to expire under the authorization of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), but that does not mean this competitive funding stream will come to an end altogether. President Obama has requested an additional \$1.35 billion in his FY11 budget request to Congress in order to extend this competition into the following year. Applications for Phase 2 are due by June 1 but states who adopt common standards after that date may submit amended applications by August 2. The states that win will be announced in September. The guidelines determined in Phase 1 for the total amount a state can receive in RTTT funds have been changed for Phase 2 of the competition. In Phase 2, the ranges for applying states include the following: \$350 million to \$700 million for California, Florida, New York, and Texas; \$200 million to \$400 million for Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania; \$150 million to \$250 million for Arizona, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin; \$60 million to \$175 million for Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, and Utah; and \$20 million to \$75 million for Alaska, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. A state may **not** request more than their allotted amount or their application will be rejected – another change from Phase 1. Additional information can be found at www.ed.gov and to access information about “Lessons from Phase 1 of Race to the Top” are available at <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2010/04/lessons-from-phase-1-of-race-to-the-top/>.

The Alliance for Excellent Education Collaborates with the Carnegie Corporation of New York to Study the Connection Between Reading and Writing

The Alliance for an Excellent Education and the Carnegie Corporation of New York held a briefing to release the report, *Writing to Read: Evidence for How Writing Can Improve Reading*. This report, using research based evidence, emphasizes the importance of writing in the classroom. Using empirical evidence from 93 studies, the report outlines when writing is a key component of school curriculum through certain practices, student’s reading skills improve. These practices include having students write about what they read, basing instruction on developing skills and processes to create text, and increasing a student’s overall writing time. While these may be obvious components of curriculum, what the report reveals is that this instruction should be starting in kindergarten and first grade. Additionally, at no point does the report mitigate the importance of reading and writing individually but rather emphasizes the collaboration of reading and writing into a student’s education proves to be beneficial. The report is available at <http://www.all4ed.org/files/WritingToRead.pdf>.