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Ellen Fern and Audrey Busch

efern@wpllc.netabusch@wpllc.net

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

This Week in Washington

The news of the day was the surprising announcement by Representative David Obey (D-WI), Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee as well as the Labor, Health and Human Services and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations Subcommittee, that after 42 years in the U.S. Congress he will not seek re-election in November. Admittedly in a tight congressional race, Obey stated he was “bone tired” and felt “used up.” He went on to say that “I’m ready to turn the page, and I think, frankly, that my district is ready for someone new to make a fresh start.” Noting that when he was first elected to Congress, one of his three primary goals was to “expand federal support for education in order to expand opportunity for every American” he was pleased that in the last three years, “Congress has been able to move a large amount of federal resources to do just that.” Speculation has already begun as to who will succeed Obey as Chairman of the full Committee as well as the LHHS Subcommittee. Since Representative Norm Dicks (D-WA) is the next most senior member on the full Committee he could be next in line for the coveted chairmanship. Similarly, Representative Nita Lowey (D-NY) holds seniority once Obey retires on the LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee, where she could be his likely successor. However, Obey remains Chairman of both the full Committee and the LHHS Subcommittee for the remainder of the 111th Congress which is far from over.

On the other side of Capitol Hill, high finance remains on the minds of legislators this week, but the topic is Wall Street—not the FY 2011 Budget. Representatives from Goldman Sachs made headlines as Congress tried unsuccessfully to extract apologies for what some might call their casino-like operations, and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (R-NV) worked hard to get Republicans to agree to debate a financial regulatory reform bill that has been months in the making. Finally, with the threat of an all night session and dreams of the weekend’s Kentucky Derby parties, Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and his fellow Republicans allowed the debate to begin. It is sure to tie the Senate in knots for at least the next two weeks.

Why does that matter for early education advocates? Several weeks of debate on a financial services bill makes the likelihood of the Congress finding floor time to adopt a Budget Resolution that much less likely. Already, concerns have been raised about bringing a bill to the floor that will open debate on looming deficits and government overspending and force Members facing tough reelections to take unpopular votes. Absent a budget resolution, the Leadership will have to devise a way to pass a deeming resolution to allow appropriators to move forward on

spending bills. A deeming resolution, as the name suggests, puts forth or “deems” a total FY 2011 budget figure for the government. It is likely to match the total figure in Chairman Kent Conrad’s (D-ND) mark that passed last week in the Budget Committee—a number \$4 billion below what President Obama had proposed. Coupled with the task of finding an additional \$5 billion to make up a shortfall in the Pell Grant program, it appears Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Members of the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations will have a challenging task writing budgets for those three domestic agencies.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and House Education and Labor Committees remain committed to crafting a new Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) before the summer recess begins. Hearings, round table discussions, stakeholder meetings and briefings continue this week, focusing on the difficult policy issues that must be resolved to rewrite ESEA—whether that rewrite happens soon or during the next Congress, a scenario that seems more and more likely as partisan politics continue to slow down the pace of work on Capitol Hill.

Secretary Duncan Highlights Role of Parents in a Child’s Education

On Monday, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan addressed the first annual *Mom Congress on Education and Learning*, hosted by *Parenting Magazine*, Georgetown University’s School of Continuing Studies and the U.S. Department of Education. Fifty-one delegates from across the nation attended the *Mom Congress* to create a parenting “Lesson Plan for Change” that will “help empower parents nationwide to get more involved in their children’s education.” In his prepared remarks, Duncan reiterated his belief that all parents should be “real partners in education with their children’s teachers, from cradle to career.” He added that during “this partnership, students and parents should feel connected—and teachers should feel supported.” Duncan illustrated the success of engaging parents and making them partners in a child’s education by citing examples that included a program in Springfield, Arkansas sponsored by the National Council for Family Literacy; a program in Chicago called the Corner School Development Program; and the monthly Parent Academies held in New York. All programs are working to empower parents to play an integral role in their children’s academic success.

In addition, Duncan highlighted how the Administration’s Blueprint to Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) supports and encourages parental engagement through a variety of means. This includes “more than \$200 million for Promise Neighborhoods, which will have excellent schools at their center and comprehensive social services, from cradle to career.” Duncan stated teacher and principals should be evaluated on how they engage parents in their child’s academic success. Duncan also announced an alteration to the Blueprint based on feedback the U.S. Department of Education had received. The proposal now includes a doubling of funding for parental engagement, which is an increase from one to two percent of Title I dollars and equals \$270 million. A copy of this speech can be found at:

<http://www2.ed.gov/news/speeches/2010/05/05032010.html>

NCLR Releases Report on the Well-Being of Latino Children

This week the National Council of La Raza, in conjunction with the Population Reference Bureau, released a report titled, *America’s Future: Latino Child Well-Being in Numbers and Trends*. This report tracked data on Latino children across the country, focusing on over 25 well-being indicators, and developed an online database containing state-level information. The findings from this report are unprecedented, not only because there has never been a report that demonstrates a “comprehensive overview of the state of Latino children”, but also because of the alarming statistics it reveals. Not only are Hispanic youngsters the fastest growing group in the

United States, but they are also facing a number of inequities and barriers to achieving success in life that could ultimately affect their integration and assimilation into country. A few of the Report's 25 indicators revealed the following: 1) 1 in 5 Latino children do not have access to health care; 2) even though many Latino children are U.S. citizens, they do not have access to public services because their parents are immigrants and face barriers; and 3) most Latino children start their education with a disadvantage and only 55% of Latinos graduate from high school. Additionally, the report states that by 2035, over a third of all U.S. children will be Latino, and by 2050, over a third of the entire population will be Hispanic. Janet Murguia, President of the National Council of La Raza said that Latino youngsters should be a "national public policy priority." To access the full report, please visit: <http://www.nclr.org/content/publications/detail/63002/>

State Preschool Programs Experience Budget Cuts

On Tuesday, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University, released its annual report titled, *The State of Preschool 2009*. This annual survey ranks each state's fiscal support of preschool programs, tracking each state's efforts over time. The survey also predicts that the effects of the current economic recession will hit states hardest in 2010 and 2011. This means tough times are ahead for many states who are already facing record shortfalls in their budgets and who, unlike the federal government, are unable to run a deficit. This is likely to result in cuts to early education programs in many states, the largest cuts seen in many years in some instances. Steven Barnett, Co-Director of NIEER claimed that already one state, New Mexico, has cut pre-K spending for 2011 and cuts across 11 other states are being considered. These states include: Florida, Illinois, Wisconsin, New York and Arizona with the latter, Barnett stated, planning to eliminate preschool programs altogether. The report also revealed that 23 of 38 states did not require well-qualified teachers in every classroom. "Six states had programs that met fewer than half of our 10 benchmarks for quality standards including three states serving tremendous numbers of children — California, Texas and Florida." Since state budgets are feeling a squeeze, Barnett stated, it is time for the President to honor the promises he made to fund early childhood education during his campaign. According to Barnett, "a \$1 billion challenge fund for preschool education, if matched dollar for dollar by the states, could increase enrollments in quality preschools by nearly a half million children." To review the full report visit: <http://nieer.org/yearbook/>

The AppleTree Early Learning Public Charter School Has Success with Results To Intervention School Model

On Tuesday, the AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation, who in partnership with DC Public Schools runs four early learning public charter schools that use the data-driven Results to Intervention (RTI) school model, held a briefing to publicize the success of the AppleTree Early Learning Charter Schools have achieved. Jack McCarthy, Managing Director of AppleTree Institute, stated that students at the AppleTree Early Learning Charter Schools have enjoyed substantial academic improvements through: 1) a low teacher-student ratio; 2) engaging classroom environments; 3) valid assessments of students' progress; 4) data-driven professional development; 5) employing teachers with bachelor's degrees; and 6) differentiated instruction of language and social competencies. Representatives from the AppleTree schools cite their commitment to using data to drive the curriculum and instruction, as well as professional development, as critical factors for success. Recognizing that "changing adults is tougher than changing children" using data to inform professional development and alter a teacher's behavior is an effective strategy. Dr. Craig Ramey, an external evaluator of the DC Partnership for Early Literacy and also the Director of the Center for Health and Education at Georgetown University, explained that children in an AppleTree Charter School made significant gains in vocabulary,

pre-literacy skills and math over the course of one year, and children who continued for a second year at AppleTree continued to make gains in these competencies. Effective teaching and learning conducted in the early years of a child's life can not only cut grade retention rates, but will also translate into a higher level of education and ultimately a higher wage earned in life, according to Ramey. To learn more about the AppleTree Institute visit <http://www.appletreeinstitute.org/>