

Notes from WSA conference call 9/19/07

Debbie Weinstein, Coalition for Human Needs

The federal budget approaching serious crunch time. There's a lot of decision making that should be done by September 30th, the end of the fiscal year, but many of those decisions will not be made by that time. This affects Head Start, S-Chip, farm bill (which includes food stamps) and other programs critical to low income children and families.

Although House has passed all its appropriations bills, the Senate has passed relatively few, including none of the domestic ones, and they don't expect to in time. Right now they're expecting that since they don't want to shut the government down, they will pass a stopgap bill that will continue funding at the current level. This might go on for 6 weeks or so, giving Congress time to come up with one or more pieces of legislation to send to the president.

There are appropriations bills in a number of different categories, but it is unlikely that these bills will pass separately at this point. The president has threatened to veto all but two of those appropriations bills. Congress will probably package the spending bills together into one or more, then the president will probably veto them. The question then is whether there's enough support to override the veto – 2/3 is needed. An override is not out of the question – many of the spending bills have passed with large majorities, but it will be a major campaign across many organizations across the country. If it's not overridden, further negotiation with the White House would be necessary, and we would be fearful of what that might mean for many programs for low-income families.

What can we do in Washington State if there is a veto of the Labor/HHS budget bill?

It's essential that you make as many and repeated contacts with congressional offices that you can. Ideally parents but also staff need to talk to members and get them to vote yes on the bill. We need a vote that's so strong that the President will have to think twice before vetoing. They need to know that children and families will be hurt, and that you are watching.

How can people get involved in the Coalition for Human Needs?

Sign up for email notices, www.chn.org. Joel reports that their emails are great.

Kelly Fargo – Food Source Plus

Food Source Plus has partnerships with around 40 associations nationwide, including the California Head Start Association. They use the group purchasing model to save money for programs on food and non-food supplies. Most agencies save between 10% and 40%. We have contracts with many food and other supply distributors at a discounted rate, and those discounts are passed on to partners. We also provide marketing and revenue support to the sponsoring agency. In Washington we already have a contract with Food Services of America and some Oregon companies. Even if you're already using Food Services of America, if you sign up with Food Source Plus you will then get the lower contracted Food Source rate.

If you want to sign up, FSP looks at what you're buying, compares it to what prices they can get for you, then they'll send you an estimate of the price savings.

It's completely voluntary and non-exclusive. If they find that their contract does not yield savings for you, we'll let you know. If we became partners with WSA, WSA would announce the partnership to its members, FSP would send out a mailing, and if programs are interested in a quote, they will proceed. In California, the CHSA gets 2% of annual revenue, about \$20k/year.

How do we get in contact with you? Does it have to be a group thing?

We don't have a partnership agreement yet, but she will track contacts with association members. Contact info is kfargo@foodsourceplus.com, 805-705-2003. Website: <http://www.foodsourceplus.com/FSPN/>

Joel – This will be further discussed at the board meeting in October, and hopefully we can put together a partnership

Head Start Reauthorization

The Head Start Reauthorization bill will probably move in October, possibly November. There is a big meeting on Friday with Democrats and Republicans to talk over the more controversial items, including policy councils, state advisory councils, voter registration, and 130%.

There's a lot of opposition on the House side from Republicans about voter registration.

We have been hearing some positive things about the policy council governance issue – a letter in support of PC's received 91 signatures of House members.

On the 130% issue, the House members aren't enthusiastic about raising the level, though there is strong support on the Senate side.

There are big differences on the state advisory councils as well. The senate proposal is huge, \$100 million out of the Head Start budget to support state early learning advisory councils.

There are some rumors that Congress will walk away completely from HS reauthorization due to the policy council issue. If this happens, which is unlikely, we would continue under current rules.

In the next couple of weeks, even before Friday, it would be good to get in touch with Catherine in Sen. Murray's office.

The other issue out there is No Child Left Behind. The Senate is interested in getting HS Reauthorization out of the way so they can get moving on NCLB.

WSA Fall Meeting & WSTC Management/HR Training

WSA Fall Meeting is October 10-12 at the Wenatchee Red Lion. Deadline for registration is 9/27, and it's jam packed with quality training, high-profile speakers, advocacy information and opportunities to network with representatives from other programs. Contact Katy@wsaheadstarteceap.com for registration and updated agenda.

Don't forget to bring your Dollar Per Child raffle donations!

The day before the WSA fall meeting we're having a WSTC Management/HR training, 9am-4pm at the Red Lion Wenatchee. Contact Katy for registration form.

State Issues

Joel has been meeting with lots of legislators. Yesterday he met with Sen. McAuliffe, to discuss our advocacy goals and her legislative priorities. There is interest in ECEAP slots. There is a game going on revolving around governor saying she can't spend any money in this election year. There will be a surplus, but they may not want to spend significant amounts. People were very receptive

to the facilities issue so we're going to talk to the capital budget people. Director comments on the quality/facilities/slots issue were sent on to the Governor's office, Rep, Kagie, DEL and others. There was interest in the professional development piece to pay for ECEAP and HS teachers, and we'll be meeting with aides to think through that issue.

The Speaker of the House is very supportive of increasing the vendor rate, so that may be included more prominently in our legislative agenda.

With respect to facilities, we may need to know from programs what that would look like – money to lease space, building improvements or expansion, etc. and how much will it cost. Within the next couple of weeks we will need to put dollar amounts next to our advocacy goals.

We will need to tweak and prioritize our advocacy goals before the October meeting.

Other Questions

Has there been any further discussion of the regulation that eliminates in-kind for parent transportation?

Joel has discussed this with committee staff on the hill and Kennedy and Murray staff. He has asked that they include that in the reauthorization legislation, and he will remind them. If people could email Joel telling how this affects their program specifically, that would help as he follows up with them.

Any word on Channel Wilkins' replacement?

The new person is Patricia Brown, who may have accepted the position somewhat reluctantly. We haven't heard negative feedback on her yet. The bigger issue may be who they put in Wade Horn's spot, which is more political.