

LIVE UNITED

United
Way



United Way of
Southeast Louisiana

PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE 2015 LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY AGENDA

Approved by Women's Leadership Council - March 5, 2015

Approved by Public Policy Committee - March 12, 2015

Approved by Board of Trustees - March 25, 2015

The Louisiana Legislature convenes at noon on Monday, April 13, 2015 with its final adjournment no later than 6:00 p.m. on June 11, 2015.

Our Legislative Agenda is based on the findings of our Community Impact's Big Issues for 2015 and reaffirms positions previously taken in the 2014 State Legislative Session.

BIG ISSUE AS ENDORSED BY UWSELA - ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The Governor's Executive Budget becomes House Bill #1, and then it goes through the entire legislative process, which begins April 13th and continues through June 11th.

EDUCATION

There is a \$1.6 billion deficit in the coming fiscal year, from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. The Governor had announced he would propose cutting some of the refundable tax credits to close the budget gap. Early care and education stakeholders advocated to ensure that the School Readiness Tax Credits refundable tax credits would not be affected.

The Governor's Executive Budget contains the following (please note that all this could be changed by the Legislature before it is final):

- It does NOT cut the School Readiness Tax Credits.
- It does NOT cut LA 4 funding, sustaining it at \$75.6 million, but it does change the source of the funds. Currently, the funding is approximately half State General Funds and half TANF Block Grant funds. The Executive Budget has almost the entire amount, all but \$8 million, from TANF funds. These TANF Funds were taken from the Department of Children and Family Service's budget.
- There is a very small reduction in the funding for the Nonpublic Schools Early Childhood Development Program (NSCED), a pre-k program for 4-year-olds in non-public schools and child care centers, from \$7.38 million to \$6.9 million, which is all State General Funds.
- It does NOT increase the funding for the Child Care Assistance Program, which has been cut by 58% over five years.

It does complete the move of the Child Care and Development Fund Block Grant from the Department of Children and Family Services to the Department of Education, as mandated by Act 3 of the 2012 Legislative Session.

For more information:

- The Division of Administration has posted a PowerPoint on the Executive Budget and the Executive Budget itself on its website.
- Bobby Jindal's budget proposal reveals spending, cuts planned for Louisiana (The Advocate)
- Bobby Jindal's state budget proposal: special interest groups react (NOLA.com)
- Thanks, Bobby Jindal, for not cutting preschool -- but we still need more money, critic says (NOLA.com)
- VIEW THE EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICY BLUEPRINT
- PLEASE VISIT OUR EARLY CHILDHOOD LIBRARY FOR THE LATEST RESOURCES AND STANDARDS.

We are seeking \$80 million in funding for the Implementation of ACT 3!

We will also advocate to maintain School Readiness Tax Credits!

We will Continue to Support Common Core!

Louisiana will soon be headed for a review of its education standards. Reviewing our standards is nothing new. In fact, it is required by law to be done by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education every seven years to ensure that our standards are as rigorous as they need to be to provide our kids with the best education possible.

We support a thoughtful, objective, and expert-driven review of our current standards, and we do not look at that review as a retreat from our goal of maintaining high expectations for our kids—expectations that they will surely meet and that will put them on a path towards a college or career of their choosing.

INCOME

UWSELA is interested in expanding the Louisiana's EITC. We understand the gravity of the current budget situation, but also would note that Louisiana's state EITC is the lowest in the country among the states that have such a credit. Expanding it would put money in the pockets of low-income families in every town, city and parish in Louisiana and lift children out of poverty. Currently the Executive Budget HB1 maintains funding for EITC.

We are committed to working with our legislators and the administration to find a substantial way to pay for increasing this credit. Attached is the following background information:

1. The original 2007 law creating the state EITC.
2. An overview of the state EITC, what it does and who it helps.
3. A one-pager that shows how the state EITC affects the overall distribution of the tax burden.
4. A fact sheet from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities that explains how the federal EITC helps Louisiana.

EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN

Continue to support legislation for equal pay for equal work.

MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

Continue to support a state minimum wage of \$9.00.

HEALTH

WHOLE CHILD HEALTH INITIATIVE

The Department of Education, the Department of Health and Hospitals, and the Bayou Health contracted providers shall collaborate to develop a plan that would result in all children funded through public education dollars to receive preventative health screenings in the school (unless results are documented as already complete by an outside provider and on file at the school) on an annual basis, guided by the American Academy of Pediatrics EPSDT Periodicity Table. All health needs identified through screenings or otherwise identified social/emotional, mental health, or physical health issues will be addressed in the Response to Intervention Structure within the school. Five pilots will be established to develop a comprehensive model for replication. A joint report will be submitted back to the legislature regarding the outcome and success of this collaboration quarterly, including issuance of a final report.

LOUISIANA CANCER TREATMENT ALTERNATIVE INFORMED CONSENT ACT

Maintain state funding to support breast cancer and cervical cancer treatment programming.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Legislation will be introduced in 2015 which has been reviewed by the Domestic Violence (DV) Prevention Commission Report and although they cannot endorse legislation UWSELA recommends support of the following:

- Address a local court's use of a 16-week program in domestic violence cases.
- Amendment of the immediate divorce law to: (1) allow recovery of costs and fees from an abusive spouse: and (2) clarify that an immediate divorce is available to any abused spouse under art. 103, effective August 1, 2014, even if the physical or sexual abuse or the issuance of a protective order occurred before August 1, 2014.
- Amendment to the exemplary damages law to allow recovery of punitive damages for any qualifying mental or physical injury caused by an abusive spouse during the marriage as long as the victim spouse was divorced after August 1, 2014. interspousal immunity precludes any tort action against a spouse during the marriage. As tort action can only be brought within 1 year following divorce.
- UWSELA also plans to address a misdemeanor conviction of stalking as a means to prevent possession of a firearm and we are also working to determine how we will seize and store firearms on the scene of a DV incident.
- UWSELA also plans to advocate for stricter penalties for violation of a protective order and to make certain that all "intimate" partners are granted the protections and services offered those who cohabitate.
- Legislation will be introduced in the Senate to address Fair Housing language to protect victims of DV. Senator Sharon Weston Broome will sponsor a bill to address DV Housing Issues as it pertains to victims of DV. The DV Prevention Commission has been provided a full presentation on this issue pertaining to Fair Housing issues and we want to support legislation that would prevent the eviction of victims of DV after calling 911 following a DV incident.

OTHER ISSUES

JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM

Mr. Josh Perry will be given an opportunity to present to the Public Policy Committee bills pertaining to Juvenile Justice reform. To build the juvenile justice system that our children and communities deserve...a system that is fair, safe, and effective at helping children to develop in positive ways. By 2018, we should be closer to a transformed justice system that directs high-quality services to children in their homes and communities; protect on the rights and dignity of every child; and reject failed strategies of over-incarceration that waste children's lives and countless public dollars with no public safety pay-off.

LOUISIANA SENTENCING COMMISSION

A New Orleans businessman, Pres Kabacoff requests the state legislature to look for ways to reduce state spending, in the state that is "the most incarcerating in the nation," starting with reducing the percentage of the state budget currently allocated to the Department of Corrections to house prisoners. Other business and civic leaders in New Orleans have followed suit and have created a Smart on Crime program who's goal is to reduce the state's prison population and recidivism and consequently their bloated incarceration budgets. Mr. Kabacoff has been invited to present their 2015 Legislative Agenda to the Public Policy Committee for approval.

REVENUE

Charmaine and Kim are working closely with Rep. Helena Moreno in Appropriations to ensure we examine any/all alternative state funding such as Casino, Lottery and Race Track gaming revenue.

UWSELA recommends support of a cigarette tax should one be forthcoming.

MEDICAID

SB 10 has been pre-filed to provide Louisiana citizens a vote on whether to expand Medicaid.