

# United Way of Southeast Louisiana Public Policy Committee 2014 Legislative Session Wrap-Up



History was made this Legislative Session with several bills signed into Louisiana law aimed at stopping domestic violence. These bills make up the most aggressive package ever introduced and passed by the state legislature to address the issue.

The Board of Trustees for United Way of Southeast Louisiana (UWSELA) Public Policy Committee put a stake in the ground around some key issues people care about. UWSELA supported bills that would create significant changes to laws on domestic violence, pay-day 'predatory' lending, equal pay for women, education, and more.

We would like to thank our Legislative Champions during this Regular Session: Rep. Helena Moreno, Sen. J.P. Morrell and everyone who assisted in making this Session a huge success!

Information on all bills can be found at the Louisiana State Legislature's website:  
<http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/BillSearch.aspx?sid=last>

# STATE

## Domestic Violence

**ACT 194 - HB 747 by Representative Helena Moreno - CRIME/BATTERY:** Provides relative to domestic abuse battery and other offenses involving domestic abuse. *Signed by the Governor.*

**ACT 317 - HB 750 by Representative Helena Moreno - FAMILY VIOLENCE:** Provides relative to restraining orders, protective orders, and injunctions issued in conjunction with domestic abuse cases. *Signed by the Governor.*

**ACT 195 - HB 753 by Representative Helena Moreno - FAMILY VIOLENCE:** Provides relative to the possession of firearms as it relates to persons convicted of domestic abuse battery or subject to a protective order. *Signed by the Governor.*



**HCR 197** designates the Act that originated as HB 753 as the **Susan "Pixie" Gouaux Act**. A lifelong resident of Louisiana, Susan Gouaux, known to her friends and family as "Pixie", she was a loving and devoted wife, mother, and grandmother. *Signed by the Governor*

**ACT 315 - SB 291 by Senator J.P. Morrell - CIVIL PROCEDURE:** Authorizes exemplary damages in certain law suits arising from domestic abuse. *Signed by the Governor.*

**ACT 316 - SB 292 by Senator J.P. Morrell - DIVORCE:** Provides relative to divorce proceedings. This bill eliminates the waiting period for divorce and a minimum 180 day spousal support. *Signed by the Governor.*

### **RELATED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BILLS**

The following bills were not part of United Way's original legislative package but had our support:

**ACT 663 - HB 1052 by Representative Helena Moreno - FAMILY VIOLENCE:** Creates the Domestic Violence Prevention Commission. This Commission will assess the state's resources and needs for preventing domestic abuse and recommend legislation and other measures to fill the gaps. *Sent to Governor.*

**ACT 318 - HB 1142 by Representative Roy Burrell - CRIMINAL/BAIL:** Provides relative to bail restrictions for offenses against a family or household member or dating partner. Now called Gwen's Law, it's named after Gwen Salley of Caddo Parish. In April, her husband spent less than 24 hours in jail for a domestic violence incident after posting bond. Forty-eight hours later, he shot and killed Gwen. *Sent to Governor.*

## Education

The United Way of Southeast Louisiana was pleased to work in partnership with the Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families, Education's Next horizon, Council for a Better Louisiana (CABL), Louisiana Association of Business and Industry (LABI) and Stand for Children.



**HCR 61 by Representative Walt Leger, III – EDUCATION/FINANCE:  
*Creation of a Model for Early Childhood Care and Education Funding***

HCR 61 urges and requests the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop a statewide model for the funding of, and the equitable distribution of, public funds for quality early childhood care and education for Louisiana children, ages birth to five, and to submit a report with recommendations to the legislature no later than sixty days prior to the 2015 Session. **Sent to Secretary of State.**

**ACT 868 - SB 524 by Senator Mike Walsworth – EARLY CHILDHOOD ED: *Transfer of Licensure and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Block Grant from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to the Department of Education (LDE)*** - This bill moves responsibility for the licensure of child care centers and registration of family child day care homes from DCFS to LDE. The bill maintains from the law passed in 2013 the creation of three new Types of licensure, Type I (roughly current Class B), Type II (roughly current Class A not taking Child Care Assistance) and Type III (roughly current Class A taking Child Care Assistance and Head Start/Early Head Start programs). It also tightens the state central registry and criminal background check requirements. As originally written, the bill completely deleted the current statute providing for the Advisory Council to DCFS on Child Care and Early Education without restoring it in LDE. The bill also moves the \$80 million federal CCDF Block Grant from DCFS to LDE.

As passed, there are a number of different effective dates for the provisions of the bill. The move of licensure of child care centers to LDE is effective October 1, 2014. The move of registration of family child day care homes is effective February 1, 2015. Finally, the move of the CCDF Block Grant will take place no later than July 1, 2015, with a cooperative endeavor agreement between the two departments, which must be submitted for review to the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget, to determine the specific administration of these funds in the interim.

The advocates were successful in obtaining a number of important amendments to this bill, including an amendment that will allow child care programs that do not have public funds to participate in the new quality rating system; whereas, the original bill restricted the new rating system (and hence possibly the tax credits or other supports) to only publicly funded programs. Given the drastic cuts in the Child Care Assistance Program, many centers are not able to access public funding for their families. In addition, advocates secured a new Advisory Council on Early Childhood Care and Education as CCDF block grant moves to the Department of Education. The new Council will advise the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), and all regulations, standards, the state plan for the CCDF block grant and other matters related to early care and education must be presented to the Council before they are considered by BESE. Furthermore, through an amendment raised by the advocates, the bill now requires in-depth reporting on CCAP participation rates and funding, as well as child care centers' licensing violation history, to be posted on the Department of Education's website.

**ACT 644 - HB 954 BY Representative Walt Leger, III – EDUCATION-PRE-K: *Re-Establishment the Cecil J. Picard LA 4 Early Childhood Program*** - This bill repeals the current LA 4 statute but maintains the current funding structure of LA 4, whereby only school districts can apply to the state for the program. The bill does, however, delete the old formula for determining how much each district will receive, and provides that the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will develop a method for equitably distributing the LA 4 funds based on demand. ***Signed by the Governor.***

As a result of the advocates, the high quality standards of the current LA 4 program will remain in statutory language, including the requirements for certified teachers, a full-day program, low adult to child ratios, as well as statutory requirements for professional development, technical assistance and an on-going evaluation of the program. None of these was included in the original bill, but was left to be defined by regulation. Also through an amendment promoted by the advocates, the requirement that a percentage of any new funding for LA 4 should be spent in community-based settings (diverse delivery) was retained. ***Sent to Governor.***

**ACT 717 - SB 533 by Senator Eric LaFleur – EDUCATION DEPARTMENT: *Provides for a Coordinated Local Enrollment Process for Publicly Funded Early Care and Education Programs*** - As originally written this bill provided for a neutral entity to inform families about all publicly funded early childhood care and education programs in their community, collect family preferences, develop and use a common application process, and make recommendations to the Department of Education for the distribution of the available slots. After amendments, the local enrollment coordinator no longer must be neutral, and the bill now specifically permits the school districts to be the coordinators.

The advocates were successful in obtaining an important set of amendments to ensure that the funding for the new local enrollment coordinators will not be disproportionately taken from the Child Care and Development Fund Block Grant; rather, now under the bill the funding for the Local Coordinators will be proportionately taken from each funding stream based on the number of children enrolled from each program.

In securing the amendments to all three of the above bills, the advocates worked closely with the bills' authors, Representative Walt Leger, Senator Mike Walsworth and Senator Eric LaFleur, as well as the Department of the Education itself, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of them for their support and assistance. ***Signed by the Governor.***

**ACT 780 - SB 657 by Senator Sherri Smith Buffington – FUNDS/FUNDING: *Authorizes Public or Private Entities to Replace State General Funds in the LA 4 Program with "Privately Funded Scholarships"*** - The LA 4 program is currently funded by both State General Funds and funds from the federal TANF Block Grant. This bill provides for replacing the State General Funds (not increasing the overall amount of funds going into the program) by private donations.

The advocates were concerned because \$6 million of the State General Funds in the LA 4 Program actually serve as state match for the \$80 million federal Child Care Development Fund Block Grant. The advocates were successful in securing an amendment to the bill that specifically mandates that nothing in such a transaction will be implemented in a way that will cause the loss of any federal or other funding for any early childhood programs or services including the Child Care and Development Fund.

**ACT 787 - HB 249 by Representative Ed Price – CHILDREN/CARE: *Provides for Improving Access to Child Care for Homeless Families*** - The bill seeks to address eligibility factors for Child Care Assistance that may be a barrier for homeless families trying to access child care. It requires a defined grace period for a homeless family to be authorized to receive child care assistance pending submission of birth certificates and immunization

records. It also provides that the state shall waive work and school requirements, for a period of not less than ninety days and not more than one hundred eighty days, for homeless families who demonstrate that they are seeking employment or participating in a transitional living program. **Sent to Governor.**

**SCR 55 by Senator Conrad Appel – BESE:** Provides for legislative approval of the minimum foundation program formula for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. This resolution that provides for the \$3.6 billion spending plan submitted by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for public schools for the upcoming fiscal year. The MFP resolution, SCR55 PASSED the House and will be enrolled. This is the first MFP to pass since 2011. **Sent to the Secretary of State.**

**ACT 134 - SB 85 by Senator Edwin R. Murray - FAMILY LAW:** Provides for consideration of certain child care expenses for purposes of child support when the expenses are incurred by a parent receiving job training or education. It allows the definition of child care costs to include the reasonable child care expenses incurred by either parent while receiving job training or education necessary to obtain employment or enhance earning potential when calculating the basic child support obligation. **Signed by the Governor.**

**ACT 15 - HB 1 by Representative James R. Fannin - APPROPRIATIONS:** Provides for the ordinary operating expenses of state government for fiscal Year 2014-2015. The state budget PASSED the House and is on its way to the Governor. **There are NO concerns with language or funding in the bill for the K12 education reform community. The Legislature approved the budget and it may be viewed here:** [http://lfo.louisiana.gov/files/publications/HB%201%20Reengrossed\\_SFC\\_LFO.pdf?mc\\_cid=ea50fcd6a3&mc\\_eid=e186ead36a](http://lfo.louisiana.gov/files/publications/HB%201%20Reengrossed_SFC_LFO.pdf?mc_cid=ea50fcd6a3&mc_eid=e186ead36a) **Signed by the Governor.**

## Higher Education Bills

Nearly every attack on school choice, accountability, Common Core State Standards, and even targeted attacks on members of BESE were defeated. THANK YOU for your work on behalf of kids in Louisiana!

**SB 122 by Senator Dan Morrish – ETHICS:** Provides an exception to the Code of Governmental Ethics regarding certain contractual or other relationships by certain municipal elected officials. **This bill was REJECTED** by the House when the conference committee report came back, even though it did remove the problematic language added to the bill by Rep. Geymann on the House floor that would have imposed stringent **new conflict of interest provisions on BESE members and the State Superintendent** during their term and for a period of two years after their term. **We OPPOSED this bill.**



**ACT 853 - SB 61 by Senator Nevers - EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY:** Provides for the Louisiana Public School Choice Act. **This bill is SUPPORTED by advocacy groups for school choice.** The bill was ADOPTED by both the House and Senate and is now on its way to the Governor's desk. The conference committee report removed troublesome language added on the House floor and the final version is a strong bill that gives new options to students in failing schools. You can read the final bill here. **Signed by the Governor.**

**HB 953 by Rep. Walt Leger III – STUDENT/STANDARDS:** Provides for the collection, sharing, and use of student assessment results and information by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. **This Bill was CONCURRED by the House** and is awaiting action by the Governor. The bill was OPPOSED by some advocacy groups because it would **delay the impact of Common Core and PARCC testing on school and teacher accountability** until 2016-17. There have been initial media reports that the Governor may veto this bill. ***Vetoed by the Governor.***

## Income

United Way of Southeast Louisiana was pleased to work in partnership with the Louisiana Budget Project (LBP). Efforts to reform payday lending, a sometimes usurious business that often preys upon our most vulnerable, fell by the wayside under the crush of a concentrated industry lobby. Several bills that would have raised Louisiana's minimum wage above the federal minimum of \$7.25 per hour failed to get out of committees in the House and Senate. Equal Pay efforts were more successful during the session and advanced through the process.



**ACT 702 - SB 322 by Senator Edwin R. Murray - EMPLOYMENT:** Provides relative to the "Equal Pay for Women Act". ***Signed by the Governor.***

**ACT 636 - HB 766 by Representative Erich Ponti - FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS:** Provides relative to consumer credit transactions. ***Signed by the Governor.***

**ACT 293 - SB 241 by Senator Francis C. Thompson - CREDIT:** Provides relative to the Louisiana Consumer Credit Law. ***Signed by the Governor.***

## Health

Multiple efforts to put Medicaid Expansion to a vote this fall in the form of a constitutional amendment failed. Click here to view the nonpartisan [Congressional Budget Office](#) (CBO) report on the Affordable Act indicating what the program would cost states.

**House Bill 1256 by Representative Joe Harrison - GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION: *Sought to Combine the Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Health and Hospitals - FAILED.*** This legislation did not attempt to improve operations but simply to merge the two departments. The bill was not supported by the agencies themselves, and advocates feared it could have made access to services even more difficult for some of the state's most vulnerable families. A coalition of advocacy organizations was successful in defeating the bill.

**SB 107 by Senator Ben Nevers - MEDICAID:** Provides for the Louisiana Health Care Independence Act. ***Signed by the Governor.*** Substitute adopted on the Senate floor and became SB 682.

**ACT 783 - SB 682 by Senator Ben Nevers - HEALTH CARE:** Provides for the Louisiana First America Next Freedom and Empowerment Plan. ***Signed by the Governor.***

## FEDERAL



### United Way Worldwide – Community Leaders Conference

The United Way of Southeast Louisiana staff and Public Policy Committee members participated in the **2014 United Way Community Leaders Conference (CLC)** in Washington, D.C. This conference provided us the opportunity to meet as a team to share with our Congressional Leaders our Public Policy agenda including education, income, health, and 2-1-1.

The UWSELA Public Policy Committee and Adams and Reese LLC hosted a **VIP Welcome Reception** on May 13th in the law offices of Adams and Reese in Washington during the CLC and over 35 United Way representatives and Congressional Leaders attended.

On May 14th, the UWSELA Public Policy Committee hosted a **“Hill Day” Luncheon** at the Capitol Visitor Center which afforded us the opportunity to share personally with U.S. Senators Mary Landrieu and David Vitter and other Chiefs of Staff our Public Policy Agenda including Education, Income, Health and 2-1-1.

#### CLC Participants included:

**Public Policy Committee Members:** Norma Grace, Charles Rice, Kim Sport, Yvonne Vonderhaar and Carol Wise.

**UWSELA Staff:** Michael Williamson, Charmaine Caccioppi, Jamene Dahmer, Beth Terry, Todd Battiste and Melisse Meza.

