



# The Family Investment Coalition

*Utah's Economy--It Starts with People*

## ISSUE UPDATES

### Budget/Tax

The Citizens for Tax Justice released a state by state analysis of the Bush Tax Cuts after Ten years. Ten years ago, on June 7, 2001, President George W. Bush signed into law the first of several tax cuts that drove the balanced budget he inherited from President Clinton deep into the red. Last year, Congressional supporters of Bush's policies pushed through an extension of these tax cuts through the end of 2012. Many lawmakers want to extend the Bush tax cuts again into 2013 and beyond, which would almost double the federal budget deficit while 47.2 percent of the benefits would go to the richest five percent of the nation's taxpayers... [Read More](#).

See the Utah's fact sheet [HERE](#).

### Health

The Utah Department of Health has released the much anticipated Medicaid "waiver" proposal, a critical step in a multi-year process to modernize the way Medicaid services are paid for and delivered in Utah by organizing providers into accountable care organizations. ACOs are groups of health care providers who agree to be held accountable for improving health care quality while lowering health care expenditures. While Medicaid ACOs are not required to look like Medicare ACOs, they should at least look like ACOs. Nothing in Utah's waiver does anything like this. In fact, the "accountability" appears to be placed squarely on the beneficiary in terms of increased cost sharing, penalties for noncompliance (i.e. Disenrollment from the ACO) and drawing clients into private insurance via the subsidies. Moreover, nothing in the waiver seems to acknowledge the need for certain services, like care coordination, health education, transportation, etc., as necessities to help patients comply with care recommendations. Stakeholders, legislators, and members of the public have until June 20 to comment on the waiver before it goes forward to CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services), the federal agency that oversees requests for waivers of federal Medicaid regulations. On make-or-break issues like cost sharing, access to medically necessary services, quality standards, and others, the proposal fails to reflect the input from stakeholders, much less the lessons from other Medicaid waivers.

To read Utah Health Policy Project's news release of the Medicaid Waiver proposal click [HERE](#).

-For more information contact Shanie Scott of Utah Health Policy Project at [shanie@healthpolicyproject.org](mailto:shanie@healthpolicyproject.org).

### Housing/Utilities

In response to Utah's two Senators vote to eliminate the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Utah's advocates for affordable housing are expressing their disappointment by asking organizations to sign-on to a letter asking Senator Lee and Hatch to attend a town hall meeting on affordable housing. It will be a forum to discuss their decisions to vote for the elimination of HUD and to explain their visions for safe, affordable and decent homes for all Utahns. See the letter [HERE](#) and please consider lending your support. Deadline for organizations to sign on is Thursday, June 23rd, 2011.

For more information contact Drew Martinez of Community Action Partnership of Utah at [drew@caputah.org](mailto:drew@caputah.org)

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## **Education**

On May 25, 2011, U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius held a joint briefing to announce the creation of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, a \$500 million fund created from the fiscal year 2011 omnibus appropriations bill (PL 112-10). This fund will help states give our nation's most vulnerable children the opportunities they need to succeed in life. Based upon the Administration's requests in fiscal years 2009-2012 for an Early Learning Challenge Fund, the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge is a competitive grant program that will allow states to design, improve, and implement cross-sector integrated systems of early learning and development that will increase the number of low-income and disadvantaged children participating in high quality early childhood programs.

Karen Crompton, Executive Director of Voices for Utah Children, a nonpartisan child advocacy organization, released the following statement:

"We are very grateful to Congress, the Obama Administration, and the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services for this joint and critical program. Today's ground-breaking announcement is a validation of what so many policymakers, advocates, policy experts, business leaders, economic experts, and criminal justice officials have been advocating for many years."

To read the full Press Release click [HERE](#).

For more information contact Karen Crompton of Voices for Utah Children at [karen@utahchildren.org](mailto:karen@utahchildren.org).

## **Food Security**

According to a USA Today article on Utahns Against Hunger's website the House Committee on Appropriations has proposed dramatic cuts to several federal nutrition programs that would eliminate nutrition assistance for hundreds of thousands of low-income seniors, women, infants, and children and cut support for charitable food assistance by over 20%.

The proposed cuts are staggering. It is not an overstatement to say that the House bill would make it harder for millions of low-income Americans to get enough to eat – Americans who are already struggling just to get by from day to day. These proposed cuts are indefensible. There is no other word for it.

[Read more.](#)

For more information contact Gina Cornia of Utahns Against Hunger at [cornia@uah.org](mailto:cornia@uah.org).

## **Disability**

The beginning of May disability advocates celebrated the Governor's signing of HB 230. People with intellectual disabilities from across the state joined advocates, parents, and participants in Special Olympics to celebrate the ceremonial signing of HB230 by Governor Herbert on May 9th. HB230, sponsored by Representative Ray (R - Clearfield) and Senator Hillyard (R - Logan) replaces the words "mental retardation" with "intellectual disability" in all Utah State Code. Twenty other states as well as the federal government have passed similar legislation.

The terms "mental retardation" or "mentally retarded" were originally medical terms; however, the pejorative forms, "retard" and "retarded" have been used widely in today's society to degrade and insult people with intellectual disabilities. Additionally, when the words "retard" and "retarded" are used as synonyms for "dumb" or "stupid" it only reinforces painful stereotypes of people with intellectual disabilities being less valued members of humanity. [Read more.](#)

For more information contact Andrew Riggle of the Disability Law Center at

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### **Asset Development**

During the 2010 tax-year the Earn it. Keep it. Save it. (EIKISI) coalition through efforts of the seven regional coalitions prepared more than 16 thousand individual tax returns for household with an income limit below \$49,000. Refunds distributed to these low-to moderate-income families totaled \$23.5 million, of which nearly \$8 million was from the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

For more information contact Melissa Jensen of Community Action Partnership of Utah at [mjensen@caputah.org](mailto:mjensen@caputah.org)

### **Workforce Development/Child Care**

New Economic Research Backs Overwhelming Public Support for Minimum Wage Increases to Help Rebuild Economy

WASHINGTON, DC – An increase in the minimum wage could help bolster the sluggish economic recovery, according to two new, groundbreaking studies. Presented June 7, 2011 by the authors on a panel hosted by the National Employment Law Project and the Center for American Progress, the studies consolidate 15 years of research showing that increasing the minimum wage boosts incomes without slowing job creation, even during weak economic periods.

“Raising the minimum wage can help our economy recover while helping the millions of Americans struggling to make ends meet in low-wage jobs. This groundbreaking research shows that boosting wages for our country’s health aides, waitresses and security guards will help families and the economy,” said Paul Sonn, Legal Co-Director of the National Employment Law Project. [Read more.](#)

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