



FFIS WEEKLY UPDATE – February 23, 2010

GENERAL

Senate Moves Forward on Jobs Package

On February 22, 2010, the Senate agreed to a procedural vote that will allow a final vote on the Senate's version of the jobs bill later this week. The Senate bill includes four items: a payroll tax holiday for job retention; a small business expensing provision; extension of the Build America Bonds program; and an extension of federal surface transportation programs through December 31, 2010, along with an infusion of \$20 billion from the general fund into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) that credits back interest earned from HTF revenues and reverses last year's \$8.7 billion rescission of state contract authority, but does not increase obligation limits to spend it. The House passed a more comprehensive jobs package in December that included an extension of the ARRA FMAPs and a \$23 billion "Education Jobs Fund." It remains unclear whether the House will approve the Senate-passed bill or amend it, which would then require the Senate to take it up again.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

1) President Releases Health Care Reform Proposal

On February 22, 2010, the president released his proposal for comprehensive health care reform legislation, which is based on the Senate-passed bill (H.R. 3590), with several modifications. Specifically, the proposal would expand Medicaid up to 133% of the federal poverty level. The federal government would fully fund the cost of services for the expansion population from 2014 through 2017. In 2018 and 2019, the federal government would pay 95% of the cost and in 2020, and thereafter, it would pay 90%. The legislative text of the proposal is not available so many details remain unclear. For a summary of the proposal, see: www.whitehouse.gov/health-care-meeting/proposal

2) CMS Issues Guidance on Medicaid MIPPA Provisions

On February 18, 2010, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a letter to state Medicaid directors containing guidance on the implementation of certain Medicaid provisions of the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (MIPPA; P.L. 110-275). Many of the provisions are intended to remove barriers to applications for the Medicare Part D Low-Income Subsidy and the Medicare Savings Program. To view the letter, go to: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/smdl/downloads/SMD10003.PDF>

3) HHS Awards Children's Health Grants to States

On February 22, 2010, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) awarded \$100 million to 10 states to improve health care quality and delivery systems for children enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The funding was included as part of the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA). A list of the awards can be found at: <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/02/20100222a.html>

4) SSA Expands List of Qualifying Conditions

The Social Security Administration (SSA) recently announced that it would add 38 additional conditions to its list of Compassionate Allowances. The Compassionate Allowances initiative allows SSA to identify diseases and other medical conditions that clearly qualify for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability benefits. SSA then uses expedited procedures to process these applications. Additional information about the announcement is available at: <http://www.ssa.gov/pressoffice/pr/cal021110-pr.html>

5) ACF Releases FY 2008 TANF Work Participation Rates

On February 17, 2010, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) released state tables on FY 2008 TANF work participation rates. To view the information, see: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/particip/indexparticip.htm>

6) ACF Issues Guidance on Head Start Funding

On February 17, 2010, ACF issued a program instruction (ACF-PI-HS-10-01) on the FY 2010 funding increase for Head Start. To view the guidance, see: http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/Pis/2010/resour_pri_001_021710.html

HOUSING

President Announces Plan to Direct TARP Funding to Homeowners

On February 19, 2010, the president announced a plan to direct \$1.5 billion in TARP funds to five states hit hardest by the housing crisis. The states are California, Nevada, Arizona, Michigan, and Florida. The funds will be allocated by formula to eligible states and will be administered through each state's housing finance agency. The funds will be used for mitigation strategies ranging from direct mortgage relief for at-risk homeowners to broader initiatives such as home-buying programs to strengthen local housing markets. For more information, see: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/president-obama-announces-help-hardest-hit-housing-markets>

LABOR

1) DOL Releases Guidance on Contracting Strategies for Youth Employment

On February 16, 2010, the Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) released a Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) for states, workforce investment boards, and youth service providers on contracting strategies that facilitate service providers to serve the youth most in need, while still achieving performance goals. To view the guidance, go to: http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?docn=2854

2) DOL Releases Guidance on Subsidized Work-based Training

On January 29, 2010, DOL issued joint guidance through ETA and the Wage and Hour Division for states considering implementation of subsidized work-based training initiatives for unemployed workers. To view the guidance, go to: http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?docn=2852

TRANSPORTATION

1) FHWA Releases Apportionment of FY 2010 Highway Infrastructure Funds

On February 19, 2010, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) released a notice (N 4510.719) that provides the state-by-state distribution of the \$650 million in Highway Infrastructure funds appropriated in FY 2010. To view this notice, see: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/directives/notices/n4510719.htm>

2) FHWA Releases Information on Proposed Jobs Bill of 2010

On February 19, 2010, FHWA released question and answers regarding the proposed Jobs Bill of 2010. To view the information, go to: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/economicrecovery/qandasjb2010.htm>

ARRA:

AGRICULTURE

1) February 19, 2010: USDA Announces Water System Improvement Projects in 19 States

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) will use ARRA funding to finance 47 projects designed to protect public health by improving water quality and public sanitation services in 19 states. For a list of awards, see:

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/s.7.0.A/7.0.1RD?printable=true&contentidonly=true&contentid=2010/02/0075.xml>

2) February 19, 2010: USDA Announces Funding for Community Facilities

USDA announced an additional \$14 million in loan and grant funding under ARRA for facilities in 40 rural communities across 12 states. Click here for additional details:

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/s.7.0.A/7.0.1RD?printable=true&contentidonly=true&contentid=2010/02/0074.xml>

3) February 18, 2010: USDA Announces Assistance for Flood Control Structures and Watershed Projects

USDA announced it will provide \$9.4 million in ARRA funding to five states to repair flood control structures, improve water quality, increase water supply, decrease soil erosion, and improve fish and wildlife habitat. For more information, click here:

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/s.7.0.A/7.0.1RD?printable=true&contentidonly=true&contentid=2010/02/0069.xml>

COMMERCE

February 18, 2010: Commerce Announces Investments to Expand Broadband Internet Access

The Department of Commerce announced ARRA grants to increase broadband access and adoption in 10 states, totaling \$357 million. For more information, see:

http://www.commerce.gov/NewsRoom/PressReleases_FactSheets/PROD01_008930

On February 17, 2010, Commerce also announced \$277 million in broadband investments in nine states. For that information, click here:

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/s.7.0.A/7.0.1RD?printable=true&contentidonly=true&contentid=2010/02/0068.xml>

ENERGY

February 19, 2010: DOE Announces \$8 Million to Support Local Energy Assurance Planning Initiatives

The Department of Energy (DOE) announced the award of more than \$8 million in ARRA grants to 43 cities and towns across the country. The awarded funds will be used to develop or expand local energy assurance plans, intended to improve electricity reliability and energy security in these communities. Follow this link for additional details:

<http://www.energy.gov/news/8672.htm>

TRANSPORTATION

February 17, 2010: DOT Announces TIGER Grants

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) awarded \$1.5 billion in discretionary grants to fund 51 projects in 41 states under the ARRA's Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program. For more information, go to:

<http://www.dot.gov/documents/finaltigergrantinfo.pdf>

3) February 5, 2010: HHS Awards \$119 Million to States for Prevention and Wellness Initiatives

HHS awarded ARRA funds to states and territories to support public health efforts to reduce obesity, increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and decrease smoking. More information is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/recovery/>

To view the awards by state, go to:

http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/recovery/docs/State_prevention_and_wellness_ARRA_awards_fact_sheet.pdf

4) February 2, 2010: HHS Publishes ARRA Adjustments to FMAPs

HHS published in the *Federal Register* the adjusted Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) rates for the first quarter of FY 2010. To view the notice, see:

<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-2177.pdf>

5) February 4, 2010: ACF Guidance on Make Work Pay Tax Credit Disregard for TANF

ACF posted a new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program Instruction advising jurisdictions they must disregard the Making Work Pay tax credit as income and as a resource in the month of receipt and the two following months. Jurisdictions may choose to disregard the tax credit for a longer period, e.g. 12 months, and may take a similar approach for other refundable tax credits and tax refunds to increase administrative simplicity. The complete guidance can be found at:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/policy/pi-ofa/2010/pi201002.htm>

HOMELAND SECURITY

February 3, 2010: DHS Announces \$23 Million Fire Station Construction Grants

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced an additional \$23 million in Fire Station Construction Grants (SCG) funded by ARRA. For more information, see:

http://www.dhs.gov/ynews/releases/pr_1265124355731.shtm

LABOR

January 29, 2010: Update on the Status of States in Regard to UI Incentive Payments

The Department of Labor released a Training and Employment Notice on the status of states in applying for and receiving unemployment insurance (UI) modernization incentive payments. As of the date of the notice, 32 states had received \$2.8 billion in incentive payments. Another \$4.2 billion remains available to states that apply for the payments and meet the requirements. To view the notice, go to: http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?docn=2851

NUTRITION

February 16, 2010: Resources for States New to the Commodity Supplemental Food Program

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) has provided 2010 CSFP training resources for new state staff, including links to powerpoint presentations and excel spreadsheets to assist new states in the CSFP Program. For more information, go to:

http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/csfp/csfp_training_for_new_state_staff.htm

February 8, 2010: CSFP FAQ's Updated

FNS has updated its list of Frequently Asked Questions for CSFP. The updated list can be viewed at: http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/csfp/csfp_faqs.htm

February 5, 2010: CSFP Final Rule Released

FNS issued a final rule in the Federal Register amending the regulations for the CSFP by removing the priority given to women, infants, and children before the elderly in program participation, in accordance with the amendment made by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill). As a result of this amendment, local agencies are no longer required to prioritize benefit issuance based on population group. All CSFP applicants may be treated equally when caseload slots become available, provided all eligibility requirements are met. This rule will become effective on March 8, 2010. To view the notice, go to:

<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-2594.pdf>

February 4, 2010: New FNS School Lunch Program Food Safety Initiative Announced

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced several new initiatives to assure the safety and quality of food purchased by the Department of Agriculture for the National School Lunch Program and other food and nutrition assistance programs. Including among the initiatives is that the FNS will review and evaluate methods currently being used by state agencies to communicate with schools and school districts regarding product recalls. FNS will develop performance criteria for states that allows them to provide rapid communication to schools and school districts. FNS will provide financial assistance to states to allow them to upgrade the speed and accuracy of their food safety messages. For more information, see:

http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/s.7_0_A/7_0_1RD?printable=true&contentidonly=true&contentid=2010/02/0052.xml

February 3, 2010: Income Eligibility Determinations Extended for CFSP and TEFAP

FNS announced a Temporary Extension of the 2009 Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Income Guidelines and Impact on Income Eligibility Determinations for CSFP and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). For more information, see:

http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/csfp/CSFP_TEFAP-Temp_Ext_of_Income_Guidelines.pdf

TRANSPORTATION**1) February 5, 2010: FHWA Releases Notice on Redistribution of ARRA Funds**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) released a notice (N 4510.720) advising states of the redistribution of Highway Infrastructure Investment funds. The unobligated balances will be withdrawn and the redistribution process will begin on March 2, 2010. To view the notice, go to:

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/directives/notices/n4510720.htm>

2) January 28, 2010: ARRA Forest Highway Program

FHWA released guidance on the redistribution of funds under the Forest Highway Program. To view the guidance, go to: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/economicrecovery/fhredistribution.htm>