



FFIS WEEKLY UPDATE – March 16, 2010

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

1) March 10, 2010: Senate Approves Extensions of Tax and Safety-Net Programs

The Senate passed the American Workers, State, and Business Relief Act of 2010 (H.R. 4213), a \$137 billion package that includes a one-year extension of \$31 billion in temporary tax cuts. It also extends unemployment insurance benefits and a 65% subsidy to help jobless workers buy health insurance through COBRA until December 31, 2010. It would extend ARRA's bonus Medicaid funding provisions through June 30, 2011. The Medicaid language carries a new requirement that governors certify within 45 days of enactment that additional funding is needed. The bill would also extend several existing energy tax credits. Some differences, such as revenue raisers to offset some of the bill's provisions, exist between the House and Senate versions of this legislation. House and Senate leaders have not yet determined if the chambers would convene a conference committee to resolve their differences or if the House would simply consider the measure with the Senate's changes.

2) March 15, 2010: Senate Invokes Cloture on HIRE Act

Yesterday, the Senate voted to invoke cloture on the \$17.6 billion Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment (HIRE) Act (H.R. 2847). The HIRE Act includes a \$13 billion tax credit to encourage businesses to hire workers who have been unemployed for at least 60 days, an extension of Build America Bonds used by state and local governments to cut financing costs for infrastructure projects, and an extension of increased expensing limits for small businesses. Under the bill, employers would receive an exemption from Social Security payroll taxes for every worker hired after February 3, 2010, and before January 1, 2011. The bill would also allow an additional \$1,000 income tax credit for every new employee retained for 52 weeks. The bill would expand eligibility for Build America Bonds and extend surface transportation policy through December, provide the Highway Trust Fund \$19.5 billion so it can meet its financial obligations through 2011, and increase the transportation funding baseline from which future legislation is written. A final vote on the legislation is expected soon.

3) March 15, 2010: House Budget Committee Passes Reconciliation Measure

Yesterday, the House Budget Committee approved a reconciliation package that will serve as the vehicle for health reform. The measure now moves to the House Rules Committee, which is expected to couple passage of the Senate health reform bill (H.R. 3590), with reconciliation instructions that would amend the bill. Reports suggest that the House Rules Committee may deem H.R. 3590 passed once the House rule is approved, thus avoiding another vote on H.R. 3590, and sending it to the president for signature. The earliest possible House vote on the reconciliation measure is March 18. If passed, the Senate must still take up the reconciliation measure. Reconciliation bills cannot be filibustered in the Senate, which means a 51-vote majority could pass the bill.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)

February 23, 2010: GAO Releases Report on TANF

The report, issued by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), explores the decline in cash assistance for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF) families since the 1990s as

well as the impact of the recession on TANF caseloads across the states. The full report is available at: <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-10-164>

Report highlights are available at: <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d10164high.pdf>

Related congressional testimony by Kay E. Brown, GAO director of Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues can be found at: <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-10-495T>

LABOR

1) March 15, 2010: DOL Announces \$125 Million for Community-Based Job Training Grants

The Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) announced the availability of \$125 million for competitive Community-Based Job Training Grants (CBJTGs) that will prepare workers for high-growth and emerging industries. Eligible applicants include individual community or technical colleges, state community college systems, and one-stop career centers in partnership with local workforce investment boards. The solicitation can be found at: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-5609.pdf>

2) March 12, 2010: DOL Announces \$67 Million in Grants for Indian Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and Alaska Native Entities

The ETA announced approximately \$67 million in grant funds for the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Indian and Native American Program. Of the \$67 million, approximately \$53 million is available to fund a Comprehensive Service Program for adults. Approximately \$14 million is available for a Supplemental Services Program for youth. The grant solicitation is available at: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-5371.pdf>

3) March 11, 2010: DOL Releases Guidance on Re-Employment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) Grants

The ETA released a Training and Employment Notice (TEN), 31-09, to encourage coordination between the state workforce agencies, state unemployment insurance (UI) agencies (if different), local workforce investment boards, and one-stop career centers when implementing REA programs. Eighteen states have operated a REA initiative since FY 2005, and 16 additional states received funds in FY 2009 to implement a REA. The REA guidance for FY 2010 contains new provisions designed to strengthen the connection to one-stop services for UI claimants served through the program. States receiving REA grants are now required to ensure that connection as a condition of receiving grant funds. To view the guidance, go to: <http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEN/ten2009/ten31-09acc.pdf>

4) March 16, 2010: DOL Requests Comments on Definition of Green Jobs

The DOL's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is requesting comments on a proposed definition of green jobs and the approach BLS plans to use in measuring them. A common definition will assist national policy makers in planning policy initiatives and understanding their impact on the labor market. The comment period is open for 45 days. For a list of BLS proposed green job industries go to: http://www.bls.gov/green/industry_by_inclusion.pdf.

To view a copy of the *Federal Register* announcement go to: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-5705.pdf>

NUTRITION

1) March 9, 2010: Grants Awarded to Five States for Direct Certification for School Meal Programs

Agriculture Secretary Vilsack announced approximately \$1.9 million in grants to five state agencies to increase enrollment in school meal programs through direct certification and verification processes. The grants were awarded to Massachusetts, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Texas. Direct certification allows states and local educational agencies to automatically certify children enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the Temporary Assistance to Needy

Families Program (TANF) for free school meals without the need for household applications. For more information, see: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/PressReleases/2010/0114.htm>

2) Solicitation Posted for Summer Food Program 2010 Demonstration Project Grants

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has posted its solicitation for summer 2010 demonstration project grants through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). These grants will serve as incentive funds to states that have been identified as having high rates of childhood food insecurity and low rates of SFSP participation. For more information, see the solicitation at:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/library/Solicitation.pdf>

ARRA:

COMMERCE

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will unveil the National Broadband Plan at its monthly meeting today and will deliver the plan to Congress. As directed by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, P.L. 111-5), the FCC developed the national strategy to ensure universal access to high-speed Internet technology, increase the availability of broadband technology, and advance national priorities in public safety, health care, energy, education, and civic engagement through broadband usage. To view the plan, go to:

<http://download.broadband.gov/plan/national-broadband-plan.pdf>

EDUCATION

March 12, 2010: ED Releases Updated Guidance for Title I Grants to LEAs

The Department of Education released updated guidance for Title I, Part A ARRA for Grants to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). To view this guidance, click here:

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/guidance/title-i-rev-201003.doc>

ENERGY

1) March 11, 2010: DOE Releases New Job Reporting Guidance

The Department of Energy (DOE) has provided additional guidance to grantees on the methodology for calculating and reporting the jobs created and retained through ARRA. This guidance applies to the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), State Energy Program (SEP), or Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG). Click here to access the guidance:

http://apps1.eere.energy.gov/wip/pdfs/wap10-14_sep10-07_eecbg10-08.pdf

2) March 10, 2010: DOE and Treasury Announce Guidance for Tax Treatment of Smart Grid Investment Grants

DOE and the Department of Treasury announced new guidance on the tax treatment for ARRA funding under the \$3.4 billion Smart Grid Investment Grant program. For more information, click here: <http://www.energy.gov/news/8755.htm>

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)

1) March 15, 2010: HHS Awards an Additional \$162 Million for Health IT

HHS awarded \$162 million in ARRA funds to help states facilitate health information exchange and advance health information technology (IT). Every state has now been awarded funds under this program. For additional information and to view the awards, go to:

<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/03/20100315a.html>

2) March 11, 2010: ACF Releases Title IV-E Guidance on Making Work Pay Tax Credit

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) posted to its website an Information Memorandum (IM 10-01) that provides guidance on the treatment of payment received through the making work pay tax credit, created under ARRA, when determining eligibility for Title IV-E programs.

To view the memorandum, see:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/im/2010/im1001.html

3) March 4, 2010: TANF Emergency Fund Updates

ACF has posted that as of March 4, 2010, a total of \$1.6 billion had been awarded from the ARRA Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF) Emergency Fund. Under the law, expenditures are reimbursable only through September 30, 2010. A list of state TANF Emergency Fund applications that have been approved, which includes the maximum amount each state qualifies for, the amounts awarded to date, and the categories in which states have had increased expenditures, can be found at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/tanf/apprTANFemerfund.html>