

Welfare Watch - February 05, 2009 - Georgia Waits on Budgets from both National and State

"No one would remember the Good Samaritan if he had only good intentions; he had money too." - Margaret Thatcher

"No Money, No Mission. - Conventional Wisdom

As the State and Federal governments deal with their budget problems in the worst fiscal environment in more than three decades, this truism has real meaning. Yesterday, a chorus of voices advocated before the House Human Services Subcommittee of Appropriations asking for resources to care for Georgia's vulnerable citizens. Most requests were compelling, leaving Legislators asking the question, "Where do you suggest we find the money?" Hopes for higher taxes, bailouts by the Federal government and a return to the glory days of massive economic expansion are in the distant future.

Out of this doom and gloom, there is some hope.

The Children's Health Insurance program was expanded - President Obama signed into law the expansion and reauthorizing of the Children's Health Insurance Program. This new legislation maintains health coverage for children currently enrolled in the program and expands coverage to over four million additional children. It also guarantees dental benefits, mental health parity, grants for outreach and enrollment and a quality assurance initiative.

House and Senate Economic Recovery Bills - The House has already passed a Economic Recovery Bill that will assist states in meeting the needs of their vulnerable citizens. The Senate is currently considering their Economic Recovery bill. Final passage of these bills is not assured. If an economic recovery bill is passed, Georgia stands to benefit. Nutrition Assistance programs, increases to Federal share of Medicaid spending, grants to education, TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) grants, social services block grants, and assistance to families. Some estimate that with the passage of an economic recovery bill similar to the House and Senate could mean a net revenue of \$1.6 billion for Georgia. No one is waiting for Federal help to decide what cuts to spare.

Georgia's House Appropriations budget tracking sheet can be found here: [FY09 and FY10](#)

Georgia lawmakers recognize the importance of the economic stimulus package coming from Washington. The House voted today to split the 40-day session into two parts. The House will meet three days per week through March 25 and reconvene in late June--the Senate is considering the same. The stimulus package could provide additional dollars to Georgia at time when Georgia must find \$2 billion in savings. The split session will give lawmakers time to respond to the impact of decisions made in Washington. (AJC Breaking News)