



## Kentucky's 2010 General Assembly: How Did Children and Families Fare?

The 2010 General Assembly adjourned last week on April 15. While the session was overshadowed by negotiations over how to fill a \$1.5 billion gap between what the state needs to fulfill the needs of Kentuckians and available revenues, we did see both wins and important progress on key issues for children and families. On others, there was a notable lack of progress. See a re-cap of children's bills of interest below:

### Safe and Healthy Families

**Care for Children with Autism** - [HB 159](#), sponsored by Rep. Jeff Greer along with 38 co-sponsors, increases the amount of coverage health insurers must provide for autism spectrum disorders. The bill requires large-group and state employee insurance plans to provide coverage in the annual amount of \$50,000 for children with autism from age 1 to 6 and up to \$12,000 a year for older children with autism. The bill passed both chambers unanimously and was signed into law by Governor Beshear on April 14. It will go into effect on January 1, 2011.

**Child Abuse Prevention** – [HB 285](#), sponsored by Rep. Addia Wuchner along with 21 co-sponsors, boosts training for health care officials, day care workers and others who work with children to improve their abilities to spot signs of child abuse. It passed both chambers unanimously and is awaiting Governor Beshear's signature.

**Children's Mental Health** - [HB 231](#), sponsored by Rep. Jimmy Lee and Rep. Tom Burch along with 12 co-sponsors, builds the state's capacity to provide specialized psychiatric care closer to home for Kentucky children currently being served out of state. The bill passed both chambers unanimously and was signed into law by Governor Beshear on March 30.

**Texting & Cell Phone Usage** - [HB 415](#), sponsored by Rep. Tom Riner, Rep. Greg Stumbo, Rep. Larry Clark, and Rep. Robert Damron, bans texting while driving for everyone, regardless of age. The legislation also prohibits cell phone use by drivers under 18. The bill passed both chambers and was signed into law by Governor Beshear on April 15. Violators will be given courtesy warnings until Jan. 1, 2011, after which violators will face fines and court costs.

**Children's Health Advisory Council** – [HB 469](#), sponsored by Rep. Joni Jenkins and Rep. Jimmy Lee, would have established a children's health advisory council. This bill passed the House Health & Welfare Committee. Progress on the bill halted when an unrelated amendment was tacked onto it.

**Child Wellness** – [HB 52](#), sponsored by Rep. Addia Wuchner, Rep. Tom Burch, Rep. Ron Crimm, Rep. Reginald Meeks, Rep. Tom Riner, Rep. Wilson Stone, Rep. David Watkins, and Rep. Susan Westrom, would have integrated physical activity into the school day and collected data on child wellness. A similar bill filed by Rep. Linda Belcher received a hearing in the House Education Committee, but failed a committee vote.

**Kentucky Children’s Health Insurance Program Premiums** – [HB 375](#), sponsored by Rep. David Watkins, would have eliminated premiums requirements for the Kentucky Children’s Health Insurance Program. Provisions of this bill were included in the original [House Budget proposal](#) for FY 2011-12. The session adjourned without legislators coming to agreement on a budget, therefore the Governor is calling them back for a special session in May. The final budget could still retain this provision.

**Menu Labeling** - [SB 86](#) and [HB 246](#), sponsored by Sen. Denise Harper-Angel and Rep. Kelly Flood and Rep. Derrick Graham, would have required restaurants with more than 20 locations to provide nutrition content for the food they serve. While neither bill moved this session, recent Health Care Reform measures passed at the Federal level enact this provision for all 50 states. Menu labeling is now required for restaurants throughout Kentucky with more than 20 locations.

## **Fair Opportunity for Every Child**

**Alternative Schools** – [HB 412](#), sponsored by Rep. Joni Jenkins, Rep. Darryl Owens, Rep. Derrick Graham, Rep. Jeff Greer, and Rep. Tom Riner, would have increased accountability and required data reporting for alternative schools. It passed the House Education Committee on February 24. Progress on the bill halted when an unrelated amendment was tacked onto it. Governor Beshear is considering adding it to the agenda for the upcoming special session.

**Graduation Age** – [HB 301](#), sponsored by Rep. Jeff Greer along with 15 co-sponsors, would have gradually raised the compulsory education age from 16 to 18 by 2015. HB 301 passed the House on a vote of 94-6 on March 4. It also passed the Senate Education Committee 10-2, but Senate leadership did not call it for a vote on the Senate floor. Governor Beshear is considering adding it to the agenda for the upcoming special session.

**Early Childhood** – [HB 190](#), sponsored by Rep. Carl Rollins along with 10 co-sponsors, would have established a framework for expanding quality preschool for 3-and-4 year old children as funds became available. The bill passed the House 99-0 on March 3, but failed to pass the Senate.

## **Fair Deal for Working Parents**

**Payday Lending** – [HB 381](#), sponsored by Rep. Darryl Owens along with 21 co-sponsors, would have capped the interest rates that payday lenders can charge at 36% APR. The bill was sent to the House Banking and Insurance Committee; however it was not called for a hearing.