



**To:** County Welfare Directors Association  
**From:** Tom Joseph, Director, CWDA Washington Office  
**Date:** January 12, 2016  
**Re:** Federal Update

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**Congress Returns:** The House and Senate are both in session this week to attend the President's State of the Union Address. The Senate returned yesterday from its holiday break. As is typical for the beginning of a new session, there has been little legislative action to date. Both parties will conduct retreats in the coming days to identify preliminary work plans for the year and to discuss the political landscape and fall elections.

**FY 2016 Budget Finalized:** Before adjourning right before Christmas, Congress adopted and President Obama signed into law a \$1.15 trillion spending bill funding all programs and activities of the federal government through September 30, 2016. Most human services programs are funded at last year's levels. A few programs received increases, including the Community Services Block Grant which received a six percent boost, with child care and Head Start receiving increases of 13 percent and 7 percent respectively. The Elder Justice Act (EJA) which provides federal funding for adult protective services, was increased from \$4 million to \$8 million. Authorized at \$100 million annually, the EJA is slowly gaining attention on Capitol Hill. The measure also extended through September 30, 2016 those programs due for a reauthorization, including the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.

On the tax side, Congress extended permanently the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. No longer will there need to be the often annual efforts to ensure that those programs continue.

Congress will soon turn to drafting a budget resolution for FY 2017. The Obama Administration has announced that it will send its FY 2017 proposals to Congress on February 9.

**'Family First' Child Welfare Legislation Stalled:** The Senate Finance Committee has not set a date for consideration of a bipartisan child welfare services bill. The draft bill would provide a federal match for prevention services for candidates for IV-E foster care and, on October 1, 2019, would place new procedures, monitoring and accreditation standards on congregate care placements. CWDA has provided comments to the Senate Finance Committee on two previous drafts and is preparing another set of comments responding to the draft released late last year.

**Ways and Means Committee Changes:** Given the House approval of Rep. Paul D. Ryan (R-WI) as Speaker, Republicans selected Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX) as the new Ways and Means Committee chairman. That move led to a number of subcommittee membership changes, including a new chair of the Human Resources Subcommittee which oversees child welfare and TANF. Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-FL) is the new chair and three of the six Republicans serving on the Subcommittee are new. Additionally, the both the majority and minority staff directors are new. These changes will likely delay any legislative action until both the new members and staff become oriented to the issues under the Subcommittee's

jurisdiction. Meanwhile, CWDA staff has met with the new minority staff director and has asked staff to the National Association of Counties and the American Public Human Services Association to accompany CWDA in a meeting next week with the new majority staff director and her professional staff.