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January 22, 2015

CURRENT NEWS AND UPDATES

President Obama Addresses Nation in Annual State of the Union

On Tuesday evening, President Obama gave his annual State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress and the American people. The speech highlighted the activities the Obama administration plans to work on over the next year. During his speech, the President noted that our nation's economy has continued to grow and expand. But more importantly, the President called for a new medical research initiative, as well as an increase in funding for the Brain Initiative, a series of studies funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that intends to map areas of the brain and identify their functionalities. [View the entire State of the Union Address](#), or read summaries from *The New York Times* and *Politico*.

Senator Alexander Releases Discussion Draft of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

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Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, recently released a discussion draft of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Among other issues, the discussion draft is aimed at giving power related to education back to the states and may give states more room to design their own plans to educate students. The bill also looks at funding for high-poverty schools and the Common Core. One of the pieces of the draft discussion bill also looks at testing rules for students with disabilities, and would not place a cap on the use of assessments aligned to alternate standards for students with disabilities. [View the full draft and press release from Senator Alexander's website.](#)

Supreme Court Hears Arguments in Medicaid Case

This week, the Supreme Court heard arguments in the case *Armstrong v. Exceptional Child Center*. The case looks at whether there is a judicial process to ensure that beneficiaries of Medicaid have equal access to care required by law. More specifically, the Supreme Court must look at whether the Constitution gives Medicaid providers the right to sue the state they are located in to increase payments. [Learn more about this case from Kaiser Health News.](#)

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Head to Step Down

Last Friday, it was announced that the head of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Marilyn B. Tavenner, would be resigning at the end of February. Ms. Tavenner joined the Obama administration in 2010. Since that time, Tavenner has worked at CMS and was confirmed by the Senate in 2013 to lead the agency. It is expected that her interim replacement will be Andrew M. Slavitt, the second official in command at CMS. Get more information from [The New York Times](#).

ON THE HORIZON

Employer Assistance and Resource Network to Hold Webinar on Creating Safe and Productive Workplaces

On January 27, 2015, from 3-4:30pm ET, the Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN) will hold a webinar on creating workplaces where employees feel

comfortable disclosing disabilities and health concerns. Reasonable accommodations and employment supports will also be discussed. [To learn more, or to register online, visit EARN.](#)

Federal Transit Administration Request for Comments on ADA Transportation Guides

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is currently developing a series of guides to help transportation providers understand Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations. The publications will include information on rules for transportation facilities, paratransit services, buses and trains and transportation complaints. The FTA is asking the public for comments on topics the guides should cover and other feedback. The comment deadline has been [extended](#) to February 11, 2015. [For more information, visit FTA.gov.](#)

For more information on the Washington Wire, please contact Connie Garner at CGarner@ucp.org.

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