



## News Release

### For Immediate Release

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### **Governor Celebrated on National Stage for Pre-K Leadership**

*Program expansion efforts on behalf of all four year olds lauded as true leadership*

(Nashville, TN) - Governor Phil Bredesen is among 17 executives proposing a total of \$261 million in increases for pre-kindergarten programs in spite of significant fiscal and political challenges, according to Pre-K Now, a national education advocacy group, in Nashville today to release "Leadership Matters: Governors' Pre-K Proposals Fiscal Year 2009."

Gov. Bredesen's sustained commitment to pre-k distinguishes him as one of the nation's most forward-thinking and consistent leaders in Pre-K Now's annual state-by-state analysis of leadership on early education. Collectively, the 17 proposed increases in FY09 budgets would bring total state funding for pre-k to \$5.2 billion - a 5.5% increase from last year - and would make pre-k available to nearly 60,000 more three and four year olds across the country.

"I appreciate the honor and share it with early education advocates in Tennessee," said the Governor. "It's sometimes an uphill political battle fighting for pre-k. But it's important because we know that, dollar for dollar, pre-k is the single best investment we can make in our kids' future. I'm committed to making pre-k an option for all parents and families who want their children to attend, regardless of economic status."

"We thank Governor Bredesen for being one of the leading voices on the benefits of quality pre-k to both children and society at large," said Libby Doggett, executive director of Pre-K Now. "He clearly understands that quality pre-k is the first step in school reform and a sound economic investment for Tennessee."

In spite of mounting evidence of the educational, emotional and economic benefits of voluntary, high-quality pre-k programs for children and communities, the number of governors recommending increases in pre-k funding declined for the first time in four years. Additional report findings include:

- Commitment to pre-k is neither "red" nor "blue" - both Republican and Democratic governors proposed pre-k funding increases.
- Pre-k has been thriving in the South, with one exception; Mississippi is the only Southern state still in the Pre-K Wilderness,
- For FY09, four governors proposed decreased pre-k funding, recommending cuts to pre-k programs totaling \$36 million.
- Two governors with enviable budget surpluses failed to invest in pre-k: Governor Brian Schweitzer of Montana and Governor Dave Freudenthal of Wyoming.

To view the new report online, please visit: [www.preknow.org](http://www.preknow.org).

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*Pre-K Now collaborates with state advocates and policymakers to lead a movement for high-quality voluntary pre-kindergarten for all three and four year olds. The following funders contribute to making this important work possible: The Pew Charitable Trusts, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the McCormick Tribune Foundation, the Foundation for Child Development, RGK Foundation, CityBridge Foundation, PNC Financial Services Group, and the Schumann Fund for New Jersey.*