

## TOP STORY ▄▄▄

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## Foreclosure aid program gets underway in Florida

By Pamela M. Prah, Stateline Staff Writer

### SOCIAL POLICY BEAT

**FIGHTING FORECLOSURES:** A new \$1 billion federal program designed to prevent **Florida** families from losing their homes will be rolled out later this month. The Florida Hardest Hit Fund originally was to be launched in February, but was delayed when Governor Rick Scott made changes to the guidelines, [The Miami Herald](#) reports. The program will offer mortgage assistance of up to \$12,000 to those who are currently or recently unemployed, depending on the circumstances. Meanwhile, hundreds of applications for a similar program in **Nevada** are still [under review](#) and **California** has expanded who can qualify for [Keep Your Home California](#). The money for the programs comes from the federal Troubled Asset Relief Program.

**RYAN'S FOOD STAMPS PLAN:** A budget proposal from Republicans in the U.S. House is getting a lot of attention for the way it would reform Medicare and Medicaid, but largely overlooked is how it would affect food stamps. House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan's [blueprint](#) for reining in the federal deficit would convert the food stamps program into a block grant to the states, beginning in 2015, an idea that is getting mixed reviews. Such an arrangement would force states during lean times to cut benefits or create waiting lists for needy families, says the [Center on Budget and Policy and Priorities](#). But the [Cato Institute](#) calls the food stamp block grant “an excellent direction for reform” in that it would allow ultimately devolve these programs to the states.

**BUDGET BLOCK:** Three county commissions in **California** have filed suit to block the state from taking \$1 billion from the statewide network of childhood development programs. The move marks the first legal challenge to Governor Jerry Brown's budget, [The Sacramento Bee](#) [reports](#).

**SUICIDE PREVENTION:** **New Mexico** Governor Susana Martinez traveled to the nation's largest American Indian reservation to sign a bill aimed at preventing suicides among young Native Americans. But the legislation doesn't set aside any funding for the effort this year, [says](#) The Associated Press. Sponsors hope state money can be found in time for the next legislative session. Statistics show young Native Americans commit suicide at a rate more than three times the national average.

**CHILD BOOM:** Child populations increased in 27 states in the 2000s, with **Texas** leading all other states, says a new [report](#) from the Brookings Institution. Texas added nearly 1 million children. Twenty-three states and the District of Columbia showed declines in their child populations. The most prominent declines were in the New England states as well as **New York, Michigan, Ohio, North Dakota** and **Louisiana**. The changing makeup could play a significant role in setting national and state priorities as policymakers balance programs for the young with those of the old, Brookings says. Census data also find that minorities now make up more than 40 percent of the child population, as shown in an [interactive graphic](#) from the [Wall Street Journal](#).

ABORTION: **Arizona** Governor Jan Brewer is poised to sign a [third abortion-related measure](#) with the legislature's approval of a ban on the use of public funding or tax credits to support any group that provides, promotes, pays or gives referrals for abortion. The measure also bans public universities and community colleges from using state funding to train students to perform abortions. Earlier this month Arizona became the first state to outlaw abortions [performed on the basis of race or gender](#). Brewer also [signed](#) a measure that will require that abortions induced through medications be [performed only by a doctor](#), thus ending the existing practice of permitting trained nurse practitioners to administer RU-486.

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**Issues:** Welfare & Social Policy

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