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On the diffusion of education among the people rest the preservation and perpetuation of our free institutions.

Daniel Webster

AACS TORNADO RELIEF EFFORT: Update on AACS Schools Hit by Southern Storms

The AACS relief effort for AACS schools that were damaged by the tornadoes last week in the southeast is now underway. It appears that our schools outside of Alabama have escaped any direct damage, but several schools in Alabama have been significantly affected. At least five ACEA schools were affected with direct damage to either school buildings or homes of teachers and school families, and physical injuries were also sustained by some of the school families. Affected schools include Tuscaloosa Christian School, Flint Hill Christian School, Brooklane Baptist Academy, Cullman Christian School, and Faith Christian Academy-Athens. Cullman Christian School students meet in buildings on two campuses, and the elementary building was destroyed ([view photo here](#)). While the school does not own this building, the loss is still significant for them. Classes have resumed in a facility volunteered by a church in the community. *We would like to challenge every student in an AACS school to donate at least \$1 to relief for those schools and teachers affected by the storms in Alabama.* Please consider presenting this challenge to your school and your students. An immediate response is needed if we are to offer any timely help. Thank you for your prayers for these people and your help for this relief effort.

Please note: All donations will be used entirely for Tornado Relief, and disbursements will be made with approval of the AACS Executive Committee and coordinated through the Alabama Christian Education office. Donations should be sent to AACS, 602 Belvoir Avenue, East Ridge, TN 37412. Donations can also be made on the AACS website using the "Donate Online" option. Select "Missions" from the drop down list.

House Introduces Education Reform Legislation

As calls mount for significant changes to "No Child Left Behind" (the current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act), House Education and Workforce Chairman John Kline has unveiled his [plans](#) for a [series](#) of smaller education reform bills. In stark contrast, the President and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan have stated that they favor one comprehensive reform bill that would be in place by next school year. This week, Representative Kline plans to introduce a measure that would identify a number of wasteful and duplicative programs for elimination within the Department of Education budget. Although the President's education [budget](#) proposal consolidated 38 programs into 11 programs, spending would actually increase by a significant amount since the funding for the eliminated programs would be combined into one revenue pool. In a recent article, Rep. Kline noted that although there are at least 79 individual programs for K-12 grades, achievement gains remain relatively flat. The next measure that the Chairman will introduce is a bill aimed at increasing districts' flexibility with the allocation of federal funds. Currently, districts must use the entire funding amount they receive for a designated purpose regardless of whether greater needs exist in other areas. The legislation would substantially alter the reporting requirements for funding transfers between programs. The American Association of School Administrators acknowledged that "flexibility can be as good as new money." [Detractors](#) of the measure warn that moving funds around could result in some student groups losing essential funds in favor of other programs that are deemed to be more important by school officials. Later in the year, other bills will be introduced that will seek to streamline accountability requirements and relieve the significant administrative burden on educators.

Conservative Leaders Issue “Counter Manifesto” Opposing Common Core Standards

In [response](#) to the current [Common Core Standards](#) initiative, several prominent conservative leaders and concerned citizens have issued a document outlining the threats posed by the adoption and implementation of these ill-conceived standards. Proponents of the standards recently issued the [Shanker Manifesto](#) which outlines the supposed merits of the Common Core Standards. This week conservatives issued a document entitled “A Critical Response to the Shanker Institute Manifesto and the United States Department of Education Initiative to Develop a National Curriculum and National Assessment Based on the National Standards.” To view the document [click here](#).

Judicial Nomination Controversy

The Senate confirmation battle over Presidential appointees to federal judgeships received significant attention last week after Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid used a parliamentary tactic to force a vote on a [controversial](#) federal district court judge nominee. Traditionally, the majority of Presidential appointees do not face significant opposition by either party since they must first be vetted and endorsed by both of their state senators. In January, the parties reached a gentlemen’s agreement in which the Republicans promised to use the filibuster less in exchange for the opportunity to offer amendments in the Democratically controlled Senate. President Obama’s first 19 judicial nominations were unanimously approved with no opposition. However, the nomination of Judge John McConnell Jr. was strongly objected to by a wide variety of [critics](#) which resulted in a fierce committee struggle. While some Democrats decried the Republican opposition as a “depart from deference” and an adherence to an “unfair standard,” several Senate Republicans pointed to McConnell’s previous employment as a Planned Parenthood clinic operator and Democrat Party State Treasurer (RI), misrepresentation of the facts during his hearings, written statements and the [objections](#) of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce as evidence that he would not be an objective and impartial judge. Despite the vehement objections, McConnell was confirmed 50 – 44 along party lines 14 months after his nomination. The McConnell nomination has reignited the debate over the Senate’s role in the confirmation process. As Judge Charles Pickering noted “the battle for the judiciary holds in balance the outcome of the current culture war raging in America.”

Revival of YouCut Program

On Wednesday, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor and several members of the Republican freshman class [announced](#) the revival of the popular [YouCut](#) initiative which solicits advice from voters nationwide. The YouCut program allows voters to propose and vote for federal programs that they feel should be eliminated by legislation. Three options are selected and then voted on by site users. The option that receives the most votes is then targeted for elimination by a bill that can be tracked online. Leader Cantor stated that a YouCut proposal has been brought to the floor every week of the 112th session. This second phase of YouCut will feature legislation sponsored by the freshman Republican Members. While some critics question whether the proposals will become a reality, Cantor observed that the goal is to increase constituent involvement in the policy arena. Current options include a proposal that would eliminate the scheduled 47 million dollar contribution by the United States to the United Nation’s Population Control Fund which funds China’s coercive abortion program among other objectionable items.

In Case You Missed It:

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[Congressional Pressure Causes Navy Reversal of DADT Repeal Guidelines](#)

[AZ College Students No Longer Have to Choose Between Their Religious Convictions and Their Diplomas](#)

