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I believe there are more instances of the abridgement of freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments by those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations.

James Madison

NCLB Data Collection Raises Privacy Concerns

As the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) moves forward, the accessibility and security of the comprehensive student data that was required and collected by the last iteration of ESEA (“No Child Left Behind”) is coming under increased scrutiny from both parents and privacy advocates. Sensitive data such as social security numbers, family economic status, discipline infractions, incarcerations, mental and health related information, along with grades and test scores have been collected by states in an effort to comply with the law. Privacy experts have raised serious questions about [access](#) to the data, as well as the lack of uniform procedural safeguards and data retention policies. Only eight states allow parents to access their child’s data. In comparison, teachers and principals are allowed to access data in twenty-eight and forty states respectively. Experts argue that many parents are often unaware of the quantity and type of data that schools have about their children. The Data Quality Campaign has [conducted](#) an in-depth evaluation of state data collection procedures. Their study has shown that many states have unclear rules about accessibility, or, in some cases, allow third parties to store data. The 2011 [revision](#) of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) strengthened parental rights to data access, but further expanded third party access to records. Finally, education advocate Michelle Rhee and Secretary Arne Duncan have both called for the use of student data in teacher evaluation systems. To view the Fordham University summary of this issue, [click here](#).

National School Choice Week

The second annual National School Choice Week, organized by a coalition of over 300 groups, was celebrated in all fifty states this week. The issue of school choice has brought together lawmakers such as Speaker of the House John Boehner and Senator Joseph Lieberman to champion the cause. The purpose of the week is to highlight the need for “effective education [options](#) for every child.” Over 320 events will be held across the country. The Alliance for School Choice released their analysis of school choice programs across the country in their school choice yearbook, entitled [School Choice Now: The Year for School Choice](#); and the American Legislative Exchange Council offered their overview of education programs state by state in their [Report Card on American Education](#). To find additional information about National School Choice week, [click here](#).

Washington State Considers Same-Sex Marriage Legislation

Reports [indicate](#) that gay marriage advocates have secured the votes needed to legalize same-sex marriage in Washington State. Passage would require twenty-five votes in the state senate. Hundreds of voters on both sides of the issue have descended upon the state capitol in recent weeks. Advocates have incrementally worked towards achieving their objective. In 2007, a domestic partnership measure was passed, and later in 2009 an “everything but marriage” bill became law. Upon passage of the current bill, Washington would become the seventh state to legalize gay marriage. Several major corporations have openly supported the measure. The National Organization for Marriage has [committed](#) to spend

\$250,000 dollars to defeat any Republicans who cross party lines in order to vote for the measure. Currently, four Republicans have pledged to vote in favor of the measure.

Administration Refuses to Broaden HHS Contraceptive Mandate Exemption

Last Friday, the Administration announced that the narrow religious exemption offered by Health and Human Services to employers who offer health insurance plans would not be broadened, but rather the Administration opted to delay full implementation of the [rule](#) until August 2013. Despite receiving over 200,000 comments and numerous objections from various faith groups (most notably the Catholic Church), officials decided that the list of preventive services coverage mandated by Obamacare must include “free” coverage of contraceptives, sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs and abortion. Thomas McClusky, vice president of the Family Research Council, argues that a one-year [extension](#) “does nothing to change the anti-religious, anti-conscience, and anti-life contraceptive mandate, rather it only postpones its implementation until after the presidential election.” Archbishop Timothy Dolan of [New York](#) has [decried](#) the health care law mandate: “Never before has the federal government forced individuals and organizations to go out into the marketplace and buy a product that violates their conscience.... This shouldn't happen in a land where free exercise of religion ranks first in the Bill of Rights.” In the *Wall Street Journal*, one pundit noted that under the current religious exemption even Jesus Christ and the disciples would not have met the requirements because they sought to minister primarily to those who were not of their own faith. Since this issue not only violates Catholics’ conscience rights, the AACS legislative office is working in conjunction with a coalition of Protestant groups to meet with Congressional staffers to communicate our [concerns](#).

March for Life Update

Over 34 lawmakers spoke at the 39th annual March for Life rally held on January 23, 2012, in Washington, D.C. The nonprofit, nonpartisan event has been held to commemorate the unborn children whose lives have been ended since the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973. Over 54 [million](#) lives have been ended as a result of that fateful decision. The March has grown from over 20,000 participants at its inception to over 200,000 participants. Several news outlets commented on energy and fervor that the large [youth](#) presence brought to the March. Speaker of the House John Boehner, the first Speaker to ever address the march, delivered heartfelt opening [remarks](#) at the rally. Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli delivered the keynote speech at this year’s banquet. A companion March for Life was also held on the [West Coast](#) in San Francisco, and a March will be held in Rome, Italy, in May. For more information, [video](#) coverage, and [photos](#)- [click here](#).

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Defending Christian Leadership for Christian Groups](#)

[Student Bullied by School Officials for Beliefs](#)

[“Digital DNA” College Testing Pilot Program Launch](#)

[Florida’s School Choice Hurdle](#)

[National Marriage Week - February 7-14](#)