



**The Washington Flyer**  
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*“It is therefore recommended to the several states... a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, that all the people may assemble on that day to celebrate the praises of our Divine Benefactor; to confess our unworthiness of the least of his favours, and to offer our fervent supplications to the God of all grace... to cause the knowledge of Christianity to spread over all the earth.”*

Continental Congress, 1790

**Defending National Day of Prayer**

The American Association of Christian Schools participated in a press conference on Wednesday to defend the National Day of Prayer after U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb declared the day to be unconstitutional. Rep. Randy Forbes (R-VA), Chairman and founder of the Congressional Prayer Caucus, hosted the bi-partisan press conference that included 30 Members of Congress as well as many faith leaders from around the country.

Rep. Forbes stated, “Throughout our nation’s history, prayer and religion have been [deeply woven](#) into the foundation of our great democracy. The federal judge’s decision to call the National Day of Prayer unconstitutional represents a movement we are seeing across the country of a small minority who want to exclude faith, religion, and morality from the marketplace of ideas.” He continued to state, “Not only does the decision undermine our Declaration of Independence and take an opposite view point of so many great leaders throughout our nation's history, but it seeks to unravel that very foundation our nation was built upon. I, along with Members of the Congressional Prayer Caucus, will continue to fight this decision – it is just too important of an issue.”

Rep. Mike McIntyre (D-NC), co-chairman of the Congressional Prayer Caucus, spoke in defense of the National Day of Prayer and reminded Americans of the Founding Fathers’ belief in the importance of prayer. He quoted Benjamin Franklin’s famous call to prayer at the Constitutional Convention: “The longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: 'that God governs in the affairs of men.' And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?” Former Congressman Tony Hall, also a Democrat, spoke of the importance of prayer in his life during his time serving in the House of Representatives. Hall was one of the lead sponsors of the original bill in 1988 which enacted the National Day of Prayer and gave his testimony of receiving Christ after he had come to Washington.

While the court ruled in favor of the organization that brought the suit, Freedom from Religion, and [deemed](#) the Day of Prayer unconstitutional, the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) is determined to reverse the decision. Jordan Sekulow, Director of International Operations for ACLJ, pointed out that while the Freedom from Religion Foundation claims to be concerned with promoting the separation of church and state, their [fundraising efforts](#) reveal them to be quite hostile to religion in general. Sekulow also urged Members of Congress to sign the [amicus brief](#) that ACLJ filed in an attempt to appeal the decision. On Thursday, the White House also filed a notice of appeal.

Maureen Wiebe, Legislative Director for AACCS, had the opportunity to represent AACCS and stand with the Members of Congress and other leaders at the press conference. She later stated, “From an educational perspective, it is impossible to teach the history of our great nation without recognizing that faith and prayer played a vital role in the lives of our Founding Fathers and in the writings of our Constitution.”

The National Day of Prayer was first authorized by Congress in 1952 through a Joint Resolution signed by President Truman. In 1988, President Reagan signed the law that officially declared the first Thursday of May each year to be the National Day of Prayer. It is customary since the days of President Truman to issue a Presidential Proclamation commemorating the day. Though Judge Crabb encouraged President Obama not to issue a proclamation on the National Day of Prayer, White House officials have not indicated that he will comply.

### **Briefing on National Standards**

In response to the push for national educational standards by the Common Core State Standards Institute (CCSSI), the CATO Institute’s Associate Director Neal McCluskey and Representative Rob Bishop (R-UT) held a briefing to assess the case for establishing National Curriculum Standards.

McCluskey presented several flaws and dangers inherent in national standards. According to McCluskey, the idea of setting high standards and pushing American schools to excellence works well in theory, but there is very little comparative research to suggest that national standards are effective. Research has given “no compelling reason to believe” that the results “lead to superior educational outcomes.” Different factors such as outliers, could throw off statistics. And when outliers were removed from the equations, there “were no positive effects.”

The briefing also addressed the fact that all children are different. They have different interests, face different obstacles, and mature at different rates. Given these differences, the goals for education and for children are just as varied themselves. Even within our nation, different regions have different economics and politics as well as culture and influence, all factors which a national standard cannot overlook or try to press into a national mold.

Another major danger is the seemingly hidden agenda for federal control over education. States are being urged to “voluntarily” come together and adopt these common standards. In an [article](#) which appeared in [EducationNews.org](#), McCluskey also stated, “The Obama Administration was informing states that to compete for part of the \$4.35 billion Race to the Top fund—a fund stocked with money involuntarily taken from state taxpayers—states had better sign onto CCSI. “

Yet, the U.S. Constitution makes no mention of “education” or “schooling” in its specific powers given to the federal government. With the imposition of federal standards, teachers unions, administrators associations, and other interest groups find themselves under the control of the federal government.

Rep. Bishop voiced his concerns over the danger of federal involvement stating that parents should have the “choice and freedom” to choose the schools and districts for their children. McCluskey added that while no proof exists of the success of national standards, it has been proven that choice in schools work. Programs like the [D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program](#) generate parent interest. “Empowering parents improves interest.”

McCluskey and Rep. Bishop concluded by offering what they believe to be the “solution” or response to national standards. McCluskey states in his policy analysis, [Behind the Curtain; Assessing the Case for National Curriculum Standards](#), “For all these reasons, the road to successful education reform appears to go in the opposite direction of greater top-down control. The key appears to be to give education funding to parents, allow schools autonomy, and as a result make schools respond to the needs and demands of parents and children.”

*By Julie Goodale, AACCS intern. Julie is a graduate of AACCS school Ko’olau Baptist Academy in Kaneohe, HI, and received her B.S. in Broadcasting from Pensacola Christian College last May.*

## Health Care Dissatisfaction

This week two more states have joined in the lawsuit against the Federal government over the overreaching provisions in the new health care law. Alaska and Oklahoma have agreed to challenge the new law, bringing the number of states involved in the suit to twenty. States have also posed their opposition to the health care law through their legislatures. The National Conference of State Legislatures has [reported](#) "... members of at least 39 state legislatures have proposed legislation to limit, alter or oppose selected state or federal actions, including single-payer provisions and mandates that would require purchase of insurance." Many believe the response of the states is warranted greatly due to the overall dissatisfaction among their constituents. Tea Parties continue to run rampant throughout states demanding that the law be repealed. The President, however, seemed to make a [joke](#) of the rallies. Laughingly, he stated he has been "amused" by them and a little confused by the dissatisfaction of the tea partiers. He believes they should be saying "thank you" for the health care law. The mood of Americans, however, is no laughing matter. Fifty-six percent of Americans believe the health care law should be [repealed](#) and 53% of Americans trust Republicans over Democrats when it comes to the health care issue.

In a letter to the American Association of Christian Schools from Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN), the congressman thanked AACCS for its help in fighting the health care battle and reiterated that the fight would continue. He wrote:

Thank you... for the enormous amount of time and energy that you expended throughout this historic health care debate... we will not give up—do not be discouraged. Rest assured that we are committed to repealing this government takeover of health care, and enacting reform that respects every human life, while preserving our liberty and personal freedom. This is not over. The American people may have been silenced on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in March, but their voices will be heard on the first Tuesday in November.

## Florida Expands Tax Credits

In a school choice [victory](#), Florida's state House of Representatives passed a measure that would expand the state's tax credit scholarship program [Step Up for Students](#) from \$118 million to \$140 million a year. The expansion passed with bipartisan support and will allow the program which currently provides over 25,000 low-income students with scholarships to continue to offer scholarships up to \$3,950 per year to parents who can then send their child to a school of their choice. Lindsey Burke, policy analyst for the Heritage Foundation, acknowledged the success of the program stating, "Florida is continuing a tradition of granting families greater control of their children's education and promoting excellence in the classroom by attracting and compensating the most effective teachers. Providing more students with access to a school that best meets their needs will ensure Florida continues to lead the nation in the academic achievement of its students and closing achievement gaps."

Some educational experts believe the Department of Education and the current Administration need to focus more on school choice when considering educational reform. "In contrast to the Obama administration's wrongheaded centralization of education policymaking through national standards, Florida has chosen the enlightened path of decentralization through expanded school choice vouchers," stated Lance Izumi, Senior Director of Education Studies for the Pacific Research Institute. He continued, "By empowering parents and their children, not Washington-based bureaucrats and special interests, Florida once again demonstrates why it is on the cutting edge of real education reform in this country, despite President Obama and Secretary Duncan's refusal to acknowledge it when they shockingly passed over Florida in awarding 'Race to the Top' grants."

## In Case You Missed It:

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

[Obama's Supreme Court Pick Will Support Abortion](#)

## House Ethics Committee Drafts Rule Regarding Same-Sex Marriage



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