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“We are a religious people and our institutions presuppose a Supreme Being... No constitutional requirement makes it necessary for government to be hostile to religion and to throw its weight against the efforts to widen the scope of religious influence.”

William Orville Douglas, United States Supreme Court Justice, 1952

Obama Administration May Want to Rethink Education Agenda

This week, President Obama has [asked](#) for another \$1.35 billion for his “Race to the Top” program. The program, designed to motivate states to ramp up their education standards and teacher performance, was supposed to be funded through the \$787 billion stimulus package. So far, no money set aside for the program has been spent. While the President wishes to put more in the pot, some states are refusing to compete for the grants for fear of encroachment by the federal government. Texas Governor Rick Perry released the following [statement](#) regarding his refusal of accepting the funds:

Texas is on the right path toward improved education, and we would be foolish and irresponsible to place our children’s future in the hands of unelected bureaucrats and special interest groups thousands of miles away in Washington, virtually eliminating parents’ participation in their children’s education. If Washington were truly concerned about funding education with solutions that match local challenges, they would make the money available to states with no strings attached.

Texas Education Commissioner Robert Scott agreed, saying, “I wholeheartedly support the governor’s decision. This one-time grant program would result in mandates for districts that would last for decades.”

Though Texas and a few other states have hesitated to apply for the funds, pressure is increasing to join with the rest of the nation in adopting “common standards” on core subjects. The Administration and officials at the Department of Education have denounced the idea of “national standards,” yet they continue to support and praise the idea of “common standards,” claiming that common standards are those adopted by collaboration of the states, rather than the Federal government dictating and controlling the standards.

In the midst of ramping up education standards, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has just released a [study on the impact](#) and evaluation of the Head Start program. Head Start is a federally funded early education program that was created to “boost the school readiness of low-income children.” The study was conducted primarily to determine the difference that “Head Start make[s] to key outcomes of development and learning (and in particular, the multiple domains of school readiness) for low income children.” While the current Administration has made clear their intentions of increasing early education programs because of their claim that early education will lower high school drop-out rates, the study’s findings should cause them to rethink their ambitious intentions of providing “cradle to career” education.

Specifically, the study not only reported that children within the Head Start program had “few statistically significant differences in outcomes at the end of 1st grade” but also found that “there were no impacts for 4-

year-olds in the cognitive domain at the end of kindergarten.” The report also stated that “there was no strong evidence of impacts on children’s language, literacy, or math measures at the end of kindergarten or at the end of 1st grade.”

The results of the study led to the conclusion that “providing access to Head Start has benefits for both 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds in the cognitive, health and parenting domains.... However, the benefits of access to Head Start at age four are largely absent by 1st grade for the program population as a whole.”

Health Care Update

Democrat leaders have been working months to bring the late Senator Ted Kennedy’s lifelong dream of universal health care to fruition yet have met [numerous obstacles](#), including the late Senator’s open seat. With two distinctly different versions of health care passed in both Houses of Congress, Congressional leaders have had difficulty determining the priorities of the Administration and developing a final version that could be agreed upon by a majority in both Houses. The two main points of contention have continued to be the inclusion of a public option plan and the inclusion of pro-life language. As of yet no version has emerged.

One obstacle that may be impossible to overcome is the Massachusetts election of Scott Brown, a Republican, to fill the seat left open by Sen. Kennedy. Despite Sen. Kennedy’s desperate attempts to change the law and allow for the Governor of Massachusetts to appoint the next Senator after his death, the original election law remained, and a special election was conducted resulting in a Republican victory. Ironically, the election law that remained was the same law engineered by Sen. Kennedy several years ago when Sen. John Kerry was running for Vice-President and a Republican held the Governor’s office.

Perhaps what is most significant about this election was the vote that would or would not be cast for healthcare. Democrats led the Senate with a majority of 58-40. Now the tide has changed giving Republicans 41, enough to stop health care dead in its tracks. Though the newly elected Senator has not declared himself as a staunch conservative, he has promised to vote against the health care bill that currently is being negotiated.

Democrat leaders are [not giving up easily](#), however, and have continued to meet behind closed doors to produce a version that could gain enough support in both Houses of Congress. While several Congressional leaders, including Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, have admitted they do not have the votes to pass a final health care bill, they have not indicated that they will stop trying to create a health care plan that will pass into law.

The date for the State of the Union Address is set for next Wednesday, January 27; and it seems the President will not be able to announce a victory on his health care reform proposals as had been originally planned. While many Republicans remain unaware of what is actually being negotiated, they remain ready to fight the bill until it is dies.

Join the March for Life!

As the Health Care debacle continues on Capitol Hill, hundreds of thousands of pro-life Americans are heading to the nation’s Capitol to participate in the March for Life. This year marks the 37th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to legalize abortion, and thousands of people are making their way to D.C. to voice opposition to the horrific act. The March originally began as a small endeavor; but with the help of a massive grassroots campaign, the first March that took place on the one-year anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision saw over 20,000 people in attendance. Since then, the March has grown tremendously, with an average of over 200,000 individuals in attendance each year. After a long battle over pro-life issues this past year, an even bigger audience is expected to make the trek from the White House up through the National Mall, around the Capitol and to the front of the Supreme Court. This year’s March will take place **January 22, 2010**.

A new feature this year will allow Americans from around the country to participate in the March through a Virtual March for Life. Pro-life advocates who cannot travel to the nation’s Capitol are encouraged to join the Virtual March for Life by creating a profile on the website and allowing their Congressman and Senator to see

their support for the March and pro-life issues. To find out how you can participate through the Virtual March, please click [here](#).

Action: Schools and families are encouraged to join in the March and the events that transpire throughout the day, as well as to pray that the March will have a positive effect on our nation's leaders.

To find more information about the March please click [here](#) or contact [Sarah Griffith](#) with the AACS Legislative Office (202-547-2991).

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Republican Leader Pence Praises Supreme Court Decision](#)

[New Hampshire's Homeschoolers Defeat Tighter Regulations](#)



Editor: Maureen Wiebe
Staff Writer: Sarah Griffith
Legislative Office, 119 C Street SE, Washington, DC 20003
Phone: 202.547.2991 • Fax: 202.547.2992

