



THE WASHINGTON FLYER

A PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

The Washington Flyer
May 25, 2012

I have found it advisable not to give too much heed to what people say when I am trying to accomplish something of consequence. Invariably they proclaim it can't be done. I deem that the very best time to make the effort.

Calvin Coolidge

Department of Education Announces District Race to the Top

On Tuesday, the Department of Education announced its intention to expand the Race to the Top competitive grant program to the district level. Launched in 2009, Race to the Top, the Administration's signature education reform, has awarded over 5 billion dollars in grants through various competitions aimed at school improvement, comprehensive assessments and early learning. This latest iteration of the controversial program seeks to award nearly 400 million in funding to 15 or 20 applicants. Although there are over 14,000 school districts in the country, only those districts with a minimum of 2500 students and 40% students who meet the poverty guidelines (those who qualify for free or reduced lunch) may apply for the grants. Smaller school districts may join with other districts to apply, even districts in other states. The DOE is encouraging districts within states to craft reform plans that incorporate the "four cornerstones" of improving teacher quality, school turnaround plans, student data collection, standards and assessments. Priority will be given to districts that link student performance to evaluations of teachers, principals, district superintendents, and school boards by the 2014-2015 school year. Points will also be awarded to those who craft plans that include personalized learning plans, track students from kindergarten through post-secondary education, improve graduation rates, reach out to parents, and seek to form public-private partnerships.

Plans must have the signatures of the district superintendent, school board officials, and local union presidents (if there are any). In a blow to federalism, state education chiefs have no power to veto the plans and are given just five days to comment on them. The DOE will be accepting comments about this proposal until June 8. The final applications will be released in mid-July, and district applications will be due in October. All of the money must be awarded by the end of the calendar year.

AACS Lobbying Days

The American Association of Christian Schools would like to thank the AACS State and Regional Legislative Directors who made this year's AACS Lobbying Days an overwhelming success. The purpose of the AACS Lobbying Days is to introduce AACS to new Members of Congress, establish relationships with Congressional offices, educate Congressional staffers, explain the mission and current legislative priorities of AACS, as well as reinforce the daily work and initiatives of the AACS Legislative Office in Washington, D.C. The State and Regional Legislative Directors include representatives from AACS ministries across the country, so their meetings with the Congressional offices are especially effective as they are lobbying as constituents from the respective districts and states. The specific issues of focus for this year's Lobbying Days included protecting religious freedom, retaining protection for Christian schools during the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and supporting pro-life legislation. This year, Rev. Gary Click and Rev. Tony Garren (BCSA), Rev. Joseph Hansen (Mid-West), Mr. Dan Zacharias and Rev. Eddy Aliff (ODACS and

MACE), Mr. Gary Mosier and students (South Mid-Atlantic region), Mr. Paul Smith and Rev. Rodney Agan (South region), and Rev. Duane Motley (NY and PA) combined to make over 140 contacts on Capitol Hill. The AACS office would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to these men who made great sacrifices to coordinate these meetings and educate Members about our concerns.

43 Catholic Groups Sue HHS

In the wake of the Administration's refusal to rescind the unconstitutional Health and Human Services preventive services mandate, at least a dozen lawsuits have been filed [filed](#) by forty three Catholic institutions, including Catholic Charities, the Archdioceses of Washington and New York, and Notre Dame University. Archbishop Timothy Cardinal Dolan opined that they had no other option in light of the August 1 implementation deadline. Father John Jenkins stated that the lawsuits demonstrate "the diversity of the Church's ministries that serve the common good and that are jeopardized by the mandate – ministries to the poor, the sick, and the uneducated, to people of any faith or no faith at all....For if we concede that the Government can decide which religious organizations are sufficiently religious to be awarded the freedom to follow the principles that define their mission, then we have begun to walk down a path that ultimately leads to the undermining of those institutions."

Maine Defunds Planned Parenthood Affiliate

Maine has joined eleven other states that have chosen to [defund](#) Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers. In order to avoid an 83 million dollar budget deficit, Governor Paul LePage signed the budget which included the ending of \$400,000 in family planning funding. The Family Planning Association of Maine, an affiliate of Planned Parenthood, provided technical training, awarded grants, trained abortionists and lobbied for increased access to abortion.

Rhode Island Governor

Last week, Rhode Island Governor Lincoln Chafee issued a [landmark](#) executive order granting same-sex couples who are legally married in other states the same legal rights and recognition as heterosexual couples. Although the Rhode Island legislature tabled a highly controversial same-sex marriage bill last year, Governor Chafee unilaterally mandated that state employees and all insurance companies regulated by the state of Rhode Island follow new guidelines. Same-sex couples are now entitled to their partner's health and life insurance benefits, certain tax exemptions on property transfers, and can be listed on birth certificates as parents. The Governor noted that President Obama's recent evolution on gay marriage provided [momentum](#) for this move.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Victories for the Alliance Defense Fund](#)

[Expert Claims that Over-Praise Drives Bullying](#)

[Clarifying the Count of Marriage Amendments and Referenda](#)

[Tennessee Bans Explicit Sexual Education Classes](#)