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*A wise and frugal government, which shall leave men free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned—
this is the sum of good government.*

Thomas Jefferson

AACS 17th Annual Youth Legislative Training Conference

By all accounts, the 17th annual [Youth Legislative Training Conference](#) was a great success. Forty students from AACS schools around the country were selected to attend this year's conference in Washington, D.C. Chaperones, mostly consisting of AACS teachers, greatly assisted the AACS Legislative Office in hosting the YLTC. On Tuesday, the students were addressed by several speakers and introduced to the mock Senate procedures. Mrs. Gail Nicholas, National Forensic League speech [coach](#), guided the students through parliamentary procedure throughout the conference. The students attended an exclusive Congressional Briefing on Capitol Hill on Wednesday. After the briefing, students visited with their Representatives and Senators. [Rep. Jeff Duncan](#) and Melissa Evans took students on an after-hours tour of the Capitol throughout which they highlighted our country's spiritual heritage. On Thursday, students toured the State Department Diplomatic Reception rooms which house rare artifacts and antiques from America's inception. Later, the students enjoyed an evening tour of the monuments and a Capitol Hill photo shoot scavenger hunt. The bulk of Friday was spent in final debate in the mock Senate. At the Friday evening banquet, AACS honored Major General [Ron Henderson](#) for the sacrificial service and Christian patriotism he has exhibited throughout his [distinguished](#) career in the Air Force. The night concluded with an inspiring trip to the Marine Corps Barracks Parade where the President's Own Band and the US Marine Drum and Bugle Corps performed patriotic selections. The week concluded with a wreath laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. The AACS Legislative office is grateful for all of the parents, sponsors, volunteers and prayers that made this year's YLTC a success.

Action Item: "Like" our AACS Legislative Page on Facebook and view photos of the week's activities.

Early Learning Challenge Fund—Race to the Top Applications

In light of the year-end deadline when the available funds expire, the Department of Education is hurriedly formulating the application guidelines and rules for the newest iteration of the controversial Race to the Top (RTT) program, this one aimed at promoting innovation in early education. The two previous rounds of RTT awarded a total 4.35 billion dollars in competitive grants to ten states and D.C. The recent early education RTT [program](#) that the department is currently promoting will award up to 500 million dollars in grants among the winning state applicants. Thirty six [states](#) have indicated to the department that they will most likely apply for the additional funding. It is interesting to note that several of the larger states (including California and Florida) have decided not to apply. Although the maximum grant of 100 million dollars is a significant sum of money, larger states would have to make considerable cash outlays to develop their grant applications and replace their existing programs and textbooks in favor of untested plans. Several states (Alaska, Texas, North Dakota) continue to debate the merits of the RTT program. [South Carolina](#) Education Superintendent Mick Zais has withstood strong opposition from public school unions for his decision not to apply for a grant. Private school associations have objected to several provisions in the early learning RTT applications that encourage states to further regulate all early childhood facilities regardless of whether they receive federal funding. At this juncture, states can still decide to participate or withdraw from the program. Application rules will not be finalized until the end of summer, and the DOE must distribute the entire amount before December 31, 2011.

House Education Committee Approves ESEA Flexibility Measure

The Republicans have unveiled the latest in a series of bills aimed at revising the problems in the current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act commonly referred to as “No Child Left Behind.” The first bill focused on the elimination of wasteful and duplicative programs. The latest [measure](#) promotes increased [flexibility](#) with federal funding for public schools. Representative John Kline, Chairman of the Education and the Workforce Committee, introduced [H.R. 2445](#) on July 13. Rep. Kline’s bill would allow districts to determine how funds should be allocated instead of being forced to follow predetermined federal dictates. He reasons that local educators are better equipped to determine where the revenue should be used as opposed to officials in Washington, D.C. For example, money allocated for English language learners could be used for teacher training and improvement courses. Rep. George Miller (D), Education and Workforce Committee ranking member, has stated his vehement opposition to the plan calling it a “backdoor” attempt to dismantle the civil rights of minorities and the underprivileged. The bill’s advocates maintain that adequate accountability measures will prevent officials from under serving disadvantaged student populations. Although most Democrats and union groups oppose the measure, the Republican majority in the House could take up the bill later this summer.

DADT Repeal Update

After the [lame duck](#) Congress voted to repeal the longstanding policy on homosexuals in the military commonly referred to as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT), conservative groups have fought to mitigate the [effects](#) of the repeal process and implementation on religious freedom in the military. In particular, there are grave concerns about the restraints that the newly required sensitivity training and education will place on chaplains’ ability to counsel and preach based on their doctrinal positions. The complete repeal was scheduled to take effect after the President, Secretary of Defense, and all four service Chiefs certified that the repeal would not have a negative effect on combat readiness and unit cohesion. In April, the Navy issued guidelines that allowed military chapels to be used for same-sex marriage ceremonies in certain states. This preemptive policy was temporarily rescinded after over fifty members of Congress sent a letter of inquiry. On July 6, a court [order](#) declared that DADT should be overturned immediately. The court cited the Administration’s recent decision to no longer defend DOMA (Defense of Marriage Act) as the basis for the ruling. In a surprising move, the 9th Circuit Court reinstated DADT on July 15 at the behest of the Department of Justice. Although the Department will no longer defend traditional marriage, officials wanted to ensure that the repeal process proceeds in an “orderly” fashion.

Pro-Life Win in NYC

The American Center for Law and Justice was able to secure a significant First Amendment [victory](#) for crisis pregnancy centers in New York City. The city’s crisis pregnancy centers were singularly targeted to adhere to restrictive guidelines. The law required centers to display specific signs in their lobbies listing preventive care services that they did not offer, insert prescribed language in their pamphlets and advertisements, repeat specific oral statements in answer to customer inquiries, and adopt views that violated their religious mission. While the law mandated compliance by crisis pregnancy centers, Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers were not required to comply with the standards. Last week, the ACLJ was granted a preliminary injunction by Judge William Pauley. The court ruling found that the law violated free speech and characterized its wording as “over-expansive” further stating that “this Court will not upend established free speech protections in service of Defendants’ overly broad definition of commercial speech.”

In Case You Missed It:

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

[NEA Convention Fails to Benefit Teachers or Improve Education](#)

[Marriage Equality or Marriage Deconstruction?](#)

