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Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.

C. S. Lewis

Common Core Standards Face Backlash

Although 46 states and DC have adopted the Common Core Standards for math and reading, the *Washington Times* and other news outlets [report](#) that several states are expressing strong concerns about the precedent setting nature of the standards. In Indiana, Superintendent Dr. Tony Bennett [stated](#) at a rally that the Administration has nationalized the standards by linking federal funding and waiver relief to their adoption and inclusion in applications. Parents in Utah have publicly expressed [frustration](#) over the lack of information made available to them prior to the standards adoption. In a *Christian Post* article, Maureen Van Den Berg, AACCS Legislative Director, [opined](#) that “anytime you've got a one size fits all attitude regarding education, it's never good for the students, the parents, or education in general.”

Louisiana Teachers Union Threatens Voucher Recipients

Although the courts refused to grant an injunction halting Louisiana's new voucher program, the Louisiana Association of Educators and others have retained an aggressive law firm to preemptively warn private schools not to accept the vouchers. The firm sent letters to approximately ninety-five institutions. At least one school has indicated that it will not accept funds until the issue is settled in the courts. Governor Bobby Jindal, who has been championing education reform since 2008, stated that “union leaders are stooping to new lows and trying to strong-arm schools to keep our kids from getting a quality education.” Currently, over 10,000 students have applied for the voucher program.

South Dakota Informed Consent Pro-Life Victory

On July 24, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a key component of the South Dakota informed consent law is constitutional. Since the law's adoption in 2005, Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider, has fought to block implementation of the law. This latest case centered on the constitutionality of requiring abortionists to inform expecting mothers about the increased risk of suicide that accompanies abortion procedures. The court reasoned that informing patients of the risks associated with medical procedures is standard practice. In an article, Alliance Defending Freedom lawyer Steve Aden notes that this latest battle highlights the fact that these plaintiffs are more concerned with financial gain than the health of the mother. This case is a crucial [victory](#) in the fight to protect the unborn.

Safe and Healthy Students Conference

On August 8-9, the Office of Safe and Healthy Students within the Department of Education sought to spark discussions and promote collaboration among the various education stakeholders from around the country. The conference theme was “Meeting the Challenge: Building and Sustaining Capacity to Improve Conditions for Learning.” In the breakout sessions, experts addressed five major issues: behavioral health (promoting a holistic approach focused on providing mental health screenings,

healthcare, community services, nutritious food, counseling, and childcare for students with children), bullying (devising appropriate interventions and prevention programs), school discipline (addressing equity outcomes and ending punitive, zero-tolerance based punishment systems), gender-based violence (mitigating the damaging effects of violent and abusive dating relationships), and school safety (formulating proactive crisis management solutions). Throughout the plenary sessions, the general consensus among the participants seemed to be that the pervasive abdication of parental responsibility has placed an enormous burden on public school staffs which must balance responding to a seemingly endless number of student issues while facing significant funding cuts. The AACS Legislative Office attended several sessions of this conference and will write about the findings in future articles.

Education Department Hosts Anti-Bullying Convention

This week, the Department of Education [hosted](#) the third annual Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Summit in Washington, D.C. Stakeholders discussed the need for collaboration among the nine departments and thirty-two offices that deal with bullying-related issues. The following topics provided the framework for the bullying discussions: defining what constitutes bullying, providing support for all those involved in bullying (including the aggressor), exploring the link between bullying and suicide, and involving bystanders to become a part of the solution. Participants also discussed the importance of youth leadership, the need for research, the need for strong policies at the state level, and the need for educators and those in media to use caution when explicitly linking bullying to suicide. Special emphasis was placed on protecting the rights of LGBT and gender-nonconforming students. Notable speakers included Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, Rep. Mike Honda, senior presidential adviser Valerie Jarrett, First Lady of Maryland Katie O' Malley, and Cynthia Germonotta (president of the Born This Way Foundation and Lady Gaga's mother).

Liberty Counsel Defends Embattled Florida Pastor

In a stunning reversal, embattled Florida pastor Jack Hakimian and his congregation will be able to continue leasing and conducting services in a Miami-Dade school facility. School officials [threatened](#) to revoke the church's lease agreement after the pastor preached a message about the intolerance of those who espouse the homosexual agenda towards those who fail to share their views. [Liberty Counsel](#), a legal firm that provides *pro bono* representation in religious liberty cases, wrote a letter to the district superintendent reminding him of the pastor's First Amendment rights. The superintendent responded with a memorandum affirming the pastor's right to express his view and withdrew the threat. Matt Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel, summarized the resolution of this case by stating that "this intolerance—we have to wake up to [it], and we have to draw a line and say enough is enough; we're not going to be demonized because of our views on homosexuality from a Biblical perspective."

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Defending Schoolchildren from the Homosexual Legal Agenda](#)

[Marriage on the Ballot in Four States This Fall](#)

[D.C. Public Schools Spend Almost \\$30,000 Per Student](#)

[Video Release: High School Students Share Real Stories of Effective Teachers](#)