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Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.

John Adams

AACS Hosts National Legislative Conference

Last week, the American Association of Christian Schools hosted the annual National Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Following the conference theme “Understanding the Times” (1 Chron. 12:32), Dr. Ed Johnson delivered powerful messages during the special services. During a Legislative Briefing, the AACS Legislative Office briefed attendees on important education and religious liberty issues pertaining to Christian schools. A “Day on the Hill” included a Congressional Briefing in the U.S. Capitol in which Members of Congress encouraged the group to stand up for conservative values and religious freedom. These Congressional Members included Rep. Virginia Foxx (NC), Rep. Jim Jordan (OH), Rep. John Fleming (LA), Rep. David Schweikert (AZ), Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle (NY), Rep. Jeff Duncan (SC), and Rep. Tim Huelskamp (KS). Attendees also had the opportunity to meet with their own Representatives and Senators and their staffs to educate them about issues that affect Christian schools. At the annual AACS Legislative Banquet, former Presidential candidate Rep. Michele Bachmann provided an inspirational keynote address, and students from Heritage Christian School in Woodbridge, VA, performed several musical selections and a powerful choric reading piece. The conference also included an exclusive, after-hours Capitol tour, hosted by Rep. Louie Gohmert, during which he pointed out the influence of Christianity on America’s founding in the U.S. Capitol. The conference concluded with a special briefing at the Heritage Foundation which included presentations made by education and religious liberty policy experts, Lindsey Burke and Dominique Ludvigson. This year, for the first time, the conference included a special student track for high school students, led by Citizen Impact founder, Paul Smith. To view the full report, [click here](#).

Common Tests Issues

The SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, one of the two groups of states developing common assessments, is considering a proposal to produce two versions of their assessment. The Race to the Top-Assessment competitive grant [program](#) awarded two testing consortia over 360 million dollars to create the tests. Several states have expressed resistance to the original proposed test as a result of the length of time necessary for completion. The latest proposal, which would allow states to choose a short or long version of the test, has raised concerns about uniformity and comparability of results. Several states are leaning towards the shorter version of the test because of decreased costs. The head of the consortium admitted that the two-test proposal was necessary to entice states to remain in the group, and federal funding for the group would be stripped if the group has less than 15 members. The Department of Education is monitoring these changes to the group’s original RTT-Assessment application proposals.

Values Voter Summit

Thousands gathered at the annual [Values Voter Summit](#) hosted by the Family Research Council in Washington, D.C. Many notable speakers, including vice presidential candidate Rep. Paul Ryan, encouraged the audience to be involved in the political process and to be aware of the many challenges

facing the country. Members of Congress—including Rep. Michele Bachmann, Rep. James Lankford, Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, Rep. Jim Jordan, Rep. Steve King, Rep. Tim Huelskamp, Majority Leader Eric Cantor, and Senator Jim DeMint—all gave rousing speeches urging attendees to work to strengthen the culture and the family in order to preserve freedom. The AACCS staff attended sessions dealing with the upcoming marriage ballot initiatives and how to engage the younger generation referred to as “millennials.” At the summit, FRC [honored](#) Leo Johnson, the FRC employee whose heroics saved many lives several weeks ago during the shooting at the Family Research Council. To view speeches, [click here](#).

Education Spending Not Paying Off

A nonpartisan group, State Budget Solutions released an eye opening [assessment](#) that demonstrates that higher spending on education does not necessarily result in higher achievement scores on the tests such as the ACT. The group came to this conclusion after analyzing state spending and testing scores from the 2009–2011 period. Although a total of 809 billion dollars was spent on education in 2010 alone, the states (Texas, Vermont, Arkansas) that invested the highest percentage of their budgets in allocation did not have the highest testing scores. Alabama, Hawaii, and Tennessee spent the lowest percentage of their budget on education. Over the three year period, Massachusetts had the top scores in the nation even though it was 46th in spending. Overall, nearly a 1/3 of state spending is spent on K–12 education.

NAEP Writing Proficiency Results

Last week, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), commonly referred to as “the nation’s report card,” released the dismal [results](#) of the 2011 writing proficiency testing. According to the report, the writing skills of only 24% of eighth and twelfth graders are at a proficient level or higher. Since the long standing test transitioned from a paper and pencil test to a computer test, students were evaluated on their ability to utilize basic word processing tools. Out of the 24,100 students who were tested, only 3% worked at an advanced level.

Iranian Pastor Freed

After months of international [attention](#) and pressure from groups such as the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), Iranian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani was finally released from prison and reunited with his family after over three years of imprisonment. Pastor Nadarkhani was accused of apostasy and sentenced to death for his conversion to Christianity and subsequent evangelization efforts. Unfortunately, at least sixteen Christians remain [incarcerated](#) in Iran because of their faith. Tiffany Barrans, International legal director for the ACLJ, stated that “Iran is at a critical juncture both politically and diplomatically. We must use this moment, while the world is listening, to draw attention to Iran’s many abuses of human rights.”

In Case You Missed It:

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

[AACCS’s Courtney Holloway Speaks for Religious Liberty in video "Women Speak for Themselves"](#)

[Egypt's Coptic Christians Fearful Amid Outrage Over Muhammad Film](#)

[Ohio City Determines to Block Development of a Christian School](#)

[VIDEO:Teacher’s Unions in Their Own Words](#)

[Planned Bullyhood](#)



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