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Let us be sure that those who come after will say of us in our time, that in our time we did everything that could be done. We finished the race; we kept them free; we kept the faith.

Ronald Reagan

AEI Forum Contrasts Views of Campaigns on Education

On October 16, the American Enterprise Institute hosted “Education Reform in the Next White House: A Conversation with the Obama and Romney Campaigns.” Education expert Frederick Hess moderated the discussion between advisers John Schnur (Obama campaign) and Martin West (Romney campaign). While both representatives agreed that NCLB needed revision, they differed on the best path forward to achieve reform. If they win the election, the Romney campaign stated that they will review the NLCB waivers that have been given to thirty-three states in the absence of a reauthorization of ESEA. Mr. West affirmed that Governor Romney favors a comprehensive reauthorization instead of conditional waivers. Mr. Schnur cautioned that reversal of the waivers would not provide the certainty that districts need to plan adequately. Mr. Schnur drew a sharp contrast between President Obama and Governor Romney in the area of education policy. He insisted that the federal government should incentivize states to adopt college and career ready standards. Other topics discussed during the debate were the adoption of the Common Core Standards, the role of the federal government, higher education loan programs, proposed budget cuts, the Race to the Top program, teachers unions, Title I portability, the Chicago teachers strike, and school choice. The full debate can be viewed [here](#).

Florida Passes Race-Based Academic Standards

The Florida Board of Education’s NCLB waiver proposal has drawn the ire of many of the state’s parents. To obtain relief from the onerous burden of the No Child Left Behind Act, at least thirty-three states have applied for flexibility waivers from the Department of Education in light of the impending 2014 deadline to attain 100% proficiency in reading and math. Florida’s plan includes a race-based standard system that sets differentiated achievement goals based on ethnicity. After receiving pushback, State Board of Education Chairwoman Kathleen Shanahan contended that the plan was necessary to receive a waiver from the Department and that “goals recognize that not every group is starting from the same point and are meant to be ambitious but realistic.” For example, reading achievement benchmarks for Asians, whites, Hispanics, and blacks are 90%, 88%, 81%, and 74% respectively. The board based those objectives on the FCAT scores for the 2011-2012 school year. Some education officials such as Palm Beach County School Board vice-chairwoman Debra Robinson have rejected this plan to lower expectations and emphatically reason that goals that “expect less from one demographic” send the wrong message to children. Chairwoman Shanahan maintains that the plan takes into account external factors such as poverty and disability. Parents in the state have continued to [lobby](#) against the proposal.

University Official Faces Job Loss over Petition

In a chilling [example](#) of what the legalization of same-sex marriage will bring, Dr. Angela McCaskill, Chief Diversity Officer at Gallaudet University, was placed on paid administrative leave after [signing](#) a petition to place same-sex marriage on the ballot in Maryland. The initiative would simply give citizens the opportunity to express their position on same-sex marriage at the ballot box instead of having it

unilaterally imposed by the legislature. While Dr. McCaskill signed the petition at her church this summer, the controversy started when a list of the 160,000 signatories was obtained by *The Washington Blade*. A co-worker and her partner filed a complaint with McCaskill's employers at the university. When Dr. McCaskill refused to apologize for signing the petition, she was immediately placed on leave and the entire university was notified via the university website. Even Marylanders for Marriage Equality and Governor Martin O' Malley who support same-sex marriage have called for Mrs. McCaskill's [reinstatement](#). However, some liberal commentators share the view of *The Huffington Post* that "if her religious views clouded her rational thinking, then clearly she's not the right person for the position she holds." In the wake of the controversy, she has received death threats and has been castigated by some in the media. Dr. McCaskill's pastor issued the following statement, "I stand to say that we as a church family and community support Dr. McCaskill and stand with her during this time. The unfair treatment of Dr. McCaskill is a warning of what is to come if same-sex marriage becomes law in Maryland. It is a clarion call for Marylanders who value religious liberties and individual rights to vote against Question 6."

Pew Study Suggests Protestants are Minority

According to the recently released Pew Forum [study](#) on religious affiliation, Protestants are no longer the majority religion in America. Only 48% of Americans identify themselves as Protestants. The study clearly illustrates the decline in denominational loyalty and church membership. Although a high percentage of survey participants acknowledge that they do pray and believe in God, church attendance remains relatively stable at 40% over the last 80 years. According to the study, approximately 1/3 of those under the age of 30 have no religious affiliation. LifeWay Research concludes that factors such as married parents who attend church themselves and have "engaged in the spiritual formation" of their children play a decisive role in the decision of Millennials to stay in church.

Abstinence Education Receives Funding

This month, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [announced](#) the latest round of sexual education funding through the Comprehensive Abstinence Education Grant Program. In a departure from previous funding appropriations, Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) based programs (abstinence education) received a five million dollar grant over the next two years. Although the Administration previously funded graphic, comprehensive sexual education curriculums at a 16 to 1 ratio, Members of Congress strongly pushed for abstinence based programs to be given funding parity. Contrary to the opposition's claims, SRA does not promote religious views and informs students of the potential risks of contraceptive use. The National Abstinence Education Association (NAEA) has documented some of the illicit and nonsensical approaches touted by the comprehensive sexual education curriculums favored by HHS. Valerie Huber, executive director at the NAEA, contends that the SRA approach is "consistent with the public health prevention model for risk avoidance" and that students need to be told the truth about the risks. To view the FAQ document, [click here](#).

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Pakistani Girl Shot for Promoting the Education of Girls](#)

[Education Savings Accounts: "The Way of the Future"](#)

[Five Questions for Education Secretary Duncan: How He Answered](#)