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Let us remember that, as much has been given us, much will be expected from us, and that true homage comes from the heart as well as from the lips, and shows itself in deeds.

Theodore Roosevelt

National Legislative Conference Yields Results

In September, the AACS Legislative Office briefed pastors, school administrators as well as state and regional representatives on a variety of issues at the annual [National Legislative Conference](#). During the conference, attendees conducted numerous visits with Members of Congress and their staffs. Many offices were informed about the potential harmful effects on private, religious schools from the Race to the Top – [Early Learning Challenge](#) (RTT-ELC) competitive grant competition. In order to receive a portion of the \$500 million dollar funding, states were encouraged to adopt a wide range of reforms for their early education programs which included the establishment of a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In states without religious exemptions for faith-based schools and centers, this rating system would apply to include private schools regardless of funding source. Across the country, AACS representatives have been meeting with state education officials about this important issue. Recently, the [Minnesota Association of Christian Schools](#) welcomed the news that four House of Representatives Members from the Minnesota delegation have sent a letter of inquiry about the problematic portions of RTT-ELC to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. In the letter, House Education and the Workforce Chairman John Kline, along with Representatives Erik Paulsen, Michele Bachmann, and Chip Cravaack, urge the Secretaries to exempt private early childcare providers who do not receive federal funding from the proposed state rating systems.

NCLB Waiver Applicants Announced

In an attempt to avoid the punitive sanctions that will result from missing the 2014 deadline set forth by “No Child Left Behind,” eleven [states](#) have applied for relief waivers from the Department of Education. Initial reports had indicated that seventeen states would apply by the first deadline. The actual number of applications demonstrates the significant hurdles states must overcome in order to produce a strong [application](#) that garners the endorsement of the various state stakeholders. As many as forty states may apply by the next deadline in February. Applications must include state plans to develop “college and career ready standards,” testing mechanisms, accountability systems, and principal-teacher evaluations that will be used in personnel decisions. In exchange for the implementation of these reforms, states will be awarded greater Title I funding flexibility and relief from the impossible standards (100% proficiency in math and reading) set forth in “No Child Left Behind.” The NCLB waiver program has many [detractors](#) that question the constitutionality of the Administration unilaterally overturning a law and then tying waiver relief to a standard determined by the Department of Education. Several senators have expressed their partiality to a comprehensive reauthorization of NCLB instead of waivers that are given at the discretion of the Secretary of Education. Education Secretary Arne Duncan has stated his [mixed](#) views on the latest reauthorization proposal. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions committee recently held a [hearing](#) on this important issue.

Iowa Family Forum

On November 19, six of the Republican presidential candidates will participate in a roundtable discussion about the impact of personal faith on their public policy views. [National Organization for Marriage](#), [Focus on the Family](#), and the Family Leader are hosting this event in Iowa. The two-hour discussion will be moderated by venerable pollster and Fox News contributor Frank Luntz. For more information, [click here](#).

Religious Staffing Victory

After many years of litigation, the case of *Spencer v. World Vision* has reached a [favorable](#) conclusion. The crux of the case centers on the applicability of a Title VII funding religious employer exemption clause. The exemption allows Title VII recipients to select employees based on their religion. Several former [World Vision](#) employees reneged on their previous promise to uphold the organization's religious tenets and were subsequently fired for their refusal to honor that promise. Lawyers for the plaintiffs contended that the religious exemption applies only to houses of worship and, therefore, does not afford legal protection for independent religious organizations in staffing decisions. World Vision maintains that religious organizations must be able to hire employees that share the values of the group. In a surprising decision, the liberal-leaning Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals [ruled](#) in favor of World Vision's argument. Earlier this term, the Supreme Court [declined](#) to review the case effectively siding with the Ninth Circuit's opinion. This ruling is an encouraging victory for religious hiring rights.

Operation Ultrasound Update

In 2004, Focus on the Family launched an initiative to encourage expecting mothers to choose life for their preborn children. Since only 80% of crisis pregnancy centers have ultrasound equipment, Focus partnered with ultrasound machine producers to purchase units for these centers. Ultrasound machines cost an average of \$21,000-30,000 per unit which can be quite prohibitive for nonprofit centers. Statistics demonstrate that the rate of mothers who choose life instead of abortion are increased significantly when mothers are shown a sonogram. Focus on the Family has provided over 528 machines or sonography training sessions in 49 states and Romania. According to clinic submissions, over 100,000 babies have been saved by this remarkable program. To read more about this initiative, [click here](#).

“Constituting America” Contest

The annual We the People 9*17 Contest conducted by “Constituting America” is now open to students in K–12, college and law school. Categories include short films, public service announcements, speeches, poems, drawings, essays, and original songs. Last year, AACS summer intern Jon Ludwig won a monetary prize for his college [speech](#) entry. Winning applicants are featured on the Constituting America [website](#), receive a certificate and a monetary prize, and may garner a possible public appearance. The submission deadline is July 4, 2012. For more information, [click here](#).

In Case You Missed It:

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

[“Wait No More” Results](#)

[Healthcare Law Before the Supreme Court](#)

[New York Pro-Life Victory](#)

