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“The most perfect maxims and examples for regulating your social conduct and domestic economy, as well as the best rules of morality and religion, are to be found in the Bible. . . . The moral principles and precepts found in the scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws. These principles and precepts have truth, immutable truth, for their foundation.”

Noah Webster, *History of the United States*, 1832

Common Standards or National Standards?

A meeting initially closed to the press on the [adoption](#) of “common standards” throughout the states turned out to be a rather open and public forum which D.C. policy groups attended along with teachers, college faculty, and other interested individuals. The forum was lead by Dane Linn of the National Governors Association along with Gene Wilhoit with the Council of Chief State School Officers, in order to garner support for the “Common Core Standards Initiative.” The [initiative](#) is a “a joint effort by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in partnership with Achieve, ACT and the College Board” to establish a benchmark among states for college readiness in K-12 standards. At the meeting in Washington, DC, the American Federation of Teachers announced their partnership with the Council of City Schools to see how common standards can be practically implemented within schools. Ultimately, in most states the state boards will choose whether or not to adopt the common standards. Wilhoit stated he believes a “considerable number” of states will proceed to adopt the “common standards,” and the National Association of State Boards of Education has already announced four regional conferences to be held in 2010 focusing on this topic.

While many supporters of common standards have reiterated the difference between common standards, in which states decide on standards, and national standards, in which the federal government decides the standards, the theory behind the two is the same and the path to national standards is becoming more evident. Federal control of schools will cause stronger regulations placed on not only those schools receiving public funding but also private and faith-based schools which receive zero public funding.

A Lone Democrat in the Senate

As the debate over healthcare rages in the Senate, abortion has once again become the [major component](#) that threatens the passage of the bill. With a 60-member majority, the Democrats need all members to support the health care bill in order for it to pass, yet Senator Ben Nelson, a pro-life Democrat Senator from Nebraska, has stated his strong opposition to the bill unless a pro-life measure is adopted into the bill. He has been working with Senator Hatch to create language that would restrict federal dollars from being used to cover abortions. While the language may be slightly different from the Stupak Amendment adopted into the House version of the health care bill, the amendment would ensure no government funds could go to cover abortions. Senator Nelson has stated intentions to filibuster any bill that does not include specific pro-life language.

Other [amendments](#) that have been offered to the health care bill include an amendment filed by Senator Mikulski which could allow for government funds to cover abortion, but would also require preventative care, including mammograms and cervical cancer screenings, to be examined and approved by the U.S. Preventive Services Taskforce (USPSTF) before determining if the insurer will cover such care. This amendment passed on Thursday by a [vote of 61-39](#). A “side-by-side” amendment was also filed alongside Senator Mikulski’s amendment which stated that preventative care should be left to the guidelines and recommendations of the physician rather than the individuals at the USPSTF. The side-by-side amendment also ensured that abortion could not be considered preventative care. This amendment, however, failed by a [41-59 vote](#).

While Senators Nelson and Hatch work on language for their pro-life amendment, whether or not it actually proceeds to a vote is still unclear, and if it does get a vote, many believe it is unlikely to pass the Senate. Because abortion has become the main sticking point in the debate, the Democrat Leadership is expected to employ the “Message Between Houses” tactic rather than a Conference Committee with Members from both Houses to work out differences between the health care bills, should the Senate pass a health care bill. This would be an effort to avoid any backlash that could transpire during a conference session.

Marriage in the States

After a heated debate, the House Oversight and Government Reform committee [passed](#) the Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act ([H.R. 2517](#)) with a vote of 23-12. The bill would allow for health care and other benefits to be given to the domestic partner of a gay or lesbian federal employee. Some Republicans raised concern of how this would lead to the ultimate destruction of [traditional marriage](#). Congressman Chaffetz (R-AZ) stated, “I recognize the sensitivity of this subject, but I also want to stand tall for traditional marriage. I don’t think we should be bashful and shy away from the fact that there are some of us who believe in the precepts, and believe in this issue of traditional marriage.” While the fight for marriage remains mainly on the state level, many federal initiatives have been brought before the U.S. Congress that would allow for equal protection and benefits for same-sex couples.

Another victory for the gay and lesbian community transpired this week as the [battle for marriage](#) in D.C. intensified. By a vote of 11-2, the D.C. Council supported a measure that would allow for same-sex marriages to be legally performed within the district. The final vote on the bill is tentatively scheduled for December 15th. If the measure is then passed, it will require a 30-day congressional review and will then proceed to D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty’s desk for signature, who will most assuredly sign it into law. The major opposition to the bill and the supporters of a referendum initiative came from many African-American Churches who fought hard to secure traditional marriage and are continuing to do so. Both dissenting votes cast, were by influence of the African-American community and their efforts. While many conservative Congressional Members have voiced their opposition to the bill, the likelihood that any measure will be voted on that would repeal the bill is diminutive.

This week, while D.C. continues to struggle in the fight for traditional marriage, supporters of traditional marriage in the state of New York won a [mighty victory](#) as a bill to allow same-sex marriage was defeated by an overwhelming majority of 24-38. The victory was made possible through the tireless efforts of conservative groups who fought hard to secure traditional marriage. According to Rev. Jason J. McGuire, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Constitutional Freedoms, “Today’s vote results from the efforts made by a bipartisan, multiracial alliance united in support of the proposition that marriage is not just about adult satisfaction or the whims of a special interest group—it’s about kids. The bottom line is that children do best when raised by their biological mother and father. This bill would have encouraged and promoted the deliberate formation of households that deprive children of either a mom or a dad.” As gay and lesbians were shocked and [dismayed](#) over the votes cast, churches and families rejoiced at the preservation of marriage. Rev. Duane Motley, Senior Lobbyist for New Yorkers for Constitutional Freedoms and a Regional Legislative Director for the American Association of Christian Schools, stated, “It is gratifying to see that so many senators from both parties are listening to their constituents and taking heed to the many objections that have been raised regarding this bill.

The legislation placed freedom of religion and freedom of conscience in jeopardy. New Yorkers' voices were heard today." He further stated, "According to the Word of God, marriage is and always will be the union of a man and a woman. Since God created marriage, only He has the authority to change it."

White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

This week the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships launched their [new website](#), just weeks after submitting [draft guidelines](#), including religious hiring, to the Advisory Council. The Office is comprised of taskforces, one of which is responsible for office reform. While the guidelines submitted mentioned religious hiring, the new website infers "The question of restricting religious hiring when federal funds are involved is reserved to the President and was not discussed."

During the last administration the Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives (WHOFBCI), as it was then called, focused on working to change the way government addressed human need: "Away from large, impersonal programs and toward innovative solutions built within solutions." The details of how this focus was put into practice can be viewed on the [Innovations in Compassion](#) website, which outlines the focus of the previous Administration's goals and methods. [Results](#) of the work done by the WHOFBCI has proven to be very successful in the work of fatherhood, state and local initiatives, community outreach, and other areas. Though the name of the office has changed, the methods used to produce successful outreach and outcomes should remain the same.

In a Better Place

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of Kevin Waycaster and his 16-year-old son Micah, as they were suddenly called home to be with the Lord through a tragic car accident on November 25th. They were traveling back home from a church retreat along with two other men from their church when the accident occurred that took the lives of all four men. Mr. Waycaster served as the Administrator of Arrowhead Christian Academy and also as the Executive Director of Christian Schools of Arizona. In addition he was the Administrative Pastor at Northwest Valley Baptist Church in Glendale, Arizona. He was instrumental in the Christian education movement in Arizona and his life touched the lives of many young people and families for Christ.

While this tragic accident brings great sadness to many, Pastor Kevin Schaal, pastor of [Northwest Valley Baptist Church](#), reminded friends and family, to "comfort one another" while remaining thankful. "We are thankful to a good God who has given us salvation from sin and the hope of heaven. We are thankful to God for the assurance that our brothers are there and that we will someday join them. We are thankful for their love for you, their lives of service, and the blessing that we received through them. We are thankful that we can grieve, and not as those who have no hope. Our hope is in our Lord, and we thank Him for his goodness to the undeserving such as us."

Please continue to pray for the Waycaster and other families who have been affected by this tragic accident, as well as the ministries that have been impacted.

In Case You Missed It:

[Obama Administration begins Funding more Stem Cell Research](#)

[A Keynote Speaker](#)

[US Delays on Internet Gambling](#)



Editor: Maureen Wiebe
Staff Writer: Sarah Griffith
Legislative Office, 119 C Street SE, Washington, DC 20003
Phone: 202.547.2991 • Fax: 202.547.2992

