



The Washington Flyer
January 15, 2011

It is a masterpiece of the devil to make us believe that children cannot understand religion. Would Christ have made a child the standard of faith if He had known that it was not capable of understanding His words?

Dwight L. Moody

Prayer Service for Tucson Tragedy

On Monday, several hundred people gathered on Capitol Hill to hold a service to pray for the health of Representative Gabrielle Giffords and the victims of the Tucson Tragedy on Saturday. After opening prayer by the House Chaplain, Rep. Giffords policy advisor Gavi Begtrup, shared his memories about the late staffer Gabe Zimmerman's friendliness and the Congresswoman's ability to balance statesmanship along with her duty to her constituents. Ministers presented Scripture readings from Psalm 46, Romans 8:18 – 27, and Psalms 23. The names and brief histories of the victims were read by Karen Bronson. Senate Chaplain Barry Black reflected on the brevity of life (Psalm 90) and the lessons that should be learned from tragedy in our lives. Mourners and well-wishers were invited to sign a condolence book in the Cannon rotunda.

D.C. and Maryland Adopt National Standards

Proponents of [common core standards](#) (nationwide, uniform English and math objectives for kindergarten through 12th grade students) are gaining ground with a recent pledge by the District of Columbia and Maryland to develop and implement these measures. The development and implementation process is expected to take several years according to the Center for Education Policy. Several groups such as the National Governors Association and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have heavily backed efforts to establish a national standard as well as a testing mechanism that can be used to assess student comprehension and application of classroom instruction. Most states have readily complied with these efforts to set national standards. Although not directly involved in the development of the common core standards, the federal government has encouraged state participation and adoption with its four billion dollar "Race to Top" initiative. Maryland and D.C. schools were awarded 250 million and 75 million dollars respectively for meeting compliance standards. [Critics of the plan](#) question whether the federal government should be involved with an issue that has been traditionally handled by the individual states.

New Jersey Passes Strong Anti Bullying Legislation

After consulting with top anti bullying advocates and victims of school harassment for over a year, Governor Chris Christie (NJ) has signed some of the nation's toughest [anti bullying legislation](#) into law. Experts estimate that every day approximately 160,000 students avoid attending school because they face harassment, intimidation and threats of violence from their peers. Reports highlight that New Jersey has one of the highest rates of bullying reported in the nation. State Senator Barbara Bruno stated that the new law rejects the permissive "kids will be kids" attitude and makes school officials accountable for their reaction to incidents. The Anti Bullying Bill of Rights strengthens previously passed legislation by creating school safety teams, requiring annual reports to the Commissioner of Education who will then grade the school, extending protections to those in colleges and universities, and widening jurisdiction to off site incidents that affect a student's performance and school attendance. It also goes a step further by mandating stiff penalties for school

officials who do not report bullying incidents or adequately address issues in a timely manner. Teachers will be required to undergo mandatory bullying prevention training. NJ State Senator Diane Allen conceded that while legislators “cannot change human nature” they can “change how governments and school officials respond to unacceptable behavior.”

Renewed Focus on No Child Left Behind Reform

Pundits [surmise](#) that there is a high possibility that the 112th Congress will address the reauthorization of the Bush era education policy commonly known as “No Child Left Behind.” The “No Child Left Behind Act” established 2014 as the date by which school’s English and math standardized test scores should meet certain levels or face the possibility of federal sanctions. Controversial fixes such as teacher removal, school restructuring and student choice transfer options from failing schools have been hailed as a necessary motivation tool by some while others see the measures as unwarranted and burdensome for overworked teachers. Schools who meet the annual yearly progress goals receive monetary incentives, teacher bonuses and increased program support. Since it appears that many students will not be proficient in the content areas by the 2014 deadline there has been a push to revisit this issue. In a recent *Washington Post* [editorial](#), Secretary of Education Arne Duncan underlined his commitment to revising the benchmarks and accountability measures set forth in the controversial law. White House Domestic Policy Advisor Melody Barnes has also [indicated](#) that education reform is a “top priority” for the Obama Administration. Also, key Republicans on the House Education and Labor Committee have expressed a commitment to bipartisanship on this pressing matter.

National Motto Under Attack

Once again, the [Supreme Court is being asked to review](#) whether the national motto “In God We Trust” constitutes an establishment of religion by the federal government. Devoted atheist and attorney Michael Newdow has several pending petitions before the Court, including cases regarding references to God in the Presidential oath and the Pledge of Allegiance. Newdow alleges that forcing atheists to use currency that contains a reference to God is “blasphemy.” It is likely that the Justices will announce the cases they intend to hear by mid-February. Usually, the Justices accept only 80 of the over 8,000 petitions they receive annually. In 2004, the Court agreed to hear Newdow’s case against his daughter’s classroom participation in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, but then decided that he did not have the legal standing necessary to pursue the case. This recent flurry of litigation seems unlikely to be given a hearing since the Court’s makeup has not undergone a drastic change and even the traditionally open-minded 9th Circuit Court of Appeals did not rule in his favor.

March for Life Rally

On January 22, 2011, thousands of pro life marchers will gather in Washington, D.C. to commemorate the infamous Supreme Court decision *Roe v Wade* which legalized abortion. For more information click on this link, [March For Life Rally](#).

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Three Reasons You Should Join “National School Choice Week”](#)

[Homeschooled Girl Ordered to Attend Public School Over Her “Rigid” Faith](#)

[Religious Freedom Day, January 16, 2011](#)

