



The Washington Flyer
February 10, 2012

A battle lost or won is easily described, understood, and appreciated, but the moral growth of a great nation requires reflection, as well as observation, to appreciate it.

Frederick Douglass

Lawmakers and Administration Offer Diverging NCLB Plans

During the first session of the 112th Congress, the House Education and Workforce committee held eleven hearings to address “overly prescriptive mandates” and “restrictive funding schemes.” The committee has crafted two pieces of legislation to address the issues with the No Child Left Behind Act. The “Student Success Act” and the “Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act” will provide states with increased flexibility with the allocation of federal funding streams. To view the committee’s press release [click here](#). On Thursday, the Department of Education announced that [ten](#) states will receive NCLB relief [waivers](#). Lawmakers have argued that linking waivers to adoption of favored educational reforms represents a troubling trend of federal overreach.

New Jersey Bullying Law Ruled Unconstitutional

After passing one of the nation’s [toughest](#) anti-bullying laws, New Jersey is now grappling with providing funding to local educational agencies to implement the statute. On January 27, the Council on Local Mandates ruled that the law represented an unfunded mandate and subsequently gave the state 60 days to revise the law before it is nullified. The law requires school districts to train and employ both district and school anti-bullying coordinators as well as establish a protocol for investigating and handling complaints in a timely manner. Governor Chris Christie has pledged to [work](#) with lawmakers to resolve the issues.

Louisiana Governor Embraces School Choice

School choice advocates [applaud](#) Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal’s bold education [reform](#) plans. After Hurricane Katrina forced the New Orleans public school system to adopt a series of school choice reform measures, the Governor has introduced plans that seek to build on the momentum provided by New Orleans students’ improved outcomes. Reforms championed by the Governor include the following measures: funding flexibility, retooled teacher tenure, relaxation of charter school restrictions, introduction of scholarship tuition organizations and expansion of the Student Scholarship for Educational Excellence program. In response to disparaging [remarks](#) by the head of the state’s largest teacher union, Governor Jindal stated that “The union leader’s comments are just the type of top-down, arrogant, elitist mentality that has badly damaged our system of public education in this country. I believe that parents—regardless of their income or circumstances—know what’s best for their children. It’s ridiculous and insulting to say that parents can’t make decisions in the best interest of their children.” To read more about his proposals [click here](#).

Maryland Marriage Update

Several [states](#) are currently embroiled in legislative battles over the issue of same-sex marriage. Maryland Governor Martin O’ Malley has followed through on his pledge to revive the same-sex

marriage bill that was defeated last year. [Opponents](#) of the measure such as the Maryland Marriage Alliance have stated that they are committed to continuing the fight to protect traditional marriage. Although the measure includes a religious exemption clause that would allow clergy and houses of worship to decline to perform or host services for homosexual couples, spokesmen for family advocates [warn](#) against taking this “bribe” and point to the example of states like Illinois. Despite the religious exemptions in the Illinois civil union law, Catholic Charities and other religious adoption placement services were eventually shut down. Peter Breen, the attorney who represented Catholic Charities, said in a 2011 statement regarding the incident, “This stands as a stark lesson to the rest of the nation that legislators promising ‘religious protection’ in same-sex marriage and civil union laws may not be able to deliver on those promises.”

Komen Foundation Reinstates Controversial Funding

Three days after Susan G. Komen Foundation for the Cure [announced](#) that newly adopted grant criteria barred it from awarding Planned Parenthood (the nation’s largest abortion provider) funds, the organization issued a stunning reversal of the decision. Although donations to the foundation rose 100% after the original pronouncement, the organization was overwhelmed with negative media attacks, website hacking, board member resignations, donor threats and a scathing letter from 26 senators. Komen CEO Nancy Brinker issued a revised statement stipulating that grants would only be halted if an organization was under an investigation that was “criminal and conclusive in nature.” Pro-life advocates were [stunned](#) by the swift [reversal](#). Revered columnist George Will opined that “the dialectic in this country goes like this...first you declare a right, then you say the right must be subsidized by the federal government, then institutions that don’t conform to our values have to be bullied into it.” Although Komen’s grant to Planned Parenthood is approximately .058% of their \$487 million dollar annual budget, the organization waged an aggressive [campaign](#) to pressure the foundation to reinstate the funding. Pundits have written extensively about the [lessons](#) that can be learned from this sobering episode.

Proposition 8 Case Update

On Tuesday, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals issued a 2-1 [ruling](#) declaring that California’s Proposition 8 (2008 voter decision that marriage is between one man and one woman) was unconstitutional. In 2010, Judge Vaughn Walker [struck](#) down the results of the Proposition 8 initiative. Traditional marriage advocates counter that the judge’s personal stake in the outcome of the case should have caused the Judge to recuse himself. Regardless of the outcome, pundits [surmised](#) that the case would be appealed to the Supreme Court. According to *Citizenlink*, the *Perry v. Schwarznegger* case [applies](#) only to the definition of marriage in California. To read an analysis of the ruling [click here](#).

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Gender Identity Controversy in England](#)

[Teacher Regains Job After Controversial Comments](#)

[Senator Marco Rubio Defends Unborn at Pro-life Gala](#)

[National Prayer Breakfast Address](#)