



The Washington Flyer
March 2, 2012

We do not need more intellectual power, we need more spiritual power. We do not need more of the things that are seen, we need more of the things that are unseen.

Calvin Coolidge

HHS Mandate and Religious Liberty Update

On Thursday, Concerned Women for America held a press conference entitled “Obama Health Mandate Demolishes Religious Liberty and Conscience Rights.” Participants included four Members of Congress (Rep. Diane Black, Rep. Marsha Blackburn, Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle, and Rep. Sue Myrick), Penny Nance (CEO of CWA), Dr. Janice Crouse (The Beverly LaHaye Institute), Janelle Wray Basham (Liberty University), Kenda Bartlett (Southern Baptists), Maureen Van Den Berg (AACCS), and Charmaine Yoest (Americans United for Life). Mrs. Van Den Berg stated, “Just last month, the Supreme Court unanimously decided that the government cannot rule in matters of the church, yet this government mandate would force faith-based organizations—including our Christian schools—either to abandon deeply held convictions or face enormous fines. This is an [unprecedented](#) violation of religious liberty.” On Thursday, the Senate [voted](#) 51-48 to defeat the Blunt Amendment (Respect for the Rights of Conscience Act) to the Senate transportation bill. The AACCS Legislative Office will continue to raise awareness on this critical issue and fight for the religious freedom of Christian schools.

House Votes to Repeal Higher Education Regulations

On Wednesday, the House of Representatives [voted](#) 303-114 in favor of the “Protecting Academic Freedom in Higher Education Act,” H.R. 2117. The bill would repeal two particularly onerous, higher education regulations put forth by the Department of Education in 2010. In order to curtail the alleged improprieties perpetrated by a few “for profit” higher education entities, the Department promulgated rules intended to protect consumers. While the gainful employment section of the regulations garnered significant [press](#) coverage, the component contained requirements that sought to define a credit hour and mandate state authorization of all universities regardless of the rigorous accreditation process already in place. Stakeholders from a broad range of the higher education community testified before the Education and the Workforce Committee on the formidable burden and potential dangers of these regulations. Rep. [Foxx](#), the bill’s originator, expressed her desire for the Senate to consider this legislation in a timely manner.

Marriage Update

Although Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley signed a same-sex marriage bill on March 1, the Maryland Family Alliance is leading [efforts](#) to place the measure before voters in the 2012 election. Petitioners must gather approximately 56,000 signatures. Maryland is the eighth state to redefine marriage. In a similar move, Maine was able to repeal a law legalizing same-sex marriage after the legislature voted in favor of a 2009 measure. In [New Hampshire](#), both houses of the legislature are considering a measure to repeal the same-sex marriage law that has been on the books for two years. The National Organization for Marriage is encouraging supporters to thank New Jersey Governor Chris Christie for enabling his constituents to vote on the issue of marriage in the 2012 election.

ESEA Reauthorization Update

On Tuesday, the Education and the Workforce Committee held a [markup](#) of the last two bills related to the reauthorization of the “Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965” (formerly known as “No Child Left Behind”). After being roundly denounced by the committee Democrats, the measures passed the committee on a party line vote. It remains doubtful that either the House or the Senate has the political will to address the variety of contentious components within ESEA during an election year. In related news, twenty-six states and the District of Columbia have [applied](#) for the second round of NCLB relief waivers.

NYC Churches Update

Last Friday, Judge Loretta Preska issued a preliminary [injunction](#) that allowed all of the displaced churches to continue meeting in public school facilities until the conclusion of the case. A previous order allowed only the plaintiff, Bronx Household of Faith, to continue holding services in the district’s facilities. The Alliance Defense Fund has litigated this case since 1995. In her ruling, Judge Preska opined that “in this Court’s view, losing one’s right to exercise freely and fully his or her religious beliefs is a greater threat to our democratic society than a misperceived violation of the Establishment Clause.”

President Obama Addresses Nation’s Governors

This week, President Obama [addressed](#) the National Governor’s Association during their annual meeting. He encouraged the state leaders to increase their state’s investment in education. The President repeated his support for stricter state laws requiring students to stay in high school longer (until graduation or 18 years of age). He noted that currently only 21 states have laws in place with the aforementioned requirements. Cuts in education funding were also cited as a barrier to adequate student preparation for postsecondary education and the reason for college tuition increases in general. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, over 550 billion dollars was spent on public elementary and secondary education in 2011. School districts spend an average of \$10,000 per student. Despite these significant outlays, student achievement remains stagnant and global counterparts consistently perform better on standardized testing.

Texas Defunds Abortion Providers

Despite [threats](#) from the Administration to withhold federal Medicaid funding, Texas has finalized the rule barring organizations that promote or perform elective abortions from receiving state family planning funding (16 million dollar revenue stream). Approximately a dozen Planned Parenthood clinics have [closed](#) as a result of the rule. Previously, the Administration threatened to withhold 40 million dollars in Medicaid funding if Texas enacted the rule. To read more about efforts to defund Planned Parenthood (the nation’s largest abortion provider), [click here](#).

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Alabama Supreme Court Issues Landmark Pro-life Decision](#)

[South Carolina Resists the Common Core Standards](#)

[Status of the President’s Faith-Based Advisory Council](#)

[School Fights Twitter Criticism](#)