



The Washington Flyer
March 5, 2010

“It is alleged by men of loose principles, or defective views of the subject, that religion and morality are not necessary or important qualifications for political stations. But the Scriptures teach a different doctrine. They direct that rulers should be men who rule in fear of God, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.”

Noah Webster, 1823

Seclusion and Restraint Bill Passes the House

This week the House passed [H.R. 4247](#), “Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act.” Sponsored by Rep. George Miller (D-CA) and Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), the bill passed with a vote of 262-153, with 8 Democrats voting against the bill and 24 Republicans voting in support of the bill. While the goal of this bill is certainly something AACCS would support, concerns remain about the language of the bill that could introduce unnecessary regulation into our private schools, specifically through the requirements it would establish for reporting and teacher training. The AACCS Legislative office has worked closely with Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, the republican lead sponsor on the bill, to ensure that private schools would be protected. While language was included that would exempt homeschoolers and schools which receive no federal funding, the bill still includes schools who do participate in programs which receive federal funding to be held accountable to the Office of Civil Rights within the Department of Education.

In a letter expressing our concerns, AACCS President Keith Weibe stated the following:

We appreciate the efforts to mitigate the effect of this bill on private education, and we are grateful for the inclusion of language that does specify protection for those private schools which do not receive federal funds.... However, we are concerned that there still may be unintended negative consequences for those private schools whose teachers or students may be benefiting from a federal education program.... While private school regulation may not be the intention of the bill, this could set a dangerous precedent for future federal regulation of private education.

Private schools, including our Christian schools, have enjoyed marked success in providing excellent education for students of all ages and abilities. Their freedom and ability to maintain their autonomy contributes greatly to this success, and the opportunities that thereby are provided for the students. The language of H.R. 4247 seems to set unwarranted intrusion of the federal government into this autonomy.

Rep. Kline, Ranking member on the Education and Labor Committee, [expressed](#) his concerns with the bill as well, stating, “It would do a disservice to the safety of our children and their teachers for Congress to hastily take action that either undercuts existing efforts at the local level or delays implementation of state-based reforms. While ignoring the warnings reported by the GAO is not an option, taking action before we have all the facts is equally problematic,” said Kline. “There are dangers to federal overreach, including this bill’s abandonment of longstanding precedent that prevents federal education mandates from being imposed on private schools.”

The Senate counterpart to the bill has been offered by Sen. Dodd, however no language has been included that would protect private schools. The AACCS Legislative office will be voicing concerns with the bill and working to establish language that would protect private schools.

Republican's Four Principles for Education Reform

As the Administration and the Department of Education move ahead to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), republicans introduced four principles of education reform they wish to be used as a guide in the reauthorization process. The principles-- Restoring Local Control; Empowering Parents; Letting Teachers Teach; and Protecting Taxpayers-- are to "identify key objectives for ensuring student success in the 21st century."

In a [press statement](#) Rep. Kline, Ranking member of the House Education and Labor Committee, expressed, "Republicans are committed to a strong educational system that prepares our children for success. We have listened to parents, teachers, principals, and school boards, and we know there is not a one-size-fits-all federal solution to the challenges that face our schools," said Rep. Kline. "These four principles will help guide federal efforts to reform education laws that aren't working well and ensure schools have the tools and flexibility they need to prepare their students for the future."

The Republican's principles in detail are as follow:

1. **Restoring Local Control.** Academic standards, testing systems, and curriculum should be set by states and local educators—without coercion from the federal government—to ensure those who know our children best are able to shape their education to excel in college and the workplace.
2. **Empowering Parents.** Parents should have a greater role in selecting and participating in the learning environment that best serves their children's needs.
3. **Letting Teachers Teach.** Onerous federal requirements should be removed to ensure our teachers and local schools have the freedom to operate and innovate as they think best.
4. **Protecting Taxpayers.** Taxpayer dollars should be spent wisely, eliminating ineffective programs and making investments that help students achieve success on an increasingly competitive world stage.

The committee is currently looking for comments and ideas of ways to further education reform. To leave any comments or suggestions please click [here](#).

White House has "Historical" Meeting with Secular Group

In what is being described as a "[historical](#)" moment, the White House met with a secular group that includes atheists, humanists, and agnostics to discuss policy issues, marking "the first time in history a presidential administration has met for a policy briefing with the American nontheist community." The Secular Coalition for America, an organization designed "to amplify the diverse and growing voice of the nontheistic community in the United States," stated a "meaningful relationship" with the White House stemmed from the President's Inaugural speech in which he described the nation as "a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers."

Though details of the meeting have not been released, the coalition did say they [briefed](#) Tina Tchen and Paul Monteiro, the director and associate director of the White House Office of Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs; Bryan H. Samuels, Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families at Health and Human Services; and Mazen Basrawi, Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at the Department of Justice, on three specific items: "religiously based child abuse issues, so-called faith-healing' and religious child care being exempt from some health and safety laws; the 'pervasive'

religious atmosphere in the military and ways in which troops' with nontheistic views are made to feel unwelcome'; and faith-based initiatives.”

Executive Director of the organization, Sean Faircloth, stated the following “Our Founders knew that there was no place in American government for the privileging of religion, or of one belief over another, and that will be a central theme in our interaction with the White House.” He continued to say, “There has been a movement toward theocracy in America that is too often overlooked. As a result, good Americans, including children, have been harmed, and men and women in uniform denied their rights. This strikes at the very core of American values. The Secular Coalition for America seeks justice for every citizen, regardless of creed.” While members of the coalition stated the meeting went “very, very well,” conservatives and faith-based groups expressed concern with the meeting.

In God We Trust, A religious advocacy group, was concerned with the administration meeting with the coalition whose members include radical “hate-filled, anti-religious groups.” In fact, an active member of the coalition, Freedom from Religion’s President, Dan Barker, has stated in his book *Losing Faith in Faith*, “Christianity is an enemy to humanity, and the antithesis of freedom” and “Religion also poses a danger to mental health, damaging self-respect, personal responsibility, and clarity of thought.”

In God We Trust's Chairman Bishop Council Nedd stated, “It is one thing for Administration to meet with groups of varying viewpoints, but it is quite another for a senior official to sit down with activists representing some of the most hate-filled, anti-religious groups in the nation.”

Health Care is Back!

In an attempt to garner Republican [support](#), the President held a [summit](#) last week to discuss the future of healthcare reform. Though the Republicans put many ideas on the table, Democrats have voiced their [intentions](#) of passing healthcare without any Republican support through a process called reconciliation. Reconciliation will require the House to pass the original Senate’s version of the health care bill upon promise by 51 Senators that changes will be made to the it once passed and signed into law. However, the Senate’s version contains pro-abortion language that would keep conservative democrats from supporting it. Rep. Bart Stupak has declared he along with 11 pro-life democrats would vote [against](#) the Senate version if pro-life language was not added. Yet, if language is added that would ban federal funding of abortions it is likely it would be thrown out in the reconciliation process. The process is designed for budgetary purposes only and not for “major social legislation” as many Republicans have argued.

The President is pushing for an “up or down” vote before the Easter recess and both Republicans and Democrats are preparing for a [battle](#), yet the vote has not been set.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[A Smarter Path to Education Reform](#)

[Quick End to "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"](#)

[Supreme Court Refuses to Stop D.C. Gay Marriage Law](#)



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

