



The Washington Flyer
March 9, 2012

I hope I shall possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain what I consider the most enviable of all titles, the character of an honest man.

George Washington

AACS Legislative Office in the News

Last week, the AACS Legislative Office participated in a press [conference](#) hosted by the Concerned Women for America. As a result there have been several mentions in the media of the AACS opposition to the unconstitutional Health and Human Services mandate. To view Maureen Van Den Berg's statement [click here](#). To view press coverage click on the following links: CWA [press release](#), [media clips](#), Family Research Council [newsletter](#), *Baptist Press* [article](#), *New York Times* [article](#).

Marriage under Fire

Around the nation, homosexual activists are seeking to redefine marriage in several states. Maryland and Washington State have both legalized same-sex marriage this year through measures in their states' legislatures. Several other states—Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, and North Carolina—will allow voters to decide in the upcoming elections. North Carolinians will go to the polls on May 8, while the other initiatives will be held in November. Traditional marriage proponents point out that when the issue of marriage has gone to the voters, marriage has prevailed every time (31). Currently, activists are seeking to expand the civil union laws in Indiana, Illinois, and [Hawaii](#). In Illinois, the enactment of a civil union law precipitated the closure of faith-based adoption agencies that had existed for decades. Hawaii Governor Neil Abercrombie has announced that he will not uphold the state's traditional marriage amendment. The Alliance Defense Fund has requested permission to defend traditional marriage in light of the abdication by the Governor. To read more on this topic [click here](#).

Religious Freedom in Iran

Last week, the House of Representatives [approved](#) a bipartisan resolution (House Resolution [556](#)) condemning the imprisonment and execution order for Iranian pastor Youcef Nahrakani. Since 2009, Pastor Youcef has been separated from his wife and two young sons for his faith. The Iranian government has repeatedly attempted to force the pastor to denounce his conversion to Christianity. Pastor Youcef has remained resolute in the face of certain death. The American Center for Law and Justice has worked tirelessly to raise awareness of Pastor Youcef and his case. The ACLJ has utilized social media outlets such as [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to keep the pressure on the Iranian government. The resolution passed by the House of Representatives sends a strong [message](#) to the Iranian government that America stands by Pastor Youcef and for the religious freedom of oppressed minorities around the world.

Minnesota School District Settles Bullying Cases

In the wake of six teen suicides attributed to bullying by classmates, the Anoka-Hennepin school district, the largest school district in Minnesota, has [settled](#) a lawsuit brought by six current and former students who allege that the district failed to protect them from harassment and mistreatment. The National Center for Lesbian Rights and the Southern Poverty Law Center brought suit on the behalf of

the students who claimed that they faced discrimination based on their real or perceived sexual orientation. According to the suit, the school district failed to take action when students reported that they were subjected to derogatory epithets, pencil stabbing, choking, defaced lockers, and other abuses. The district was under investigation by the Department of Education and the Department of Justice for the unusually high number of suicides. As a result of the settlement, the district has committed to make significant structural and procedural changes. The consent decree reverses the previous policy of neutrality to sexual orientation. The agreement also mandates proactive policies to prevent, respond, investigate, punish and rehabilitate those who bully classmates. Furthermore, the district will hire an equality consulting firm to evaluate policy guidelines, hire on-site monitors and counselors, craft a comprehensive bullying survey, and identify “hot spots.” The federal government will evaluate the district’s progress toward achieving these goals in five years. While concerted efforts to prevent harassment are laudable, serious concerns have been raised about whether proper consideration has been given to student’s First Amendment rights, the role of parents, the scope of school liability, and individual responsibility.

The Criminalization of Texting

Lawmakers around the country are having difficulty crafting laws that appropriately address the issue of “sexting” (“sending of sexually explicit messages or video via mobile phone”). According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, one in five teens have engaged in the sending and forwarding of inappropriate text messages. In response to teen suicides, twenty [states](#) have passed laws intended to discourage the practice. Although well-intended, critics of the laws argue that they impose excessive penalties on misguided teens who may not fully understand the long range implications of sending or forwarding humiliating and inappropriate pictures to their peers. In some states, offenders are charged with misdemeanors for participating in child pornography, forced to pay fines, or registered as a sex offender. Opponents of such measures contend that more focus should be concentrated on educating children and teens about the perils of sending photos of themselves and warning them not to participate in the forwarding of photos of others. Several high profile cases of students whose inappropriate photos went viral after the ending of relationships have led to court cases and suicide by the distraught victim.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Military Service Doesn’t Count in School Progress Scoring](#)

[Progressive Nature of Higher Education](#)

[Trial Begins in Intelligent Design Discrimination Case](#)

[Ohio School Shooting Victim’s Mom Forgives Gunman](#)