



The Washington Flyer
March 16, 2012

It seems to me that at this time we need education in the obvious more than the investigation of the obscure.

Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.

Louisiana Voucher Program Welcomes New Participants

School choice [advocates](#) celebrate the widespread popularity of the New Orleans voucher program. Recently, over 300 parents participated in a sign-up [event](#) for the Student Scholarship Educational Excellence Program. The program is available to low income, K-6 students from over 15 failing public schools. The five-year-old scholarship program has over 1800 enrollees and boasts a 93% parental satisfaction rate. Since 44% of Louisiana public schools received a “D” or “F” rating, parents welcome the choice to place their child in a private school. Approximately one-third of the state’s public school students are performing below grade level. Although Governor Bobby Jindal has been hailed by school choice advocates for his attempts to bring significant reform to the Louisiana Public School system, this week public school teachers in several districts cancelled classes to participate in [protests](#) to sway legislators who are considering the Governor’s proposal this week.

HHS Finalizes Controversial Abortion Rule

In the wake of the contentious “preventive services” mandate debacle, Health and Human Services [released](#) the 644 page rule for the establishment of state health care exchanges mandated by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare). [Detractors](#) have expressed dismay over a provision that mandates that all health insurance plans offered by the state must include a one dollar abortion surcharge per premium payer. This abortion fee would be disclosed to the purchasers only at the time they bought the plan. Plan providers would be prohibited from revealing this fee in advertisements. Pro-life advocates [contend](#) that although the state exchange rule supposedly offers states flexibility in implementation, the rule includes the words *must* 1000 times and *require* 320 times, limiting innovation and choice. States are divided over whether to begin the arduous task of creating these exchanges by January 1, 2013, or awaiting the mid-summer Supreme Court decision on PPACA.

Nonpartisan Committee Releases Healthcare Law Analysis

This week, the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation and the Congressional Budget Office [released](#) its [analysis](#) on the effect of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). Although Congress approved a 900 billion dollar increase in spending for implementation of the [controversial](#) law, experts now predict that spending will increase by 1.8 trillion. According to the report, over 4 million Americans will lose their employee health insurance coverage by 2016 because companies have indicated that they would rather pay stiff fines (15 billion annually) than provide coverage that meets PPACA guidelines. Employees would then be forced to procure their own health insurance from state run exchanges or pay fines. Finally, small business owners will be adversely affected and may choose not to hire workers in order to avoid certain aspects of the law. The Congressional Budget Office predicts that government revenue will increase as a result of employer fines for not offering healthcare and the taxation from the higher wages for workers who are not receiving health insurance through their

companies. Unfortunately, these temporary gains will be [offset](#) by the number of people who are then forced to enroll in federal programs such as Medicaid. The Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in the case to overturn the health care law on March 26, 2012.

Former Planned Parenthood Director Files Lawsuit

A federal judge [unsealed](#) one of the whistleblower lawsuits against Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider. Abby Johnson, former Planned Parenthood clinic director, [alleges](#) that Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast filed over 87,000 fraudulent Medicaid claims. Allegations include billing for services not rendered to clients and overbilling for medical procedures and services. During Ms. Johnson's time at the organization, officials acknowledged that they had illegally received millions over a four year period. When Ms. Johnson questioned the illegality of these disclosures, Planned Parenthood officials stated that returning the money would be an ordeal so it would be easier to keep the funding and hope that their actions would not come to light. Planned Parenthood is also under [investigation](#) in several other states and by the House Oversight and Investigations subcommittee chaired by Rep. Cliff Stearns for over a hundred million dollars in fraudulent claims.

El Paso Christians Face Arrest

Over 250 citizens from several churches and values groups in El Paso, Texas, are [concerned](#) that they could face [prosecution](#) and jail time for participating in a recall effort. The conflict between the citizens and the city government was precipitated by a ballot initiative which prohibited the extension of benefits to unmarried domestic partners. The mayor and city council members overturned the voter decision despite the public support for the initiative. Area churches and values groups spearheaded a recall petition drive effort to unseat the mayor and several council members. The state appeals court stopped the effort, and an El Paso district attorney proceeded to build a case against the recall drive participants. The Alliance Defense Fund is representing the defendants in this disturbing [case](#). Attorney Joel Oster stated that "we have more than 250 signed affidavits from local citizens who are terrified that they may go to jail for their legitimate political and free speech efforts. This is America, and the mayor can't be allowed to put his opponents in jail just because he doesn't like the fact that they participated in a valid effort that he doesn't favor."

Agency Threatens to Withhold Texas Medicaid Funding

Despite [threats](#) from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to withhold Medicaid funding, Texas Governor Rick Perry editorialized that the state will work to find funding to continue providing women with preventive care services that are "abortion neutral," meaning abortion is not included in their services. In May, HHS will cut more than 30 million (90% of budget) in funding for screenings and treatments covered by Texas' Women's Health Program. Although there are over 2000 abortion neutral service providers in Texas, HHS Secretary Sebelius maintains that the Texas program guidelines must be revised to include providers like [Planned Parenthood](#) who perform abortions. Currently, there are three lawsuits that address whether the Administration has the right to withhold critical funding in order to leverage states to enact federal directives.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Fee on Faith](#)

[Update on Pastor Youcef](#)

[Couple Awarded Millions in Wrongful Birth Lawsuit](#)



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