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There are few things more dishonorable than misleading the young.
Thomas Sowell

Department of Education Considers District NCLB Waivers

Education experts [predict](#) that the Department of Education is considering the extension of No Child Left Behind [waivers](#) to the district level in the third round. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has stated that he is “sympathetic” to those in districts within states that have stated they will not apply for relief waivers. As a result of NCLB provisions, states are faced with punitive measures if all students do not reach 100% proficiency standards in math and reading by 2014. Education officials in Texas and California (which represent 1980 school districts) have indicated that they will not apply for the waivers. Texas officials posit that there is little to be gained by exchanging one set of rules for another set of rules in order to gain relief. District level waivers raise several issues such as the potential infringement on state sovereignty and Congressional authority.

University Curtails Religious Liberty on Campus

Although San Diego State University allows student groups to require that their leaders share the mission and beliefs of the group, they do not allow adherence to religious beliefs to be a litmus test for leadership. There are about 115 recognized student groups at San Diego State University. Christian student groups that require leaders to sign a statement of faith are not recognized by the school. One of these groups appealed the decision to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals alleging that the groups should be entitled to freedom of association. The appeals court sided with the university. In a disappointing decision, the Supreme Court has [declined](#) to review *Alpha Delta Chi-Delta Chapter v. Reed*. This decision upholds the unfavorable ruling of the lower court. In a disturbing trend, several other universities such as Vanderbilt University have enacted similar discriminatory policies in which only Christian student groups are not allowed to require their leaders to share their values. To read more about the battle to secure religious freedom in public schools [click here](#).

Healthcare Law Extends “Free” Benefits to Student Health Plans

On Friday, the Department of Health and Human Services [issued](#) a 32-page proposal (advance notice of proposed rulemaking) that would [require](#) higher education institutions to provide contraceptives, sterilization, and abortion-inducing drugs in their student health plans. This notice signaled the agency’s [intention](#) to publish a final rule after a 90-day comment period. The proposal offers three possible ways to include coverage of the objectionable items without co-pay to students through their university backed plans. The pro-abortion lobby has voiced support for this latest mandate stemming from the directives in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). They argue that this mandate will keep students from having to choose between buying their textbooks and contraceptives (despite evidence that shows that generic contraceptives can be obtained for less than \$10). “We do not need any more rule-making,” said The Becket Fund’s Hannah Smith. “We do not need any more comment periods. We already settled this with that one original rule—the First Amendment.” The Supreme Court will [hear](#) the oral arguments about the constitutionality of the healthcare law next week.

High School Graduation Rates Improve

At the Grad Nation Summit, the America's Promise Alliance (APA) [released](#) findings that demonstrate a slight uptick in the nation's graduation rates. Between 2001 and 2009, there has been a 3.5% increase in students who received their high school diploma. Statistics show that 75% of students graduate which conversely means that 1 in 4 do not complete their education. There has also been a decline in the number of dropout factories (schools in which 60% or fewer students graduate on time). According to the most recent report, approximately 450 of the 1550 identified dropout factories have ceased to operate. Both New York and Tennessee have had double digit gains in high school graduation rates. Wisconsin boasts a 90% graduation rate. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Nevada reported a dismal 56% graduation rate. This low number was attributed to the pre-recession lure of high paying jobs in the service sector. The current economic climate has proven to be a challenge for those who chose not to complete their high school education and now find themselves in a highly competitive job market. The state is working to address this issue. The APA suggests that employing strategies such as raising the mandatory attendance age to 18, working to have students reading at grade level, and establishing an early warning system to identify students who are at risk of dropping out help to improve retention.

Homosexual Activists Attempt to Blacklist Christian Commentators

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) has [announced](#) that it is actively seeking to pressure media outlets to ban Christian commentators who exhibit "extreme animus" towards the LGBT community. According to the group's website, the "Commentator Accountability Project" specifically lists pro-family and pro-traditional marriage advocates such as Focus on the Family's Jim Daly, Family Research Council's Tony Perkins and National Organization for Marriage's Maggie Gallagher. The project coordinators ask their supporters to fill out an online form whenever they see any of the blacklisted persons on television. The group will then lobby the media outlet not to allow these people to present their views on air. Focus on the Family writer Candi Cushman, who is also on the list, points out the irony of a group who purportedly advocates tolerance actively seeking to silence the opposition's viewpoint. This effort to select one's opponent and determine who is qualified to comment on an issue is the latest battle in the culture wars.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Institution of Marriage Defended Across the Nation](#)

[Millennials Forced to Put Lives on Hold](#)

[Citizen Cosponsor Project Initiative](#)

[Is Your Organization Religious? Ask the Government to Find Out!](#)