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¹⁰That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; ¹¹If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. ¹²Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:10-12

AACS Submits Comments on Reauthorization of ESEA

As discussions are underway regarding the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the House Education and Labor Committee asked for comments from groups and individuals regarding their thoughts and position on the bill. The American Association of Christian Schools (AACS) used the opportunity to encourage Congress to maintain the current language that would not only protect AACS member schools but would also prohibit the establishment of national standards, national curriculum, and a national data system. AACS expressed the following:

The autonomous nature of private, faith-based schools allows them the freedom to provide educational services in adherence to a faith-based mission. As a result of adhering to their mission and their accountability to the parents, AACS schools have experienced great success in educating their students.

The language that has been included in ESEA since its inception has allowed for this freedom of private, faith-based, and home schooled education to exist; and we urge maintaining this same language in the reauthorization of ESEA (section 9506 in NCLB). Language has also been included which allows for equitable participation for private schools in some programs, specifically programs designed to help disadvantaged students and to further the professional development of teachers and principals while at the same time protecting the autonomous nature of these schools. Maintaining this language and protections for the independence and autonomy of private schools would ensure that the individual needs of students can be met.

In addition, the NCLB Act (and ESEA before) prohibited the establishment of a national curriculum (section 9527), national testing (section 9529), mandatory national teacher certification (section 9530), and a national student database (section 9531). We urge maintaining this same language in the reauthorization of ESEA as efforts to control curriculum, standards, testing, and teacher certification from the federal level would not only greatly endanger the individualized instruction that is necessary for every child to receive an excellent education in any school, but it would also jeopardize the religious freedom of faith-based schools to adhere to their mission when determining their own curriculum and hiring the best faculty and staff that helps them achieve academic excellence in their schools.

Currently, both the House and the Senate education committees have begun holding hearings on ESEA, although only a [blueprint](#) of the legislation has been released. There seems to be bipartisan support to work on

the bill; however, as the discussions move from underlying principles to the details there will likely be disagreement on how best to structure the education reforms.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has [defended](#) the blueprint on Capitol Hill saying he believes that the changes made during reauthorization will move to “increase local control” and “raise standards” in what is “an unprecedented opportunity to reform our nation's schools...preparing all of our students for success in college and careers.” He focused on encouraging initiatives that would establish common standards between states and improving assessment methods. Republicans, however, have continued to reiterate the four principles they wish to see in the reauthorization of ESEA, which include restoring local control, empowering parents, letting teachers teach, and protecting taxpayers.

Religious Heritage Petition

Last May Congressman Randy Forbes (R-VA) introduced House Res. 397, in which the U.S. House of Representatives would declare the first week of May as “American Religious History Week.” American Religious History Week would acknowledge the vital role that religious peoples have played in American history. The text of the bill includes pages of reasons why religious faith is central to American history and why it is vital the House publicly recognize this importance.

Among the reasons given are the following:

[R]eligious faith was not only important in official American life during the periods of discovery, exploration, colonization, and growth but has also been acknowledged and incorporated into all 3 branches of American Federal government from their very beginning;

[T]he Supreme Court of the United States affirmed this self-evident fact in a unanimous ruling declaring ‘This is a religious people ... From the discovery of this continent to the present hour, there is a single voice making this affirmation’;

[T]hroughout the American Founding, Congress frequently appropriated money for missionaries and for religious instruction, a practice that Congress repeated for decades after the passage of the Constitution and the First Amendment.

The bill currently sits in the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and has 79 co-sponsors. In an effort to garner support for the bill, high school student Nick Stelzig, a senior from Rainelle Christian Academy in Rainelle, West Virginia, has organized a petition calling all Christians to sign it in order to fight for the bill and to see that it receives a vote on the House floor. “This bill acknowledges the Christian heritage and principles this nation was founded on, and rejects, ‘in the strongest terms,’ any attempt to omit or remove such history from our nation’s public buildings or education system. Upon reading this bill, I decided that I needed to do something about it; because if the Christians don’t do something about it who will? This is where I need your help,” Nick stated.

If you would like more information on this bill please click [here](#). Or if you would like to sign the [petition](#), please contact [Nick Stelzig](#).

Health Care Aftermath

Just one week after a landmark health care overhaul bill was signed into law, the President signed the reconciliation bill with “needed” changes to the health care law. The reconciliation bill, which was an essential element needed to garner the support of Democrats in order to pass the original health care bill, also contained an [overhaul](#) of the student loan industry. While funding for early education was originally in the student loan bill, it was stripped when the bill was added on to the reconciliation bill. Secretary Duncan has indicated that he will look for another vehicle to get through Congress the billions in early education funding.

Moments after the President signed health care reform into law, 13 states immediately [filed](#) suit with the Federal Government over the mandate that forces individuals to buy health insurance and over the concern that the bill infringes on state's rights. Attorney Generals in Florida, South Carolina, Nebraska, Texas, Utah, Louisiana, Alabama, Colorado, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Washington, Idaho, and South Dakota all filed suit with the federal government. Florida Attorney General Bill McCollum stated, "This bipartisan effort by Attorneys General around the country should put the Federal Government on notice that we will not tolerate the constitutional rights of our citizens and the sovereignty of our states to be trampled on." He continued to state, "This law represents an unprecedented encroachment on the liberty of the American people, and I will pursue this litigation to the highest court if necessary."

Liberty University (LU) also [filed](#) a private suit, stating their concerns over the constitutionality of the law as well as their concern with the federal government forcing taxpayers to pay for abortions. Matt Staver, founder of Liberty Council and Dean of Liberty University Law school, stated in a [news release](#), "Congress does not have unlimited authority to regulate private actions. If the Constitution does not give Congress the power to act, then Congress cannot act. Congress clearly lacks the constitutional authority to force individuals to have, or private businesses to provide, health insurance." When asked by Fox News why the university has filed a lawsuit, Jerry Falwell Jr., Chancellor of LU, [stated](#) that one of the reasons was "because it attacks one of our core beliefs, which is the sanctity of life from conception to natural death."

In Case You Missed It:

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

[UK Mandates Children as Young as 5 to be Taught Sex Education](#)



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