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Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.
William Butler Yeats

Hidden Danger in Anti-Bullying Proposals

National attention has been focused on the topic of bullying. Although bullying is not a new phenomenon, a growing number of teen suicides linked to pervasive harassment have ignited a debate over how to best prevent bullying incidents. The latest incident in April involved the double [suicide](#) of Minnesota teens who were harassed by classmates allegedly because of their physical appearance. The grief stricken parents of these students blame school administrators for dismissing their complaints or failing to take action. In response to this growing problem, President Obama held a [summit](#) with advocates and bullying experts to address the issue. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan issued several [statements](#) acknowledging the harmful effects of bullying on school safety and student academic achievement. In conjunction with the Administration, the Department of Education (DOE) has also issued [guidance](#) for school officials, convened a summit and launched a website to help bullying victims. The website addresses several topics and highlights the rising concerns about cyberbullying. Unfortunately, these well meaning [efforts](#) to prevent and stop bullying are being hijacked by liberals who want to promote the normalization of homosexuality. On the DOE bullying webpage, controversial [advice](#) is given to LGBTQ bullying victims concerning the support and affirmation that they should receive from the community. Furthermore, homosexual activists have used this initiative to promote laws that [limit](#) free speech, encroach on parental rights, and extend school's legal responsibility to the monitoring of student Internet activity. Groups such as the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) have coined deceptive terms such as "safe schools" or "welcoming schools" to cloak their efforts to insert their agenda into anti-bullying curriculum. [Kevin Jennings](#), a GLSEN founder, was a strong advocate for this effort during his tenure as DOE Safe and Drug Free Schools Czar. While conservative groups welcome Jennings' recent resignation, they recognize that the liberal [objective](#) to indoctrinate children still exists. Most would agree that bullying is wrong regardless of the intended target or purported reason. Legislation should protect all bullying victims, not single out a particular group for preferential treatment. Recently, the [Alliance Defense Fund](#) has formulated a comprehensive bullying policy and submitted it to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (OCR) for review. Government regulation, bullying summits and public service announcements can never fully address the root cause of bullying or formulate workable solutions that will lead to its complete elimination. Ultimately, the responsibility of training children to treat others with respect and react in appropriate ways lies with the parents.

House Subcommittee Holds Charter School Hearing

Last week, the subcommittee on Early Education, Elementary and Secondary Education held a hearing to discuss the positive effect of charter schools on the nation's education system. Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Duncan Hunter released a [statement](#) citing the many constructive aspects of the charter school model. Charter school educators are not bound by the plethora of restrictions placed on public school teachers. Expert witnesses testified about the benefits of charter schools such as increasing parental involvement, providing alternatives for students in failing public schools and promoting investment in the community. To view the hearing, [click here](#).

Public Expression of Religion Act

Representative Dan Burton recently introduced [H.R. 2023](#), the Public Expression of Religion Act. This act seeks to curtail the amount of litigation brought against religious entities by limiting the reasons for which suits can be filed in court. Expressions of religion would have to be declaratory or injunctive in nature to warrant a

hearing. Groups, such as the ACLU, FFRF and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, regularly use the threat of litigation to force cities and states to accede to their demands. Usually, the [Establishment Clause](#) of the First Amendment which prohibits the establishment of religion by the government is the basis for these suits. Currently, the losing side must pay the legal fees for both litigants. This causes many localities to abandon their position in order to avoid paying the exorbitant fees with taxpayer funds. This measure would require both parties to pay their own legal fees and thereby remove the incentive for many of these liberal groups to harass private and public institutions.

Tennessee Lawmakers Pass Ten Commandments Resolution

The Tennessee House of Representatives unanimously [passed](#) H.R. 107 affirming the integral role played by the Ten Commandments in our nation's founding. The resolution urges all counties to permit the posting of the Ten Commandments in the state's courthouses. The constitutionality of the measure will likely face several legal challenges. Similar resolutions have already been passed in 90% of Tennessee's counties. Almost a decade ago, Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice [Roy Moore](#) waged a massive legal battle to keep a Ten Commandments monument in his court but was ultimately forced to remove it after the judge decided in favor of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Currently, Moore is the president of the Foundation for Moral Law. In a [statement](#), Moore praised the measure and expressed his hope that other states will follow Tennessee's example.

Second Circuit Rules Against Religious Groups

Last week, the Second Circuit reached a [decision](#) that could affect many churches around the country if it is upheld. The ruling affirmed a lower court decision that allows all 1200 New York public schools to discriminate against church groups who seek to use their facilities for worship services after hours. In 2002, the Alliance Defense Fund defeated a similar attempt to block facility use. Currently, about 60 churches meet in school facilities in New York public schools. All other community groups are still allowed to meet in the buildings. Although the ruling states that this decision does not constitute "viewpoint discrimination," critics of the decision point to the fact that religious groups are the sole focus of the ban. In the dissenting opinion, Judge Walker declared that the majority opinion is "inconsistent with Supreme Court precedent" and that a "fear of violating the Establishment Clause" is an insufficient basis to prohibit churches' use of public facilities. The decision is being appealed to a higher court.

Prayer Prevails in Texas

In a surprising turn of events, Medina Valley High valedictorian, Angela Hildenbrand, was granted an emergency order which allowed her to pray during her graduation speech. The objection of one agnostic family led a judge to expressly prohibit prayer and virtually any religious content in the ceremony. The protesting parents stated that allowing prayer would cause "irreparable harm" to their son. Washington D.C. based group, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, brought the suit for the family. The [ruling](#) included a list of specific words that could not be used during the exercises. Senator John Cornyn opined that the ruling taught the class of 2011 the "wrong civics lesson." Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott and Liberty Institute worked quickly to reinstate the valedictorian's [First Amendment](#) rights prior to the ceremony. There was an outpouring of support from the community, and the story received national media coverage. A last minute ruling by the 5th Circuit overturned the decision on the basis of its unconstitutionality. To view the speech [click here](#).

In Case You Missed It:

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

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