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“Those who manage the affairs of government are by this means reminded that the law of God demands that they should be courageously true to the interests of the people, and that the Ruler of the Universe will require them a strict account of their stewardship. The teachings of both human and Divine law thus merging into one word, duty, form the only union of Church and state that a civil and religious government can recognize.”

Stephen Grover Cleveland, 22nd and 24th President of the United States

D.C. School Choice Program

The final Congressionally-mandated [report](#) on the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program was released this week with compelling findings that may have lawmakers rethinking their actions. Last year the Democratic leadership silently eliminated funding for the OSP, a program that provides school vouchers for low-income families. Despite a city-wide campaign to keep the program and continue to allow for children of low-income families to have a choice in their child’s education, Democrats in Congress under direction from President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stripped the program of funding and rescinded scholarships that had been awarded to students. Republican leadership pushed to see the program reinstated and mandated a study of the program in order to prove the program’s benefits.

Nearly a year later, the report has been released, and many are shocked to see its findings. Perhaps the most stunning aspect of the report is the huge increase in graduation rates for children who received a scholarship. The nearly 20% increase in the graduation rate among students who participated in the program is a huge success in the city that produces the nation’s lowest graduation rate. Other findings of the program included a substantial increase in parental satisfaction as well as higher reading scores. According to [Business Wire](#),

Students from chronically underperforming public schools experienced graduation rates that were 20 percentage points higher and female students saw graduation rates increase by 28 percentage points. Many students are reading at higher levels as a result of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program.

The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program has proven a significant catalyst for education reform in Washington, D.C. A stunning 28 percent of D.C. public schools made definitive efforts to improve as a direct result of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program. . . . Specifically, schools increased efforts to involve parents, improved safety, offered new courses, and lowered class sizes, among other reforms.

Parents who sent their children to schools using scholarships are much happier than parents who don’t, the study reveals. . . . The study found that ‘students offered a scholarship attended schools with more frequent parent-school communication’ and that 76 percent of participating parents graded their children’s schools an ‘A’ or a ‘B.’

With the release of the report, supporters are hoping lawmakers will reconsider their actions and reinstate the program. The [Washington Post](#) wrote:

More than 3,700 students -- most of them black or Hispanic -- have been awarded scholarships, which provide up to \$7,500 for private-school tuition, since the program's start in 2004. Students currently enrolled, an estimated 1,300, will be allowed to continue until they graduate from high school. But for reasons that have more to do with opposition from teachers unions than what's good for children, no new students are being accepted. Education Secretary Arne Duncan last year signaled the program's demise by rescinding scholarships already offered, and congressional Democrats refused to reauthorize the program. These findings should prompt them to reconsider. Said former D.C. Council member Kevin P. Chavous, chairman of the Black Alliance for Educational Options, 'The results of the study demonstrate what we've known for years: [The program] is making a difference for students who need our help the most.'

Update: Kagan Nomination

As the Senate prepares to begin hearings next week on the confirmation of U.S. Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan, conservatives continue to beat the drum over major philosophical concerns and the nominee's lack of qualified experience. Kagan has been the U.S. Solicitor General for a little over a year and had only 2 years of litigation experience prior to that position. Because of her lack of a record, Senators have had to look at her writings while serving in the Clinton Administration. Since last week, the Senate has received over 70,000 documents from the Clinton Library. Many believe a week is not enough time to fully digest all her documents before her hearing starts next week. The Democratic leadership is determined to begin her hearings none-the-less and is urging a final vote on the nominee by August.

Concerns over her elevation of international law over constitutional law as well as her views on religious liberty, abortion, and gun rights are all expected to be discussed at the hearings. Carrie Severino of the Judicial Crisis Network stated regarding Kagan's writings, "The documents show a politically savvy Kagan, and bring to the fore the question of whether she would be able to set aside her deeply ingrained political instincts to evenhandedly apply the law."

Americans United for Life has written memos specifically on Kagan's position on the pro-life issue, showing her to be a supporter of "women's rights," [abortion funding](#), [partial-birth abortion](#), as well as embryonic stem-cell research, and [assisted suicide](#).

Other concerns have been raised on Kagan's background and judicial philosophy. Frank J Gaffney Jr., President of the Center for Security Policy and host of "Secure Freedom Radio," points out that her activity regarding recruiters at the Harvard Law School shows her to be anti-military. In a recent article, he writes that at the same time Kagan was busy pushing the military recruiters off the Harvard Law School campus during her tenure as its dean, she was also [very supportive](#) of having "what amounted to Saudi recruiters ensconced there for the purpose of enlisting some of the nation's finest young lawyers to work for the industry know as Shariah-Compliant Finance (SCF)." In addition, as dean, Kagan undertook the effort to update and revise the law school curriculum. This update included the removal of Constitutional Law and the addition of International Law in the curriculum. On the Harvard law school [website](#), Kagan said, "This marks a major step forward in our efforts to develop a law school curriculum for the 21st century."

ACTION: Please contact your [Senators](#) and urge them to **OPPOSE** the nomination of Elana Kagan to the Supreme Court.

Early Learning

The Woodrow Wilson Center in conjunction with the Open Society Institute hosted a Capitol Hill briefing this week titled "[Early Childhood Development: Why it Matters in the U.S. and Worldwide.](#)" Speakers included Sarah Klaus, Director, Early Childhood Program, Open Society Institute; Michelle Neuman, Senior Early Childhood Development Specialist, World Bank; Adele Robinson, Associate Executive Director, Public Policy,

National Association for the Education of Young Children; and Emily Vargas-Barón, Director, The RISE Institute. The focal point of the briefing was to argue for an increased focus on early education not only in the U.S. but in countries around the globe and to express the need for more government funding for these programs.

The panel spoke about the lack of public support for early learning programs and the need to collaborate efforts from the local level to global outreach in order to educate children in their “primary” years. They argued a “gap in equity” drives the investment to procure a stable early education program in the U.S, citing examples from Great Britain and the European Union where free access to pre-k is a “right” of the child. Sarah Klaus cited the UN Committee on the Child and urged government support to focus on the education, health, parenting, sanitation and other aspects in a child’s life from “Pre-birth - Age 8.” The panel argued that early childhood development will lead to greater economic stability and will help relieve the “burden” being placed on the “parent’s back.” The panel also discussed ways to have parent’s “participate” in their child’s education including home visitations.

Not all organizations are quick to support government funded early education. Lindsey Burke of the Heritage Foundation has done [extensive research](#) on early education and finds that that more government funding for education during the early years will really just create an unnecessary subsidy for the middle class.

Maureen Wiebe, AACS Legislative Director, has also expressed to the Department of Education and Congress the essential component of a parent’s role in a young child’s life as well as the success of private pre-k programs around the nation. She attributed this success to their autonomy and mission as well as the tremendous emphasis private Christian schools put on the parental and family role in a child’s life. She commented, “Without question, quality parenting is the best predictor of a child’s future success and development emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually. Any early education that a child receives beyond the home can serve to enhance a child’s experiences but should never supplant the parents’ role in providing the education and direction for these young children.” She further stated that “autonomy also aids the non-public school in employing highly qualified teachers as the principals have the authority and autonomy to hire the best teachers that align with the mission and vision of the school. This serves to ensure that the teachers and administration of the school have the same strong commitment to the education of the children.”

National Bible Association Announces “2010 Capitol Hill Award” Recipient

The [National Bible Association](#) awarded this year’s “2010 Capitol Hill Award” to Rep. Louie Gohmert, the U.S. Congressman serving Texas’s First District. The National Bible Association was founded 70 years ago and has continued to give the award to legislators who [display](#) an “exemplary commitment to reading the Bible.” Rep. Gohmert has never shied away from his faith and has played a vital role in restoring our nation to its religious founding. He has spoken at both the AACS Youth Legislative Training Conference and the AACS National Legislative Conference and has given much of his time and effort toward reaching out to religious organizations and faith-based schools. Rep. Gohmert is faithful in his Christian service and commitment to Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, TX, where he serves as a deacon and Sunday school teacher. The AACS is pleased to see the award given to such a worthy candidate. Congratulations Rep. Gohmert!

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Mass. Town Distributes Condoms in Elementary School](#)

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