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We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Thomas Jefferson

Liberty Counsel Clients Celebrate the Upholding of Religious Liberties

Perhaps America's Founding Fathers had a special celebration this last Independence Day as Liberty Counsel upheld the "truths to be self-evident," through their [settlement](#) with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to amend Florida's Santa Rosa County School District's Consent Decree last week. Representing twenty-four of the district's teachers, staff, students, and community members, Liberty Counsel battled the decree that violated dozens of constitutional religious freedoms these last two years. Violations included prohibiting teachers from praying privately, wearing religious jewelry, and attending and fully participating in baccalaureate services, and the students from participating in private, after-school religious functions. Founder of Liberty Counsel and Dean of Liberty University School of Law Mathew D. Staver said, "From the beginning we contended that this Consent Decree went too far and swallowed up the rights of teachers, staff, students and members of the community. The Constitution is not some relic that can be discarded at will." School employees who disregarded the consent decree were subject to potential criminal or civil contempt charges. Principal Frank Lay and Athletic Director Robert Freedman, for instance, were charged with criminal contempt after praying over a meal. Their prospective sentence was a \$5,000 fine, six months in jail, and a collective loss of seventy years worth of retirement benefits. Liberty Counsel defended those charged and championed the upholding of our Constitutional religious liberties resulting in a huge win for Santa Rosa County citizens. Staver went on to say, "We are pleased that freedom has been restored to Santa Rosa County. It is appropriate to celebrate these restored freedoms as America celebrates Independence Day."

By Rachel Devamithran, Liberty Counsel Intern and former AACS Legislative employee

Pro-Life Movement on the Offensive

As a result of the watershed 2010 election cycle, the pro-life movement has made significant gains across the country. State legislatures have passed a variety of measures that defund abortion providers such as Planned Parenthood and inform potential abortion patients of the inherent risks and available alternatives. In six states, abortions have been banned after twenty weeks since studies show that babies can feel pain at that point in the pregnancy. [Fetal pain legislation](#) has become an effective tool of pro-life advocates. Abortion advocates are hard pressed to justify blocking legislation that keeps babies from undergoing horrific procedures. Research by respected neonatal and pediatric doctors has shown that babies are capable of feeling pain earlier than previously thought. Abortion proponents have not mounted a major legal challenge to fetal pain legislation in the courts. It is unclear whether such a challenge would be successful in the current Supreme Court in light of Justice Anthony Kennedy's decision in *Gonzalez v. Carhart*. In that decision, Kennedy, who is routinely the tie breaking vote, upheld the ban on partial birth abortion procedures.

Indiana's Enacts Pro-Life Provisions

On July 1, several pro-life [measures](#) were enacted in Indiana despite the Administration's objections. These changes have been hailed as the biggest pro-life gains in the state in four decades. Abortion providers will now have to take additional steps in order to be in compliance with state laws. These steps include informing patients of when life begins, the inherent risks involved in an abortion procedure, and safe haven laws and underage

parental notification. Two provisions – withholding of funding for abortion providers and notification of fetal pain - are under currently under review. Pro-life groups are confident that these provisions will be upheld under scrutiny. Indiana Right to Life applauds the Indiana legislature for taking these steps to inform and protect women.

Gay History Bill Reaches California Governor's Desk

On Tuesday, the California State Assembly sent SB 48 to Governor Jerry Brown for consideration. The [controversial](#) measure would mandate that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender figures in history are included in social science instruction. The bill would also prohibit any material that portrays LGBT figures in a negative manner effectively curbing the First Amendment rights of the opposition. Advocates of the measure say that teaching gay history will help LGBT students by reducing bullying, alleviate feelings of alienation, and provide a more complete historical account. Opponents have expressed a myriad of concerns about the measure which includes the proposed indoctrination of children, the inability of parents to remove their children from these courses and the national textbook trend that would be set by the adoption of this bill. In a 2009 California case, parents were not allowed to have their children opt out of classes because they were classified as a social science course instead of health education classes. Conservative lawmakers have raised concerns about sexual orientation being the primary focus instead of the actual accomplishments of the individual. Since California is the nation's biggest textbook buyer, pundits have reasoned that this bill could have a significant impact on textbook offerings. Previously, Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed the bill. Governor Brown has not indicated whether he will sign the measure.

National Education Association Criticizes Duncan's Policies

The nation's most powerful educators' union held its annual conference from June 30 to July 5 in Chicago, Illinois. At this year's conference, NEA delegates expressed frustration with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's [agenda](#). Although the group voted down a measure to call for his [removal](#), they did adopt a [resolution](#) delineating the reasons for their disapproval of his policies. In a [speech](#) to the conference, Vice President Joe Biden noted the "fighting in the family" but highlighted the shared goals (progressive tax policies, early childhood education, healthcare) of the Administration and union leaders. He also stressed the need for the NEA to endorse the President and resist the efforts of the "new" Republicans who do not share the same goals. At the end of the convention, members voted to endorse the President's reelection bid in spite of calls for a delay of the announcement from some state delegates.

AACS Prepares for the 17th Annual Youth Legislative Training Conference

July 12 – 16, the American Association of Christian Schools will be hosting the 17th annual Youth Legislative Training Conference in Washington, D.C. Forty students from AACS schools around the country have been selected to attend the conference. Participants will gain hands-on political experience as they engage in activities such as a weeklong mock Senate, attending a Congressional briefing, meetings with their Representatives and Senators, touring historical sites, and listening to an array of political and policy experts. The week will conclude with a wreath laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. At the conclusion of the conference, a video and pictures will be posted on the AACS website. Since the D.C. office will be hosting this event, the Washington Flyer newsletter will resume the week after the conference. Please pray that this year's YLTC attendees and chaperones will have a great experience in our nation's capital.

Action Item: "Like" our AACS Legislative Page on facebook and follow us on Twitter for conference updates (@AACS_DC).

In Case You Missed It:

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

[When I Think of America](#)