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"While the people are virtuous they cannot be subdued; but when once they lose their virtue they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader."

Samuel Adams

Common Core Curriculum Criteria Pushback

The [release](#) of the proposed English language arts curriculum content guides authored by David Coleman and Susan Pimentel has sparked a fierce debate among educators and textbook publishers. According to Coleman and Pimentel, the twenty-four page document is meant to establish criteria for publishers that identify the main components and ideas that must be included in textbooks that support the [Common Core Standards](#) (CCS). Their recommendations have been evaluated by a variety of education stakeholders in an informal vetting process. Critics of the guidelines allege that they "dictate pedagogy." This debate also centers on the important question of what consortia should be in charge of developing the curriculum guides. [Opponents](#) of the CCS offer cautionary tales about a highly centralized group being entrusted to formulate a "one size fits all" curriculum [approach](#) that would apply to forty-six diverse states. Experts at the influential Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the primary financial backers behind the CCS initiative, are considering whether curricula standards should be evaluated by a validation process or a panel of experts. Groups such as the National Council of Teachers of English and the National Education Association characterize such efforts as a "usurpation of teacher judgment." The CCS recommendations will require substantial investments in professional development and training courses. The English guide promotes the use of "complex readings" and requires students to evaluate and make assumptions based on an in-depth reading of the text. Over 80% of the reading standards are said to be text dependent. Educators have raised other issues with the suggestions included in the guide. The curriculum guide authors maintain that their proposals are merely instructive and nonbinding on publishing companies.

New York Same-Sex Marriage Law Goes Into Effect

On July 24, New York became the sixth state to allow same-sex couples to legally marry. Since same-sex marriage is still illegal in twenty nine states, same-sex couples recognized in New York will not necessarily be [recognized](#) by other states. The federal definition of marriage as stipulated by the Defense of Marriage Act confers Social Security benefits and permits joint tax filings for heterosexual couples. Although Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg praise the new law as a positive step forward for the Empire State, the law's passage has opened a virtual Pandora's box of legal issues and concerns. Several New York clerks have quit their jobs in objection to the law. Other issues raised include determining the applicability of the religious exemption for those who do not wish to provide services for same-sex weddings, benefit availability issues, same-sex divorce laws, etc. In light of the lack of transparency and alleged constitutional [violations](#) that occurred throughout the bill's passage, Liberty Counsel has filed a lawsuit on behalf of the New Yorkers for Constitutional Freedoms seeking declaratory and injunctive relief from the law.

Senate Holds Hearing on Repeal of DOMA

Last week, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a [hearing](#) for Senator Dianne Feinstein's (D - CA) bill [S.598](#), the Respect for Marriage Act. This deceptively titled proposal actually seeks to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act. Although over 80% of Congress voted in favor of DOMA in 1996, President Obama recently directed Attorney General Eric Holder and the Justice Department to stop defending the law. In response, House leadership convened the Bipartisan Legal Advisory Group and retained former Solicitor General Paul Clement

to represent the House in the onslaught of same-sex marriage litigation that resulted from the President's decision. Senator Feinstein's bill seeks to unilaterally change the definition of marriage by eliminating the two main components of DOMA: the ability of states to determine whether they will recognize marriages performed in other states and the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman in federal law. At the [Senate](#) hearing, the testimony of traditional marriage experts was met with belligerent taunts and derision by several of the committee members. [Austin Nimocks](#), Alliance Defense Fund attorney, outlined the numerous benefits for children raised by both a mother and a father. Nimocks also emphasized the importance of maintaining the standard definition and the stability that traditional marriage has on society as a whole. Despite the heckling at the hearing, the bill will probably not be taken up in the Senate since the measure would not find sufficient support in the House of Representatives. Alliance Defense Fund Senior Counsel Jordan Lawrence opined that the societal and fiscal effect of forcing the remaining forty-four states to recognize same-sex marriages would not necessarily alleviate the difficulty of securing federal benefits for same-sex couples.

NCLB Left Behind

The current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act commonly referred to as "No Child Left Behind" ([NCLB](#)), which governs the public school system, has created uncertainty for the majority of schools which will not reach its improvement benchmarks by the 2014 deadline. Three [states](#) – Idaho, Montana, South Dakota – have decided to reject the requirements set forth in the act and abandon their attempts to set yearly academic math and reading proficiency goals. In Montana, at least 255 of its 821 schools are currently not meeting the standards. Next year, almost half of the state's schools will receive failing grades according to the guidelines in NCLB. The data and transparency that resulted from the implementation of NCLB have provided further impetus for school reform programs. However, the controversial law also increased the federal government's role in education and has been blamed for the school district cheating scandals in [Georgia](#), Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia. School officials have blamed the unrealistic goals of NCLB for putting undue pressure on educators to achieve high test scores by any means necessary.

DADT Update

On Friday, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta [certified](#) that the military was ready for the repeal of the longstanding policy of homosexuals in the military commonly referred to as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." The certification process (signatures by Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the President) was meant to ensure that the repeal did not disrupt the unit cohesion and combat readiness of the armed forces. In sixty days, the repeal process will take full effect. Members of [Congress](#) have sent letters to the Pentagon asking for a detailed report of DADT repeal on future recruitment and retention efforts.

Tornado Relief Update

The AACS would like to thank all of those who donated funds for the southeast tornado relief effort. We have received \$13,939.20 for this project. The entire amount has been given to the Alabama Christian Education Association to further the recovery effort.

AACS 17th Annual Youth Legislative Training Conference

Action Item: View photos of our recent Youth Legislative Training Conference [here](#) and "Like" the AACS Legislative Page. Updates on current issues from our AACS Washington Office will be posted on this page.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Cheating Fails the Character Test](#)

[Administration Just Says No to Abstinence](#)

[South Korea Replaces Textbooks with Digital Content](#)

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