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Our contest is not only whether we ourselves shall be free, but whether there shall be left to mankind an asylum on earth for civil and religious liberty.

Samuel Adams

“No Child Left Behind” Waivers

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has announced that the Department of Education will begin granting “[No Child Left Behind](#)” proficiency standards relief [waivers](#) to states. Since many state education officials have acknowledged that they will not reach the Annual Yearly Percentage (AYP) [goals](#) or have 100% of students attain the established math and English standards by 2014, there has been an overwhelming cry for relief from the law’s punitive consequences. Despite questions of the illegality centered on unilateral circumvention of an established law, the Secretary has offered states waivers in exchange for adopting reform strategies favored by the Department. Heritage Foundation education policy analyst Lindsey Burke warns that these waivers set a “bad precedent” and do not offer “long term relief or solve the underlying problem.” Furthermore, *Washington Post* opinion education writer Valerie Kraus [questions](#) whether states will merely be replacing one bad policy with another favored by the Secretary. The Administration has blamed the lack of bipartisan agreement on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as the main impetus to offer waivers. As the *Washington Times* [reported](#) on Wednesday, despite “the mystery surrounding the details of the plan,” states are rushing to apply en masse. In the article, Massachusetts Education Department spokesman J. C. Considine compared the waiver offer with the Race to the Top competition and stated that in the past states adopted reforms for money now they were opting to adopt reforms for regulatory relief.

Liberal Groups Oppose Florida Ballot Initiative

Last session, the Florida legislature voted to place an amendment to overturn the infamous [Blaine Amendment](#) on the 2012 ballot. The longstanding Blaine amendments were a result of Presidential candidate James Blaine’s attempt to placate voters who expressed strong anti-Catholic sentiment in the late 1800’s. Although he lost the election, many states adopted the so-called Blaine amendments. Certain provisions in the amendments require discrimination against religious groups particularly in the area of education funding. Several liberal [groups](#) including the American Civil Liberties Union, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Anti-Defamation League, and the National Education Association have become plaintiffs in the case opposing the repeal of these amendments. Reverend Barry Lynn (AUSCS) has repeatedly testified in opposition to equal participation opportunities for faith-based organizations in regards to federal funding. The groups allege that the title on the ballot is misleading and the option should be removed entirely. Proponents of the repeal effort believe that Floridians should be given the opportunity to vote on the measure.

DOE Hosts Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools Conference

The Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools [Conference](#) (OSDFS Conference) was held at National Harbor in Maryland August 8–10. Thousands of education and community outreach [stakeholders](#) convened to be briefed by expert panelists on the latest challenges to student safety. Workshop offerings focused on emerging substance abuse threats, bullying and suicide, school safety plans in a post 9/11 world, and how to mitigate issues that affect LGBT students and other marginalized populations. Along with the

sessions, plenary sessions and movie screenings were also conducted throughout the conference. On Tuesday, the Secretary of Education outlined his plans for the [agency](#) and answered questions from the audience. For an overview of the conference, [click here](#).

School Safety in a Post 9/11 World Session – OSDFS Conference

A panel of experts who are routinely called upon to handle our nation's biggest tragedies discussed the way in which 9/11 and other tragedies have fundamentally altered the way that schools prepare and respond to disasters. A revised [emergency management](#) plan for schools was formulated by experts from the lessons learned from that fateful day. Four emergency management phases now include the following steps: prevention/[mitigation](#), [preparedness](#), [response](#) and [recovery](#). Panel expert, [Greg Thomas](#) (National Center for Disaster Preparedness) stressed the need to evaluate a school's preparedness mettle and emergency notification policies. He also reminded the audience that "proper planning prevents poor performance" in an emergency situation. In his book, *Uncommon Sense Uncommon Courage*, Thomas and several of his colleagues recount how sensible and heroic educators evacuated thousands of students at Ground Zero schools without any loss of life.

[Dr. Marleen Wong](#), USC professor named by the *Wall Street Journal* as the architect of school safety, highlighted how events such as the Oklahoma City bombing, school shootings and hurricanes have psychologically affected children. In her remarks, she stressed the importance of developing community partnerships, providing adequate crisis counseling training, the inclusion of religious leaders in the aftermath of senseless violence, centralization of mental health services, and a dedication to monitor those adults who are closely working with students since they are most susceptible to compassion fatigue. She also stressed the importance of communicating the school safety plan to all staff members and not a select few top officials.

National counterterrorism expert [Daniel Sutherland](#) spoke about the role schools and educators play in countering violent extremism. The government has been exploring partnering with nontraditional entities like schools to prevent terrorists from recruiting susceptible children to join their ranks. Immigrant integration and anti-bullying initiatives are the primary focus of the counterterrorism experts. Militant groups are actively seeking to recruit disaffected young people especially among immigrant populations to engage in extremist activities. Since teachers have "the most time on target" with children, they may be able to mitigate some of the negative messaging that that groups such as al Qaida and others use to persuade children. Finally, he suggested that 9/11 be used to compare and contrast ideas about proper patriotism, to counteract stereotyping, and to promote constructive dialogue.

Annual National Legislative Conference, September 12-14

This year's event will highlight the recent Supreme Court victory that upheld Arizona tuition tax credits. Mike Sproul (Christian Schools of Arizona) and banquet speaker Congressman Trent Franks (author of the Arizona Scholarship Tax Credit) will provide first-hand information about the very successful Arizona program and its impact on our AACCS schools in Arizona. Education expert Lindsey Burke will speak on the school choice movement and on national standards during the exclusive AACCS briefing from the Heritage Foundation. You can also meet with your Congressman and hear from others at the Congressional briefing. [Register](#) today!

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Atheists Oppose September 11 Memorial](#)

