



# THE WASHINGTON FLYER

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*“We fervently recommend to thy fatherly notice our federal convention. Favor them, from day to day, with thy inspiring presence; be their wisdom and strength; enable them to devise such measures as may prove happy instruments in healing all divisions and prove the good of the great whole...that the United States of America may form one example of a free and virtuous government. May we continue, under the influence of republican virtue to partake of all the blessings of cultivated and Christian society.”*

Prayer by Rev. William Rogers, July 4, 1787, during the Constitutional Convention

## **VIDEO: 2010 Youth Legislative Training Conference Huge Success!**

View a brief snapshot of the week of the 16<sup>th</sup> annual AACCS Youth Legislative Training [Conference](#) by [clicking here](#).

## **A National Education Philosophy**

Since taking office, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has made clear his intentions to use pragmatic means to bring about success in the nation’s failing schools. Determined to get the job done, this Administration has sought to bring about a “quiet revolution” in order to radically and fundamentally change the structure of the nation’s education system. Recently, Secretary Duncan made the following [remarks](#) as part of a speech at the National Press Club:

Today, in the field of public education, this moment is upon us and I am not the first to say it. From journalists and educators to politicians and parents—there is a growing sense that a quiet revolution is underway in our homes and schools, classrooms and communities. . . . I am especially honored to be part of an administration that is playing a modest role in sparking this quiet revolution.

We arrived in Washington at a time when America was deeply divided over the proper federal role in education policy. No Child Left Behind forced some hard conversations around issues like accountability and the achievement gap but it also triggered some negative consequences. It caused states to lower standards, mandated impractical remedies, and incentivized the wrong behavior among some educators who put standardized testing ahead of a well-rounded curriculum. Rather than driving reform at the local level, NCLB fed long-standing frustration with federal over-reaching.

Secretary Duncan then continued to list the accomplishments he believes have been made in the field of education by the current Administration through more federal dollars from the 2009 stimulus package, and more federal dollars in the Pell grant program (which incidentally resulted in a federal takeover of the student loan industry for higher education). When discussing the accomplishments made through the stimulus funds, Secretary Duncan praised the Race to the Top (RTTP) program for “improving education in four core areas of reform: standards, teachers, data and school turnarounds. With a budget of just \$5 billion dollars—less than one

percent of total education spending in America—this minor provision in the Recovery Act has unleashed an avalanche of pent-up education reform activity at the state and local level.”

In fact, Secretary Duncan specifically praised states who have adopted the Common Core Standards. While supporters of the [Common Core Standards](#) have adamantly stated that the initiative has been “state-led” and is not a move toward a national or federal standard, the Department of Education and the Administration’s role in incentivizing states to sign on and adopt the standards is prevalent. In order to be a highly considered candidate to receive Race to the Top (RTTT) funds, states must submit “[evidence of having adopted common standards](#).” And if that is not enough to entice states, the Administration has “laid the groundwork in their blueprint for tying the \$14.5 billion in Title I funding for low-income districts to the adoption of national standards—a deal that states will likely be unable to turn down.”

Though the Secretary may want the nation to believe that this “quiet revolution” is being driven by “great educators and administrators” who are facing “challenges” of teaching in “second-rate” schools, or by the “foundations and entrepreneurs that seed the kind of fresh, new thinking that every sector of society needs,” it is naïve to think that these are really the drivers behind this kind of fundamental change to our education system. Some would counter that the real “drive” behind this “quiet revolution” is the \$10 billion in funding that has states scrambling to do whatever is necessary even to be considered a viable contender. Make no doubt about it, the funding is being used to bribe states into adopting these “common”—or soon to be “federal”—standards which will be used to gain greater federal control of the education system.

While the adoption of Common Core Standards is perhaps one of the [biggest transformations](#) in education at this time, little debate has occurred on the issue. In fact, many states are simply adopting these standards with minimal to no evidence on whether these standards will in reality help their students achieve greater success and with no clear plan on whether their state can afford to make the drastic changes that the Administration is urging. No real explanation can be attributed to this mindset other than the prospect of being granted millions in federal money. In a letter sent from Secretary Duncan to the Governors of those states who were named as finalists in the RTTP funding program, the Secretary stated, “The Department pledges to support you and your state in this work by sharing the lessons learned and the materials developed through Race to the Top, and by including you in relevant collaborative learning communities. In addition, as you are aware, President Obama has proposed \$1.35 billion for Race to the Top in his fiscal year 2011 budget. We hope to continue this program and its support of reform across the country.”

However, as more federal dollars are sent to states for education, parental control along with local and state control will be stripped away. While many have applauded the Secretary for his efforts in education reform, some have voiced strong concerns over the direction this Administration is headed. The federal takeover of the banks and auto industry leads many to believe education is next. As Secretary Duncan stated, “As we look at the last 18 months, it is absolutely stunning to see how much change has happened.”

### **AACS Joins Fight to Ensure School Choice in Arizona**

The American Association of Christian Schools is pleased to be represented by Liberty Counsel, which submitted an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court in *Arizona Christian School Tuition Organization v. Kathleen M. Winn*. The Supreme Court announced last month that the highest court will hear arguments in the case that has [challenged](#) the constitutionality of a tax-credit program in the state of Arizona, which serves nearly 29,000 students, benefiting mostly special needs students and children of low-income families.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed suit 10 years ago, claiming that the program violated the establishment clause. According to the [Institute for Justice \(IJ\)](#), the organization arguing on behalf of the program, the ACLU “claims that the tax credit program advances religion because taxpayers—free from any government pressure—have independently decided to give more money to religiously affiliated School Tuition Organizations than to nonreligious organizations. Arizonans are free to give to any of the 54 organizations currently operating in Arizona, including many that are nonreligious.”

Several groups have also joined in the fight to secure education choice and freedom and have filed an amicus brief, or a “friend of the court” brief, to help expand the court’s knowledge on legal, fiscal, and social details that may not necessarily be brought up by the party’s opening brief. Liberty Counsel, joined by AACS, [submitted an amicus brief](#) which focuses on the true purpose of the Establishment Clause. The brief seeks to clarify the Establishment Clause standards which should be used to determine the constitutionality of a case, pointing out that the standards employed by the Ninth Circuit Court in their decision fail to meet these logical standards.

Dr. Jeff Walton, Executive Director for AACS elaborated on the case and the need to get involved:

The American Association of Christian Schools supports tax credit programs as perhaps the only vehicle allowing a tax incentive for parents who choose Christian schools without entangling the government in those schools. A challenge to the Arizona program threatens all efforts to offer parents genuine choice in education. The Arizona tax credit program has been a wonderful vehicle for allowing parents who are not wealthy to exercise a choice in their children’s education that previously only those who were more prosperous could exercise. . . . We believe that such freedom is the most effective and equitable way to improve the quality of K-12 education in America. Individuals and corporations may freely choose the School Tuition Organization to which they contribute. Parents may freely choose the STO and through it the school that a child will attend. The State of Arizona establishes no particular religion but establishes an environment in which individual choice and educational quality can flourish. The AACS fully supports those core values and applauds the State of Arizona for this remarkable and critical effort to offer educational choice and to foster educational quality.”

The AACS currently has 9 schools in Arizona which will directly be affected by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that “struck down the education choice law.”

### **Department of Education Hosts Bullying Summit**

The Department of Education’s Assistant Deputy Secretary for the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools Kevin Jennings and Assistant Secretary for the Office for Civil Rights Russlynn Ali joined the Secretary of Education Arne Duncan for a [two-day summit](#) on bullying in the nation’s capitol this week. As issued in a [press release](#) by the DOE, “The goal of the summit is to engage governmental and nongovernmental partners in crafting a national strategy to reduce and end bullying.” The summit focused on three main areas: “Research (what we know and additional gaps we need to fill); Programs (which programs work in combating bullying and areas where further programmatic development is needed); and Policy (how can policy at the local, state and federal levels help prevent bullying).”

Secretary Duncan made several remarks at the opening of the conference stating, “Bullying behavior is not only troubling in and of itself but if left unaddressed can quickly escalate into harassment, violence and tragedies. We hope this summit will help us get ahead of the game by focusing on prevention and doing everything we can to bring this plague to an end.”

Many, however, see the DOE using the bullying platform as just another means to [push a radical homosexual agenda](#) under the name of tolerance. In fact, two of the nongovernmental partners represented include the Human Rights Campaign and the Gay, Lesbian, and Strait Education Network (GLSEN), which was founded by Kevin Jennings before he became the Safe and Drug-Free School Czar. Both groups are self-avowed homosexual activists on the forefront of promoting “tolerance” among children. In fact, the Human Rights Campaign, self-described on the website as “America’s largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality,” stated in regards to the summit, “It is our hope that this first-of-its-kind bullying summit indicates that combating bullying in our nation’s schools, particularly against LGBT students, those perceived to be LGBT or those from LGBT families, is a priority for this Administration.”

The Human Rights Campaign also [sent a letter](#) to Attorney General Eric Holder, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, expressing their support for new federal legislation that would “prevent and address bullying in our nation’s schools.” In the letter, HRC outlined 9 points they wished to see this Administration put into practice. Three of the points are listed below:

- **Guidance.** DOJ, ED and HHS should update guidance for school personnel to emphasize liabilities, obligations and protections existing under current civil rights law and the Constitution for the bullying of students based on actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity, including an update to ED’s Office of Civil Rights January 2001 “Revised Sexual Harassment Guidance: Harassment of Students by School Employees, Other Students, or Third Parties, Title IX.”
- **Early Intervention Initiatives.** DOJ, ED and HHS should endorse and provide funds for schools to implement elementary school-based interventions that decrease bullying behavior before it intensifies in middle school. For example, these agencies should endorse state and local implementation of elementary school programs like the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s *Welcoming Schools*, which provides administrators, educators and parents/guardians with the resources necessary to create learning environments in which all students are welcomed and respected.
- **Federal Legislation.** The Administration should strongly support federal legislative efforts that target bullying and harassment, including bullying and harassment of LGBT students. Currently, the Student Non-Discrimination Act (H.R. 4530; S. 3390) and the Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 2262) would address the problem of bullying legislatively. Such legislation should be included in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act.

While the summit has come to an end, it is clear the direction this Administration is heading. The DOE has now set up a new “Safe and Supportive Schools grant program” intended to “enable states to measure school safety at the building level.” The DOE has also called for a “dramatic increase in funding” for the program through the Department’s blueprint for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). While preventing bullying is essential to securing safety in our schools, hijacking the problem in order to promote a liberal social ideology will produce more harm to American students.

### **Coming Up! AACS National Legislative Conference**

The AACS Legislative Office is looking forward to the National Legislative Conference in September, when many AACS state leaders along with administrators, pastors, teachers and students will convene in Washington, D.C. to discuss current legislation that can affect our Christian schools and ministries. The conference will also provide opportunity to hear from godly Congressmen and other national leaders who have been called to protect the religious freedom of our nation. In addition, the Heritage Foundation will be hosting an exclusive briefing for the AACS conference attendees to address issues of religious liberty, marriage, and an outreach to youth entitled Seek Social Justice. This year’s theme will be “But God,” taken from the 26th verse in Psalm 73, “...but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.”

Please mark your calendar for this year’s National Legislative Conference (September 13-15, 2010) to participate in the discussion of important issues facing our country, Christian schools, and churches around the nation. To download a registration form, please click [here](#).

### **In Case You Missed It:**

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

[Signs of the Times: Rising Washington Tide Against Religious Hiring](#)

[Judge to rule on stay Thursday in Prop. 8 case](#)



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