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*Let us be sure that those who come after will say of us in our time, that in our time we did everything that could be done. We finished the race; we kept them free; we kept the faith.*

**Ronald Reagan**

### **Race to the Top Winners Face Challenges**

The second round of the controversial [Race to the Top](#) grant competition produced eleven winners (ten states and the District of Columbia) who received varying awards under the 4.35 billion dollar education reform initiative. Questions about how the winners would implement the lofty plans and goals set forth in their ambitious grant applications were present from the program's inception. Results have proven these doubts to be well-founded. Chiefs for Change, a group of state education officials, recently participated in a conference call and wrote a letter to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan admonishing him to hold states accountable for implementing their reform proposals. In their [letter](#), the group charged the Department of Education not to allow states to amend their proposals, delay implementation of key reforms, or in some cases, permanently set aside their promised reforms. Although the Chiefs for Change implored the Secretary to withhold funds from those states that do not implement their promised plans, it is interesting to note that some of the members of the Chiefs for Change themselves have asked for leniency with their own plans. For example, Rhode Island has asked the DOE to allow it to delay some aspects of its proposed charter school initiative and the development of an educator certification program. In an uncharacteristic move, the Department has threatened to withhold 18 million of the state's RTT grant. Florida and Tennessee, whose education officials are also members of CFC, have also asked to revise their proposals. Other winners, such as New York and Hawaii, have had parts of their reform strategies struck down by courts and have indefinitely delayed or abandoned some of their efforts. As was pointed out by some critics prior to the program's inception, plans adopted by one state administration could potentially be set aside by a new state administration with different goals. The newest iteration of the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge is expected to resurrect the firestorm of criticism surrounding the Department's grant recipients and whether the grantees' proposals come to fruition.

### **ACLU Wages War Against Internet Filtering**

The American Civil Liberties Union, a liberal watchdog organization infamous for insatiable litigation under the auspices of freedom, is now threatening public schools to change their internet filtering protocols to include sexual education and LGBT advocacy websites. They argue that children have a fundamental right to access such information on school computers. The ACLU has preemptively sent letters to school districts [warning](#) them that failure to adjust their filtering systems will result in costly litigation. Some school districts like Prince William County in Virginia quickly caved in to the group's intimidation tactics. While other schools have promised to reevaluate their policies, officials in a Missouri school district have stated that they feel their filtering standards are appropriate and are preparing for a legal dispute with the ACLU. In an effort to combat this initiative, the Alliance Defense Fund, a network of Christian attorneys, has sent letters to schools informing them of their constitutionally protected rights.

## **Planned Parenthood Defunding Fight Continues**

Earlier this year, pro-life advocates in Kansas won a major victory in their effort to defund Planned Parenthood on the state level. Under the law, funds formerly given to Planned Parenthood would be given to other family planning groups that do not provide abortions. Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider, has been under intense scrutiny for the undercover footage depicting workers offering advice to "clients" about hiding various illegal activities. The Kansas branch of the organization requested a reprieve because they would have been forced to close down one or more clinics as a result of the decrease in funding. On August 31, a federal judge [ruled](#) that Kansas must continue to fund the Planned Parenthood clinics until a final decision is reached by the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals.

## **California College Settles Free Speech Case**

After several years of litigation, California based Cypress College has agreed to amend its restrictive free speech policies and pay monetary and legal fees of a pro-life student group. The group was subjected to repeated arrests and harassment after they staged a series of peaceful pro-life protests on campus. Katie Short, legal director at the Life Legal Defense Foundation, stated "This victory shows that, with a lot of patience and persistence, it is possible to open the eyes of college administrators and successfully preserve the free speech rights of young people on our public college campuses."

## **New Jersey Anti-Bullying Law Update**

On September 1, New Jersey enacted one of the nation's toughest anti-bullying [laws](#). The controversial measure was introduced in an effort to reduce bully-related suicide. National attention focused on the state after Rutgers University freshman Tyler Clementi committed suicide after some of his peers posted embarrassing video footage online. Clementi's parents and others were frustrated by the lack of legal recourse available to bullying victims, and their frustration served as motivation for passage of the law. The "Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights" sets forth strict requirements for the reporting, investigation and resolution of bullying incidents. Students will now be able to anonymously report bullying incidents via the Crimestoppers hotline. Despite the good intentions of the law's sponsors, a spokesman for the New Jersey Association of School Administrators has expressed concern about the fiscal burden the measure places on already overtaxed school budgets. Provisions of the law require public schools to employ an anti-bullying specialist, investigate incidents within 24 hours of notification, fill out detailed reports for every incident, and send a biannual report to the state government. The report findings will be used to grade schools, and that score will then be posted on the school's website. School districts must hire anti-bullying coordinators and provide comprehensive staff training. A *New York Times* [article](#) raises important questions about the ability of this program to alleviate the problem. In addition to establishing an extra layer of bureaucracy, this law does not address the issue of cyberbullying which often occurs outside of school and has become a growing issue. The subjective nature of bullying and anonymous reporting component has great potential for misuse by disingenuous persons whose allegations could irreparably mar the reputation of the accused. As one expert opined, laws alone will not necessarily change offensive behavior and respect for others must begin in the home with proper parenting.

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

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

[Schools Offering Rewards for Attendance](#)

[Let the People Vote in New York](#)

[Massachusetts Parents Win Survey Battle](#)

