

**The Washington Flyer**

**September 9, 2011**

Great tragedy has come to us, and we are meeting it with the best that is in our country, with courage and concern for others because this is America. This is who we are.
[**George W. Bush**](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/g/georgewbu142664.html)

**Atheists Fight to Exclude Ground Zero Cross**

As the 10th anniversary of 9/11 nears, the role of religion in the numerous observances around the country has become a topic of contention. From New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s ban on the [participation](http://wwrn.org/articles/36061/) of religious leaders in the Ground Zero ceremony to the [secular](http://www.foxnews.com/us/2011/09/06/evangelicals-left-off-national-cathedral-11-program/) service being held at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., the exclusion of religion and faith in the observances is causing religious groups to become vocal about the importance of recognizing and including evangelical Christian leaders. Post 9/11, there was an overwhelming acknowledgement and turning to God across the nation as Americans sought to cope with the tragic events of the day. Conservative leaders question the decision to exclude Christianity and include other minority faiths in observances in an effort to be politically correct. In the most recent incident, the American Atheists have brought a [suit](http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=45375) against the inclusion of an iconic cross-shaped beam in the National September 11 Memorial and Museum. The “[Ground Zero Cross](http://blogs.wsj.com/law/2011/07/26/the-brewing-battle-over-the-ground-zero-cross/),” as it was dubbed by workers at the site, became a symbol of inspiration to many. The cross was placed on display and is now slated to be included in the museum’s artifacts display. The atheist group claims that the inclusion of the cross will cause them mental anguish and a variety of other physical ailments. Since the museum will receive some government financing, American Atheist President David Silverman argues that the cross will violate the Establishment Clause. Furthermore, he contends that if the cross is included, then every other faith should be allowed to display a symbol. In his view, inclusion of the cross elevates Christianity and thereby slights other religious faiths. Advocates of separation of church and state have editorialized that attacking the Ground Zero cross is not a battle that the majority of them would like to fight because they will lose in the court of public opinion.

**Health and Human Services Mandates Abortion Coverage**

The Department of Health and Human Services recently announced the final comment period for a new regulation that seeks to require every health care provider to cover the so-called “full range of preventive health services” on all medical insurance plans. The mandate would require insurance plans to cover services which include abortions and abortion-inducing drugs. Pro-life advocates such as the Family Research Council have launched an [initiative](https://www.frcaction.org/get.cfm?request=/alerts/stop-obamacares-conscience-rights-invasion&port=80&track=0) to raise public awareness and involvement. Fiscal conservatives contend that health care providers will raise costs as the providers pass the expense on to consumers. The narrow religious exemption in the regulation does little to assuage the concerns of religiously affiliated institutions which would be forced to cover objectionable medical procedures in their employee health plans. For more information and to post a public comment, please [click here](http://www.nchla.org/actiondisplay.asp?ID=299).

**Pro-Life Group Faces Free Speech Lawsuit**

In what could be a watershed case for political speech, the Susan B. Anthony List has appealed a ruling by an Ohio federal judge to the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals. The Susan B. Anthony List (SBA List) is a pro-life group that seeks to “mobilize, advance and represent pro-life women in politics.” The defamation [case](http://thehill.com/blogs/healthwatch/abortion/177435-sba-list-appeals-ruling-on-health-law-and-abortion) was filed against the organization by former Rep. Steve Driehaus after the group sought to post billboards alleging that the Congressman had supported taxpayer funding of abortion by voting for the health care bill commonly referred to as Obamacare. Although the billboard did not go up, Mr. Driehaus’s suit argues that the group violated Ohio’s statute that prohibits making false statements about political candidates with their claim which deprived him of his Congressional job and future earnings.

SBA List contends that the statute is unconstitutional and points to the many groups (the Catholic Church, the Congressional Research Service, and the majority of Congress) that support their claim. Previously, Mr. Driehaus had acknowledged in public statements that the bill did not expressly prohibit the funding of abortion and indicated that he would not vote in favor of the measure but later reneged on that statement. The ACLU, an infamous liberal group, has sided with the SBA List in this instance because of the free speech implications. A spokesman for the ACLU stated that citizens have a right to criticize elected officials. In a [statement](http://www.sba-list.org/newsroom/press-releases/group-fights-defamation-suit-defeated-democrat), SBA List President Marjorie Dannenfelser outlined the far-reaching effect that an adverse decision in this case would have on the First Amendment rights of all interest groups.

**Ohio School Choice Program**

As the school year gets underway, the proliferation and popularity of school choice programs around the country is evident from the number of applicants. Ohio’s newly expanded school choice initiative allowed an additional 5,000 students to apply for the state’s Education Choice scholarships. Approximately 17,000 students have applied for scholarships to attend the private school of their parent’s choice. The [program](http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/first-year-edchoice-applicants-surpass-5000-127900453.html) which previously allowed 14,000 children to receive scholarships will allow 30,000 this year. Next year, over 60,000 students will be eligible to receive a scholarship. The scholarships range between $4,250 and $5,000 per pupil. After acceptance into the program, the scholarships are automatically renewed until graduation. Chad Addis, the Executive Director of Educational Choice, praised the significant gains that the program has made this year and has pledged to continue to work towards school choice for every child.

**North Carolina Marriage Vote**

As the North Carolina legislature begins a new session next week, traditional marriage advocates and their opponents are campaigning heavily for their respective positions. The legislature is set to consider SB 106 which would place a [Marriage Protection Amendment](http://www.ncfpc.org/specialsma.html) on the 2012 ballot. The Family Research Council has launched a $10,000 [advertisement](http://www.chron.com/news/article/Ads-want-NC-lawmakers-to-back-marriage-amendment-2160076.php) campaign in favor of allowing the people to have a vote on the matter. Dueling press events have been held this week. At one anti-marriage amendment rally, opponents attempted to portray the amendment as bad for the state’s [economy](http://www.ncfpc.org/stories/110907s1.html). According to research by the well-respected American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the top ten states for business all have laws in place that protect traditional marriage, and all but one have marriage protection amendments which debunks the detractor’s claims. Conversely, the ten lowest ranking states all have laws that undermine traditional marriage by allowing domestic partnerships, civil unions and same-sex marriage. If the voters approve the measure, North Carolina would be the 32nd state to reaffirm traditional marriage between one man and one woman.

**In Case You Missed It:**

[Weekly Market Update](http://www1.blackrock.com/eIndex.aspx?cmty=ind&lo=4&eid=37536&ln=36499) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](http://www.totalmerrill.com/TotalMerrill/system/ViewFAPage.aspx?pageurl=gbcs)

[In My Seat: A Pilot’s Story About 9/11](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLj4akmncsA)

[Congress Returns to Face ESEA](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/09/06/03congress.h31.html?tkn=LURFvcHum8WuEDUq7fPmfdJvFRqCqtm94j2t&cmp=clp-edweek)

[Fetal Pain Legislation Update](http://www.citizenlink.com/2011/09/01/fetal-pain-law-takes-effect-in-alabama-falls-under-attack-in-idaho/)

