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All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.

Noah Webster

AACS Legislative Director Participates in “Dialogue with Arne Duncan”

At the seventh annual Private School Leadership Conference, representatives from some of the largest private school advocacy organizations were chosen to participate in a panel discussion with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Maureen Wiebe ([American Association of Christian Schools](#)), Vernard Grant (Association of Christian Schools International), Joe McTighe ([Council for American Private Education](#)), and Abba Cohen (Agudath Israel) spoke with the Secretary about critical issues facing the private school community. First, Ms. Wiebe delineated the many positive outcomes that Christian schools are able to produce as a result of the autonomy that they enjoy as a result of the specific protections in No Child Left Behind. She then queried as to whether the Department of Education’s competitive grant programs and NCLB relief waivers would erode these protections. Secretary Duncan stated that the Department was “absolutely committed to maintaining that autonomy so you have no worries there. If you see us somehow overreaching, please challenge us very hard.” He further declared that he had “no interest in micromanaging schools around the country” and reiterated his earlier challenge to push back “very, very hard” if indeed the Department did cross the line. Next, Mr. Grant challenged the Department to advocate an approach that incorporated agape love. Thirdly, Mr. McTighe spoke with the Secretary about the Administration’s position on the use of tax credits and vouchers to promote school choice. Secretary Duncan outlined his position on the need to focus on fixing public education versus helping students to escape failing schools. Lastly, Mr. Cohen addressed several problems that his constituents have had with the procurement of the services promised by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The Secretary acknowledged that the program had not lived up to its high ideals and that the Department would like to work with him to rectify the communication issues. To view pictures of this event or follow the activities of the D.C. Office please “like” the AACS DC Office Facebook [page](#).

At the conference, private school representatives heard from several distinguished speakers and were exposed to a variety of educational opportunities. Jim Shelton, Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Office of Innovation and Improvement, advocated a data-driven approach to decision making in every aspect of private school purchasing and curriculum decisions as a viable strategy for surviving in a tough economy. Later, White House Senior Policy Advisor Alexia Kelley commended faith-based groups for their ability to find creative ways to tackle social justice issues. A panel of leaders from the “Private Schools with Public Purpose” initiative offered examples of how private schools can engage and transform their communities effectively dispelling misguided elitist characterizations. Private school teachers were encouraged to apply for the Teacher Ambassador Fellowship (TAF) Program, a paid fellowship opportunity that provides the Department of Education with a consortium of classroom teachers that can give valuable feedback on education proposals. NASA spokesmen familiarized the audience with the wide array of instructional materials, educational resources and class lectures that are available at agency centers around the country. Finally, the group was introduced to early learning

innovations pioneered by the Learning Apps Media Partnerships (LAMP) project that uses Apple-based technology to facilitate and promote learning by using proven content in a creative way.

Utah Breaking the Mold

Utah recently approved a [plan](#) that will greatly expand the educational options available to students in the state. As a result of the plan, parents will now be able to deposit the money that would have paid for their child's education into an educational savings account. The money in the account can then be used to pay for whatever educational option parents choose to employ. Educational options include online classes, homeschooling, and private schooling. Any unused money would be carried into the following year and can even be used towards higher education payment. School choice advocates hope that this approach will be replicated across the nation.

Arizona Pro-Life Law Stands

The move to defund Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider, continues to gain support across the nation. Pro-life advocates received welcome news that the organization would not [challenge](#) Arizona's comprehensive abortion law. The 2009 law requires expectant mothers to receive complete information about the procedure and stipulates that minors must have notarized consent to undergo an abortion procedure. The Arizona Court of Appeals unanimously ruled the law constitutional.

Alabama Supreme Court Gives Legal Recognition to Unborn Child

In a unanimous decision, the Alabama Supreme Court voted to expand protections for the unborn. The court ruled in favor of the plaintiff in the *Mack v. Carmack* case. April Mack filed a civil suit against the drivers in an accident that led to the loss of her unborn child. A lower court dismissed the suit on the basis that the child was not able to survive outside of the womb and, therefore, wrongful death statutes were not applicable. The decision reached by the justices creates a legal precedent that the statutes do apply to a person at any stage in life. Alabama is now one of ten states that specifically grant legal protection to all unborn children in civil proceedings.

First Amendment Victory for Schoolchildren

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled that United States schoolchildren do, in fact, have First Amendment rights. In their opinion, the judges absolved several elementary school students who were forbidden from distributing items of a religious nature. Nine years ago, Jonathan Morgan was punished by his principal for attempting to give candy canes with an attached religious message to his classmates. Because of this incident, the Liberty Institute filed suit in *Morgan et al v. Plano, Texas Independent School District* on his behalf. The government's argument posited that elementary school children were too young to have protection under the First Amendment. Other incidents have also been cleared of any wrongdoing, including the distribution of tickets to a religious play and an entire class that was prohibited from writing "Merry Christmas" on cards for troops serving abroad. The school principals in question were not reprimanded for their disciplinary actions that precipitated this case.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Working to Save the Life of a Christian Pastor in Iran](#)

[House Subcommittee Restores Abstinence Funding in Budget Bill](#)

[National Organization for Marriage Announces Anti-Defamation Alliance](#)

