Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers. It may not be difficult to store up in the mind a vast quantity of facts within a comparatively short time, but the ability to form judgments requires the severe discipline of hard work and the tempering heat of experience and maturity.

Calvin Coolidge

Arizona Appeals Court Upholds New School Choice Option
On October 1, the Arizona Court of Appeals upheld the constitutionality of the state’s newest school choice vehicle, the Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA). This important decision preserves the right of parents to choose the best educational options for their children. Enacted in 2011, the ESA is a groundbreaking school choice option that gives parents approximately $5,400 dollars or 90% of the per pupil public school funding to apply towards tuition at participating private schools. While the program is currently available only to students in “D” or “F” schools and children of active duty military, children with special needs, and children in the state foster care system, proponents hope to expand the program to more families. Some of the unique aspects of the ESA scholarship are the ability to utilize the funds for a range of services such as online classes, private school tuition, therapies, and tutoring.

Private School SAT Scores Raise National Average
Historically, private school students have scored higher than their public school counterparts on assessments like the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Recently, the College Board, which oversees the SAT, released the results of the class of 2013. Approximately 1.7 million students took three tests—critical reading, writing, and mathematics—and averaged a combined score of 1550. Private, religiously affiliated school students accounted for 9.4% of test takers and scored 45 points higher than the national average. In comparison, public school students scored 76 points below the average. Over the past five years, only 43% of students graduated high school ready to complete college level coursework. College Board president, David Coleman, announced that the group will work to improve coursework and that by “transforming the daily work that student do we can achieve excellence and equity.” High scores on the SAT usually indicate an increased likelihood of enrolling in a four year college and successfully completing a degree. The SAT is a main factor in the admissions process for most four year colleges in the United States.

Secretary Urges Business Leaders to Support Early Ed
At the National Business Leader Summit in Atlanta in September, Secretary Arne Duncan challenged the business community to invest in early education. The Secretary reiterated the importance of early education to encourage growth in the economy and increase America’s ability to compete in an increasingly global marketplace. Plenary sessions tackled a range of topics ranging from legislative advocacy, innovative early education approaches, the economic case for investing in preschool, and research that purportedly underscored
the benefits of investment in this area. Business leaders from Aflac to United Way committed to promote increased access to early education. The AACS believes that early education opportunities that a young child receives beyond the home can serve to enhance a child’s experiences but should never supplant the parents’ role in providing the education and direction for these young children. Without question, the best predictor of a child’s future success is quality parenting.

**Effect of the Shutdown on Education**
Since lawmakers were unable to pass a continuing resolution (temporary budget extension) to fund the government by September 30, the federal government went into partial slowdown mode. In the education arena, the hodgepodge of funding sources and differing appropriation schedules have caused confusion about which programs and services will remain operational. According to Lindsey Burke of The Heritage Foundation, 95% of the Department of Education’s 4,000 employees will be furloughed during the impasse. In the short term, programs such as formula funding for states (special education, Title 1 funding, etc.), competitive grant programs (Race to the Top), and student loans (Pell Grants) will be largely unaffected. The public school lunch program, administered by the Department of Agriculture, is funded through October. Meanwhile, the Head Start early education program which serves about one million children would have approximately 23 of its 1600 grantees affected by a short term shutdown. A protracted Congressional stalemate would result in funding gaps for other programs, slower response times for inquiries, and delay end-of-year grants distribution.

**New Jersey Court Legalizes Same-Sex Marriage**
In September, Superior Court Judge Mary Jacobson ruled that New Jersey must recognize same-sex marriages starting on October 26, 2013. In her *Garden State Equality v. Dow* decision, the judge cited the Supreme Court opinion in the *United States v. Windsor* case issued in June. The high court ruled that Section 3, which defined marriage as a union of one man and one woman for federal purposes, of the Defense of Marriage Act unconstitutional but upheld Section 2 which allows states to decide the issue within their own borders. New Jersey Family Policy Council President Len Deo opined that “It is judicial activism for a judge to usurp the authority of the legislature and the right of people to vote on this issue.” Furthermore, he warns that this decision “cuts the knees out from under the democratic process, declares an ending where we should have thorough discussion and debate, and singles out religious believers for discrimination.”

**In Case You Missed It:**

**Weekly Market Update** provided by Jeff Beach of the AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch

**Obama Administration Approves NCLB Flexibility Request for Texas**

**GOP Leaders Demand Answers on Administration’s Attempt to Shut Down Louisiana Private School Choice Program**

**Default Rates Continue to Rise for Federal Student Loans**

**Pastor Saeed Abedini Learns That Obama Spoke Out About Him: Receives Hope for Release**