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*Educate and inform the whole mass of the people.... They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.*

**Thomas Jefferson**

**Privacy for All Group Wins Crucial Decision**

In the wake of California Governor Jerry Brown's signing of AB 1266, which was slated to go into effect on January 1, 2014, concerned parents and faith-based groups have communicated their concerns about the bill's ramifications on student safety and school liability. The law states, "A pupil shall be permitted to participate in sex-segregated school programs and activities, including athletic teams and competitions, and use facilities consistent with his or her gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on the pupil's records." In order to allow voters to be heard, [Privacy for All Students](#) and their coalition partners worked to collect over half a million signatures in 90 days to halt the measure and to place it on the ballot. When several county mailroom clerks declined to accept the petitions upon their arrival, California Secretary of State Debra Bowen contended that some of the signatures were turned in after the deadline and refused to count the signatures from those counties. This week, a Sacramento Superior Court Judge directed the Secretary of State to count all of the "bathroom bill" petition signatures to determine their validity and noted that the petition gatherers had submitted the documentation on time. Gina Gleason, one of the law's opponents lamented, "It is a shame that we had to go to court to assure that the citizens of Tulare and Mono would not be disenfranchised by the arbitrary actions of the Secretary of State." State officials were erroneously informing districts that the law was going into effect in spite of the likelihood that there were enough valid signatures. The law's opponents allege that the Secretary of State is "not an unbiased referee in this process but an advocate for the co-ed bathroom law." If 504,760 signatures are validated, the measure would be placed on the November ballot. California citizens would then be able to show their support or opposition for this watershed bill. Petition gatherers assert that their ability to garner more signatures than needed in a short window of time attests to the opposition to the measure. According to those monitoring the validation process, a high percentage of the signatures have been [accepted](#) so it appears that the measure will meet the requirements to be placed before voters.

**Common Core Pushback Receives Major Funding**

As the 2014-2015 Common Core Standard (CCS) assessment deadline looms, grassroots opposition to the Common Core Standards for English and mathematics continues to mount in the states. A diverse coalition that ranges from teachers unions to homeschoolers has called for a wide range of responses including a one year moratorium, review by state legislatures, discussion forums with the state education commissioners, and abandoning the standards completely in favor of state reforms. As Maureen Van Den Berg, AACCS policy analyst noted in a recent *Breitbart News* [article](#), "The Common Core standards, as a national standard, employs the 'one size fits all approach' which cannot meet the individual needs of students, nor will it raise the bar for academic excellence..." *Politico*, a popular liberal leaning news journal, [charges](#) that "what started as a ragtag

opposition led by a handful of angry moms is now a sophisticated national movement supported by top donors and strategists on the right.” Although initially the Department of Education and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation infused \$4.3 billion and \$170 million respectively to promote CCS adoption, prominent conservative groups such as FreedomWorks and Americans for Prosperity have now begun to fund and mobilize some of the opposition. *Politico* writer Stephanie Simon charges that these groups are working “to channel that energy into a bold campaign to undercut public schools, weaken teachers unions and push the federal government out of education policy.” The autonomous nature of our Christian schools allows them the freedom to provide excellent educational services in adherence to a faith-based mission. The wide sale adoption of the CCS and the subsequent establishment of a national curriculum and national test would result in greater federal control and a loss of local control and accountability.

### **Justice Halts Mandate for Nuns**

In an eleventh hour [ruling](#) on New Year’s Eve, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor issued an emergency injunction in favor of the Little Sisters of the Poor, a Colorado-based group of Catholic nuns who have provided end-of-life care for free to the elderly for over 175 years. On January 1, the group would have run afoul of the Obamacare-related Health and Human Services Mandate which requires employers to provide abortion-inducing drugs, contraception and sterilization to their employees without co-pay. In light of the group’s ongoing battle in the courts, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which represents the nuns, praised Justice Sotomayor’s timely decision and maintains that there is no compelling governmental interest that requires the nuns to provide products and services that violate their deeply held religious beliefs. In their [response](#), the Department of Justice reiterated their earlier assertion that the mandate placed “no substantial burden on their (the nuns’) exercise of religion...” Mark Rienzi, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, argued that “the Sisters would also be required to sign a form that triggers the start of that coverage....In good conscience, they cannot do that. So the ‘accommodation’ still violates their religious beliefs.” In the spring, the Supreme Court will take up several cases related to for-profit businesses and the HHS Mandate. To view the HHS Mandate Information Central, [click here](#).

### **Pro-Life Bills Go Into Effect**

In 2013, there were many advances in the pro-life movement. Approximately, twenty-two states [adopted](#) seventy provisions that limit the abortion industry. The pro-abortion Guttmacher Institute cited this number as the second highest number since 2011 which was a defining moment year in the pro-life movement. Over the last three years, 205 restrictions were adopted at the local level. These commonsense restrictions include doctor admitting privileges to local hospitals, longer waiting periods, parental notification and informed consent laws, and increased health and safety regulations. Planned Parenthood, the nation’s largest abortion provider, blames the regulations on “out-of-touch Tea Party politicians.” Polling shows that a growing number of Americans disapprove of taxpayer-funded abortion.

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

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

[New Study on Homosexual Parents Tops Previous Studies](#)

[Supreme Court Puts Same-Sex Marriage on Hold in Utah](#)

[College Admission:7 Common FAFSA Mistakes](#)