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Within the covers of the Bible are the answers for all the problems men face.

Ronald Reagan

Senator Graham Introduces Resolution Opposing Common Core

On Thursday, Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), along with Senators Enzi, Cochran, Cruz, Grassley, Inhofe, Lee, Scott, and Wicker, [introduced](#) a resolution that strongly denounces the Administration's forceful role in the adoption of the Common Core Standards for English and mathematics. The measure strongly parallels state level attempts to reassert local control of education. Since federal law prohibits the Department of Education (DOE) from establishing specific content standards and curriculum, the measure rejects the Department's use of federal grant programs such as Race to the Top and NCLB flexibility waivers to circumvent these statutory constraints. The measure explicitly states that control of education lies first with the parents and then with local education officials who are best able to determine what is best for students. The resolution does not rescind any monies previously awarded to states or speak to the content of the standards themselves. Furthermore, it seeks to reaffirm the proper role of the federal government and prohibit the DOE from conditioning future funding on the adoption of a national standard. In September, AACCS representatives from across the country met with dozens of offices during the annual National Legislative Conference and educated Members and their staffs about the dangers a national standard poses to the autonomy of the private school community. We are pleased to support this federal effort to highlight the [problematic](#) adoption and implementation on the standards. Several conservative groups including AACCS, Concerned Women for America, Family Research Council, Home School Legal Defense Association, and Eagle Forum support the measure. To read the press release, [click here](#).

Hobby Lobby Abortion Pill Mandate Case Update

Last week was the filing deadline for *amicus* briefs in the *Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby* case that will be heard by the Supreme Court in March. *The Washington Examiner* noted that of the over 80 briefs submitted approximately 2/3 of the briefs were in favor the rights of conscience and religious freedom for Hobby Lobby's owners. Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle weighed in on the Obamacare-derived HHS abortion pill mandate which requires employers to cover abortion-inducing drugs, contraception, and sterilization or to pay steep fines. In the House of Representatives, a bipartisan group of Members led by Rep. Randy Forbes filed a brief in favor of Hobby Lobby. Meanwhile, 91 Democrats in the House and 19 Democrats in the Senate filed in favor of the Administration's position. On the other side of the aisle, two groups of Republican Senators, grouped by those who were in Congress during the passage of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and those who were not, filed briefs in favor of Hobby Lobby. Steve Green, owner of Hobby Lobby, [opines](#) that while he has no problem covering 16 of the 20 FDA-approved drugs his religious beliefs preclude him from paying for abortion-inducing drugs. The Department of Health and Human Services along with the Justice Department maintains that secular businesses do not have First Amendment protections for religious exercise. The DOJ

stated that the mandate presents a compelling governmental interest and that there is no substantial burden on the plaintiffs. Hobby Lobby faces fines of over one million dollars a day. To view the most up-to-date information on the cases, [click here](#).

NCLB Waivers and Common Core Testing Collide

Since the Elementary and Secondary Act (formerly known as No Child Left Behind) has not been reauthorized, forty-five states and several US territories [applied](#) for flexibility waivers from the Department of Education (DOE) to escape the 2013–2014 deadline for 100% proficiency in English and mathematics. This resulted in a patchwork of flexibility waivers and widely varying proposals which the DOE is now working to monitor. As part of the monitoring process, the Department of Education is pressuring states that have chosen to opt out of the CCS assessment consortia to identify what alternative assessment will be used to measure student progress. The two federally funded groups developing the Common Core aligned assessments are the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC). Currently, four states—Georgia, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Utah—have officially pulled out of the groups citing increased costs and loss of local control. In the fall, the Department began to question these states about their testing plans. Currently, state education officials who exited the testing groups are awaiting Department approval of their amended proposals. Two states—Alabama and Pennsylvania—also pulled out of the tests but have already had their alternate assessments approved by the DOE. A spokesman for the DOE maintains that they are working to ensure that states have standards that produce college and career ready graduates and do not seek to validate the assessments specifically. *Education Week* experts conclude that eventually “all states will have to have their testing systems peer reviewed again.” One notable exception is Virginia which did receive a flexibility waiver and is also one of the four states that has refused to adopt the CCS. Standards proponents often cite Virginia as proof that states are not required to adopt the Common Core to receive flexibility. Currently, the Department has approved 42 of the 45 state waiver applications.

Common Science Standards Slow to Garner Support

As Common Core math and English standards detractors have cautioned, groups would subsequently formulate standards for other disciplines that would be even more controversial. In the spring of 2013, the [Next Generation Science Standards](#) were finalized. Originally, twenty-six states signed on to the effort as “lead partners.” As *Education Week* has noted only eight states have officially adopted the standards to date. While some have puzzled over state reluctance to adopt the standards, slow adoption can be attributed to the current uproar over the problematic Common Core rollout, the cost to the states, and a reluctance to wade into a heated [battle](#) over content matter.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Federal Preschool Proposals Will Cost Billions and Have Limited Impact on Participants](#)

[Highlights From the Creation v. Evolution Debate Between Ken Ham and Bill Nye](#)

[Former Planned Parenthood Director Plans to Open Crisis Pregnancy Center](#)

[Federal Court Hears Arguments on Virginia's Same-Sex Marriage Ban](#)