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*And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

**I John 4:16**

**The House Takes on Common Core**

This week, Representative Jeff Duncan (R-SC) [introduced](#) House Resolution 476, which denounces the federal role in the adoption of the Common Core Standards (CCS) for English and mathematics, along with 43 original cosponsors. In a statement, Rep. Duncan noted that many South Carolinians have expressed concern that the CCS represent a federal takeover of local decision making and have questionable content requirements. In addition, he noted that “As a father of three boys, I know first-hand that every child is different and every child learns differently. Education needs to be personalized and flexible, which means education policy needs to originate from our local communities and not from some bureaucrats in Washington, DC. The Washington-knows-best approach has repeatedly failed the very children it proposes to help. It’s time to roll back Common Core and return education to the people who it matters most to—children, parents, and teachers.” Last week, South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham introduced the Senate companion (S.R. 345), which has garnered nine additional cosponsors. In related news, Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) [introduced](#) the Learning Opportunities Created at Local Level Act (S. 1974) which seeks to prevent further federal coercion of states into adopting the academic standards, textbooks, and assessments favored by the Department of Education. There have been several other measures which seek to address these issues such as the Educational Freedom Act, the House approved Student Success Act, and Senator Lamar Alexander’s ESEA reauthorization proposal. Grassroots opposition to the standards continues to grow in intensity. Teachers unions have also begun to call for a moratorium of the CCS-aligned assessments which has led to public outcry in states such as New York. In several states, the Common Core has become a major factor in state education official elections. To view the latest developments on this pivotal education issue, [click here](#).

**Private School Choice Participation Continues to Grow**

In the wake of National School Choice Week, the Friedman Foundation for School Choice [notes](#) that support for and participation in private school choice has continued to grow each year. Currently, over 301,000 children are participating in forty-nine private school choice programs across the country. Florida, which has the most participants, has an array of school choice programs which include online learning. The first school choice program was established in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1990. The success of that program has led to a proliferation of innovative program options such as Education Savings Accounts in Arizona. Click here to view state-by-state analysis, [click here](#).

## **Heritage Conservative Policy Summit 2014**

On Monday, Heritage Action for America, the legislative arm of The Heritage Foundation, [hosted](#) the inaugural Conservative Policy Summit: An Agenda to Unite America. The day-long event included nine panel presentations from leading Members of Congress. After each [speech](#), a panel of experts discussed the innovative policy proposals and fielded questions from the audience. Among the proposals, three were of special interest to the AAC's staff. There were two education-related discussions lead by Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) and Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) respectively. The summit concluded with a panel discussion of the challenges facing marriage and religious freedom. Senator Scott opened the Bringing Education Decisions Closer to Students panel with an impassioned address about the importance of school choice options for "high potential" students. The panel—education expert Lindsey Burke, author and television anchor Juan Williams, and Heritage Action CEO Michael Needham—discussed the CHOICE Act and school choice innovation in the states and dismantled the arguments of school choice detractors. To view this discussion, [click here](#). In the eighth presentation of the day, Senator Mike Lee outlined his higher education reform proposal which included a number of proposals. He noted that the current higher education model has become increasingly outdated as technological innovations like massive online open course (MOOC) offerings increase in popularity. He posited that many students become mired in debt in order to obtain a degree which in many cases has not equipped them for success in their chosen field. His solution for the current untenable state of affairs includes allowing alternative accrediting bodies to enter the field and eliminating outdated school calendar course completion. To learn more about this proposal, [click here](#). The last presentation given by Representative Raul Labrador (R-Idaho) centered on preserving the First Amendment freedoms of groups who hold a traditional view of marriage. Rep. Labrador expressed [concern](#) about what he called a "climate of intolerance and intimidation" and the many attacks on religious liberty. Austin Nimocks, senior counsel at the Alliance Defending Freedom, noted that there has been an increased need for legal representation for Christian business owners. Several of his clients have faced protracted legal battles between powerful state human rights commissions and business owners who seek to operate according to their faith.

## **Attorney General Announces Same-Sex Benefits Extension**

Since 2011, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has abdicated its responsibility to defend traditional marriage and has advocated for same-sex marriage benefits on the federal level. In 2012, several states approved same-sex marriage laws. Last June, the Supreme Court struck down section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act which defined marriage as a union of one man and one woman for federal purposes. Approximately, thirty-three states still hold to the traditional view of marriage and therefore do not accord same-sex unions with certain state tax benefits. Last week, Attorney General Eric Holder announced that the DOJ would extend benefits to same-sex couples even in states with a constitutional amendment. During a keynote address at the Human Rights Campaign, Attorney General Holder [declared](#) that LGBT equality was akin to the civil rights struggle and that he would not be a "bystander during this important moment in history." To read the Family Research Council report analysis of this decision, [click here](#).

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

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

[Nine Things You Should Know About Marriage in America](#)

[The Hill: Education's Grand Bargain](#)

[Planned Parenthood To Pay 2 Million in Wrongful Death Suit](#)

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