



**The Washington Flyer**  
**February 28, 2014**

*Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.*

**C. S. Lewis**

### **Nation's Largest Teachers Union Denounces Common Core Rollout**

Last week, National Education Association President Dennis Von Roekel issued a strongly worded [letter](#) expressing serious concerns about the Common Core Standards (CCS) problematic rollout and implementation. The leader of the nation's largest teachers union, with over 3 million dues paying members, says that his constituency has voiced alarm about the rollout of the standards, the role of the CCS-aligned assessments in teacher evaluation proposals, and the lack of professional development. Van Roekel stated the standards may improve education but that a major "course correction" is needed at present. He suggested that teachers be given a role in a possible revision of the standards. In the letter, he stated that 70% of public school teachers believe that the implementation of the standards is going poorly in their school. This number reflects the tough road ahead for the controversial math and English standards. Previously, Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation for Teachers, called for a one-year moratorium on CCS-related assessments. These developments, combined with the recent vote by the New York Teachers Union, spell trouble for the proponents of the standards. In related news, several states have [opted](#) to change the name of the CCS. This has resulted in names such as the Iowa Core or Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. Glyn Wright, executive director of Eagle Forum, summarized the changes as follows: "Even under a different name, the Common Core Standards are still mediocre, at best, and continue to put American students at a significant disadvantage to their international peers."

### **Education Secretary Addresses Nation's Governors**

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan [addressed](#) the nation's leaders at the National Governors Association winter meeting in Washington, D.C. The bulk of his remarks centered on the inevitability of early education program expansion. In his remarks, he outlined ten [reasons](#) for this belief. He cited the "enormous and persistent unmet need" in early education program openings. After his speech, the secretary was asked about the Congressional resolutions denouncing the Common Core Standards which were championed by the department. To read his comments, [click here](#). Lindsey Burke, Will Skillman Fellow at the Heritage Foundation, writes that the Administration should [address](#) the well documented failings of the Head Start program instead of attempting "to scale-up the troubled program to make it a universal taxpayer-funded entitlement; at a minimum it should be reformed to better serve the low-income children currently enrolled."

### **U.S. Attorney General Instructs State Heads not to Defend Marriage**

This week, Attorney General Eric Holder caused a firestorm in the legal community when he instructed the country's attorney generals that they were under no obligation to uphold state laws that they did not believe in.

While several attorney generals indicated that they would not uphold their respective state's marriage laws, Wisconsin Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen maintained, "If there's one clear-cut job I have, it's to defend my Constitution. There is no one else in position to defend the State Constitution if it comes under attack." Since the Windsor ruling in June, the attorney generals in several states, [California](#), [Pennsylvania](#), [Illinois](#), [Nevada](#), and Oregon, have declared that they will not defend voter-approved marriage constitutional amendments. Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum is the latest to take this [position](#) and has stated that bans "cannot withstand a federal constitutional challenge under any standard of review." Brian Brown, president of the National Organization for Marriage, stated, "The people are entitled to a vigorous defense of the laws they enact...and the marriage amendment is no exception to that solemn obligation." In Utah, Oklahoma, and [Texas](#), federal judges have declared that the marriage amendments are unconstitutional. Those rulings are being appealed. On Wednesday, a Texas judge declared that the "court decision is not made in defiance of the great people of Texas or the Texas Legislature, but in compliance with the U.S. Constitution and Supreme Court precedent." Texas Senator Ted Cruz opined that the ruling was "a troubling display of judicial activism." Furthermore, he posited, "Our Constitution leaves it to the States to define marriage, and unelected judges should not be substituting their own policy views for the reasoned judgments of the citizens of Texas, who adopted our marriage law directly by referendum." Currently, 17 states and the District of Columbia allow same-sex couples to marry, while 33\* states have statutes protecting traditional marriage.

*\*These numbers have been in flux the past few weeks, possibly illustrating a cultural shift in the importance of defending natural marriage.*

### **Arizona Governor Vetoes Religious Liberty Bill**

On Wednesday, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer vetoed [S.B. 1062](#) a bill which sought to make technical [changes](#) to the state's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) of 1999. The measure sought to make several important changes: expand the definition of a "person" to include businesses, protect citizens from coerced speech, and close loopholes that have allowed some in other states to be punished or fined for their beliefs. The bill passed through both houses of the legislature with little fanfare; but once it reached the governor's desk, activists began to place tremendous pressure on legislators to renege on their votes and withdraw their support. A blatant and widespread [misinformation](#) campaign was waged in the media. Major businesses—Apple, Delta Airlines, American Airlines, and the National Football League—levied an array of threats that included a potential loss of a new factory and a future Super Bowl. Both Arizona Senators John McCain and Jeff Flake called on the governor veto. Governor Brewer [defended](#) the veto stating, "Our society is undergoing many dramatic changes; however, I sincerely believe that Senate Bill 1062 has the potential to create more problems than it purports to solve." Eighteen states and the federal government have similar RFRA legislation. The federal law, which was passed by an overwhelming margin in both houses and signed into law by President Bill Clinton, has existed for twenty years and has not created the "parade of horrors" that opponents of the Arizona law warned would occur upon passage of the measure. Doug Napier, senior counsel at Alliance Defending Freedom, counters that "Freedom loses when fear overwhelms facts and a good bill is vetoed. Today's veto enables the foes of faith to more easily suppress the freedom of the people of Arizona. Even though the battle has become more difficult, Alliance Defending Freedom stands ready to defend any Arizonan who suffers the indignity of religious discrimination." To read the Alliance Defending Freedom statement about the bill, [click here](#).

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

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

[State Legislatures Suppressing Debate on Common Core](#)

[Why Would a Republican Love the Common Core Standards?](#)

[Of Consciences and Cake](#)