



**The Washington Flyer**  
**March 14, 2014**

*If we ever forget that we are One Nation Under God, then we will be a nation gone under.*  
**Ronald Reagan**

**Conservative Experts Tackle Common Core at CPAC**

Thousands gathered at the Gaylord Hotel in Maryland for the forty-first annual Conservative Political Action Conference ([CPAC](#)) on March 6–8. Attendees heard from a bevy of 2016 presidential hopefuls and thought leaders from across the conservative ideological spectrum. Dozens of breakout sessions on controversial issues were addressed by expert panels. On Thursday, an expert panel—Lindsey Burke (Heritage Foundation), Robert Enlow (Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice), Phyllis Schlafly (Eagle Forum), and Jim Stergios (Pioneer Institute)—[tackled](#) the Common Core Standards for English and mathematics. The standards, which were rapidly adopted by 46 states in order to secure billions in stimulus funding and No Child Left Behind flexibility waivers, have come under a growing firestorm of criticism. The panelists discussed the history of the federal takeover of public education, the rise of school choice programs, and the necessity of pushing back on the standards at the local level. Jim Stergios posited that the central issue is who will ultimately control education and the ability of those closest to students to tailor instruction to meet the unique needs of each student. At the grassroots level, Schlafly [noted](#) that the standards elicit the strongest feelings of any policy issue. The Heritage Foundation is compiling examples of Common Core-aligned curriculum offerings. To submit stories, [click here](#).

**New York City Mayor Closes Charter Schools**

Despite his relatively short tenure in office, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio has already created a storm of controversy with parents and students after deciding to shut down several charter schools. During his campaign, Mayor de Blasio promised to establish a universal preschool program by taxing the rich and to crack down on the city's charter schools. As the *Washington Post* editorial board [noted](#), the decision to block openings and rescind previous agreements to launch new charters is surprising in light of the demonstrated gains made by current participants. Students at the Harlem-based Success Academy 4 have some of the highest math scores in the state. Eva Moscovitz, CEO of twenty-two Success charter schools, has surmised that the move is political payback for her opposition during the mayoral election. During the hotly contested race, the mayor stated that Mrs. Moscovitz "has to stop being tolerated, enabled, supported." The mayor's office has repeatedly denied that the move is politically motivated. In related news, the Mayor's budget reallocates \$210 million from charter schools to other sectors. Shocked parents have conducted press conferences and demonstrations expressing their disapproval and urging the mayor to reconsider the closures. This week, parents announced that several lawsuits will be filed against the city. Former Governor George Pataki, who pioneered the start of the charter school movement in New York, [opines](#), "It's just really, in my view, unconscionable because what is happening is it's all about control, it's all about ideology. And education, public education, should be about one thing. And that is what's best for the children in those schools." Over 50,000 students are on waiting lists to attend a NYC charter school and escape a failing school.

## **Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Comments**

The Departments of Education (DOE) and Health and Human Services (HHS) have announced that they received 480 public comments about the newest version of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge competitive grant program. In the January budget deal, the DOE received \$250 million for this new round of RTT-ELC and launched the Preschool Development Grant competition. Since 2011, over \$1 billion has been awarded to 20 states in previous RTT-ELC competitions. Trying to ensure the ability of private, faith-based preschools in these states to provide early childhood services, the AACS submitted public comments urging the departments to continue to clarify that all states are free to exempt non-publicly funded preschools and early education programs from requirements that are part of the RTT-ELC guidelines and application. Additionally, our letter requests that any participating private and religious early learning programs continue to have the freedom to operate autonomously and according to their religious mission. The departments will continue to take input at a dedicated [website](#) and will hold additional public listening sessions to receive input from stakeholders.

## **Common Core Resolution Update**

In February, Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), along with 9 cosponsors, [introduced](#) Senate Resolution [345](#) to denounce the federal involvement in the adoption of the Common Core math and English standards. The measure is continuing to gain cosponsors in the House of Representatives. Rep. Jeff Duncan (R-SC) has 59 cosponsors on the House companion resolution and is enlisting further support from both sides of the aisle. Last week, AACS Policy Analyst Maureen Van Den Berg posted an [article](#) about the effect of the Common Core Standards on private faith-based schools.

## **Winning the Abortion Olympics**

A comprehensive report conducted by the Charlotte Lozier Institute and Life Canada has shone a spotlight on some troubling new statistics. The [study](#) analyzed the abortion laws of 198 countries having populations exceeding 1 million people. The United States is one of seven countries that permit elective abortion procedures after the twenty week mark when babies can feel pain. America also has the dubious distinction of being second only to China in the number of late abortions performed in countries of similar size. Approximately 140 countries have some prohibitions on abortion procedures. Pro-life leaders have long criticized the millions of dollars of taxpayer funding used to promote and perform abortions here and abroad. Several bills [targeting](#) the defunding of the United Nation Population Fund and placing limits on Title X funds going to abortion providers have been introduced in this Congress.

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

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

[Pearson and Microsoft Announce Common Core Software Partnership](#)

[Obamacare's Growing Threat to the Education System](#)

[President Obama Announces New FAFSA Completion Initiative](#)

[HIGHER ED: Push for Student Databases Continues](#)

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