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Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6: 8-11

AACS Hosts National Fine Arts, Bible, and Academic Competition

Last week, the AACS National Competition was held in Greenville, South Carolina. Approximately 1,700 students from 31 states participated in the AACS National Competition, having captured top honors in their state contests. The students, representing almost 200 Christian high schools, competed in 77 categories in the five basic areas of Bible, music, speech, art, and academics. Throughout the week, evangelist Rich Tozour preached a series of challenging messages. Bob Jones University faculty and staff graciously facilitated the student activities and accommodations. The three-day competition culminated at the Thursday night awards ceremony, which included a showcase highlighting some of the best entries by several individuals and schools. For the twelfth consecutive year, Virginia (Old Dominion Association of Church Schools) [won](#) the AACS Cup of Excellence as a result of accumulating the most points of any state. [Illinois](#), [North Carolina](#), [Tennessee](#), and [New Jersey](#) were also among the top states. The AACS offers our warmest congratulations to all the students who participated and made this year's National Competition a memorable event. To view the complete list of this year's winners click [here](#). To view pictures of the event, "[like](#)" the AACS Legislative Office Facebook page or follow us on Twitter at AACS_DC.

***Building the Machine*—The Truth About Common Core**

A new documentary produced by the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), [Building the Machine](#), convincingly presents the case against the Common Core Standards. Using interviews with major players on both sides of the issue, the documentary shows why so much opposition has risen against the standards and what the CCS as a nationalized standard means for the education of all students in America—including private, charter, and home school students. The film explains how the CCS, initially presented as a project of the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and reported to be a state-led effort, was really created by Washington, DC insiders. The film reveals how this relatively small group of 30 individuals actually wrote the standards with little input or debate from the public.

Interviews with content experts Sandra Stotsky and Jim Milgrim offer insight into the academic rigor and quality of the standards. Stotsky and Milgrim served on the validation committee for the CCS but withdrew their names from supporting the final standards. According to Stotsky, of the 30 people who served on the validation committee, only 25 are recognized as supporting the standards, and the other five names have been removed from the record. A point emphasized by several experts in the film is that the CCS as a national standard will decrease local control and individual achievement. Additionally, the film recognizes that quick adoption by 45 states has prevented the standards from being evaluated or tested in actual educational environments, potentially producing negative consequences for millions of students forced into untested curriculums, methods, and standards. In a telling quote, Bill Gates says, "Identifying common standards is just the starting point. We'll only know if this effort has succeeded when curriculum and tests are

aligned to the standards.” In addition to the standardized tests being created to assess the CCS, if college entrance exams are aligned with the standards, this will force [all](#) to be subjected to the standards. A [review](#) of the film by Heritage Foundation points out that at the “heart of the film is the notion that parental control in education will be jeopardized by national standards.” To watch the documentary, click [here](#).

Federal Judge Issues Sweeping Marriage Ruling in Ohio

Federal Judge Timothy Black [ruled](#) on Monday that the state of Ohio must recognize same-sex marriages that were performed in other states. After an appeal was filed by Ohio State Attorney General Mike Dewine, the Judge issued a stay while the case makes its way through the courts, meaning no same-sex marriages will be recognized in Ohio except the four couples who originally filed the suit. A state constitutional amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman was adopted in 2004 with 62% of voters supporting traditional marriage, and recent polling shows that the majority of people in Ohio still support the traditional definition of marriage. Phil Burress, president of Ohio-based Citizens for Community Values, responded to the ruling, saying, “The shockingly intolerant decision by Federal Judge Timothy Black to invalidate the Ohio Constitution’s Marriage Amendment and the clear will of more than 3.3 million Ohio voters is egregious. It’s another example of homosexual activists using sympathetic judges and the courts as a blunt instrument to force a redefinition of marriage and family on the people of Ohio.” Since the Supreme Court’s June decision on the Defense of Marriage Act, eight federal judges have [issued](#) rulings in favor of gay marriage.

Support Fading for Common Core in the States

The Peabody School Committee in Massachusetts is calling for an [investigation](#) into the involvement of Massachusetts Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester with PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), one of the two testing consortia designed to measure the success of the Common Core Standards. Massachusetts is one of many states that have agreed to administer one of the two common core aligned assessments (PARCC or SBAC, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium); however, as Mr. Chester is now in his third term serving on the PARCC governing board, the Peabody Committee questions his bias in the decision to move away from the already successful Massachusetts academic standards and testing in favor of the CCS and PARCC. To date, [fifteen](#) states are [reconsidering](#) their support and quick adoption of the standards. Government leaders in Louisiana, South Carolina, Oklahoma, and Missouri are encouraging their state legislatures either to withdraw from the standards or replace the CCS with their own stronger standards. Indiana is the first state to officially withdraw from the standards through a bill that was signed into law by Indiana Governor Mike Pence last month.

Pro-Life Challenges in North Dakota and Arkansas

U.S. District Judge Daniel Hovland on Wednesday [overtured](#) a North Dakota law which banned abortions as early as six weeks into pregnancy. The law was one of four pro-life measures passed into law last year and strongly backed by the state legislature. North Dakota State Attorney General Wayne Stenhjem said he was reviewing the case to determine his next move. In Arkansas, State Attorney General Dustin McDaniel [filed](#) an appeal to the Federal District Court decision which struck down a portion of the Arkansas Heartbeat Protection Act, a law passed last year requiring doctors to perform ultrasounds and inform the mother of the baby’s heartbeat and also prohibiting abortions after the first trimester. U.S. District Judge Susan Webber Wright ruled in March against the 12-week ban on abortions while upholding the informed consent portion of the bill. Matt Staver of Liberty Counsel remarked, “Today’s appeal is another step in protecting women from the harmful affects of second and third trimester abortions and defending the most vulnerable among us, preborn children.”

In Case You Missed It:

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

[NYC Pregnancy Centers Win First Amendment Victory](#)

[Understanding Windsor: What the Supreme Court Ruling on the DOMA Did - and Did Not - Say](#)

[Marriage on Trial: State Laws Defining Marriage as the Union of One Man and One Woman Are Valid Under the Constitution of the United States](#)