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I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live by the light that I have. I must stand with anybody that stands right, and stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong.

Abraham Lincoln

National Assessment of Educational Progress Reveals Stagnation

On May 7, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) released the latest results for the 12th-grade mathematics and reading exams of the National Assessment of Educational Progress ([NAEP](#)), which is widely regarded as the nation's report card. Between January and March 2013, approximately 92,000 seniors took the NAEP tests which are administered on a four-year rotation. The statistics show that achievement rates have remained unchanged since 2009. The average senior scored 288 out of 500 possible points on the English exam. On the mathematics test, students averaged 153 out of a possible 300 points which resulted in an abysmally low 26% of students at or above proficiency. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated, "We project that our nation's public schools will become majority-minority this fall—making it even more urgent to put renewed attention into the academic rigor and equity of course offerings and into efforts to redesign high schools. We must reject educational stagnation in our high schools, and as [a] nation, we must do better for all students, especially for African-American and Latino students." As he noted the nation's racial demographics are changing rapidly: the number of Caucasian students has dropped (74% to 58%) while the number of African-American students has remained steady and the Hispanic demographic has increased significantly (7% to 20%). Only five states—Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and South Dakota—outperformed the national average in both math and reading in 2013. Among the top performers, the proficiency rates are relatively low: Connecticut (50% reading proficiency) and Massachusetts (34% math proficiency). After the public release of the results, education pundits began to debate the reasons behind the low scores and continued stagnation. Factors such as a growing cohort of English language learners and those with disabilities, a lack of motivation for graduating students who have no personal stake in taking the test, and lower exclusion rates were cited as contributing causes. Some cited the rising graduation rate as a factor. They argue that although more students are completing high school, those on the brink of dropping out may be bringing the overall scores down. In any case, a NAEP spokesman said that despite these factors the results are a reflection of academic reality. Finally, the next NAEP test will be aligned to the Common Core educational standards. When asked about the effect of a Common Core-aligned NAEP test, a spokesman called it "the million-dollar question." Although the NAEP tests are primarily administered to public school students, some private schools do take part in the examination.

Massachusetts Court Upholds Pledge of Allegiance

The constitutionality of the Pledge of Allegiance has been [upheld](#) once again. The latest assault on the inclusion of the phrase "under God" took place in the state of Massachusetts. The state's Supreme Judicial Court rejected that notion that merely claiming to be "offended" by the phrase violates the Establishment Clause. Alliance

Defending Freedom (ADF) Senior Legal Counsel Jeremy Tedesco stated, “As we argued in our brief and as the Supreme Judicial Court found, the recitation is completely voluntary, and listening to the words ‘under God’ does not violate anyone’s constitutional freedoms.” Furthermore Massachusetts Family Institute President Andrew Beckwith, who joined ADF in an amicus brief, praised the court’s decision and opined that the pledge “unites Americans.” To read more about the *Doe v. Acton-Boxborough Regional School District* decision, [click here](#).

Marriage Turmoil in the States

Last week, members of the Pennsylvania House State Government Committee met to discuss a [resolution](#) to impeach the state’s Attorney General Kathleen Kane. Like several other attorney generals around the nation, Mrs. Kane refused to defend the state’s voter-approved constitutional marriage amendment in court. In a statement after the watershed *Windsor* decision, she declared that she could not “ethically defend the constitutionality of Pennsylvania’s version of DOMA.” At the recent hearing, all ten of the Democratic members walked out in protest. In addition to the marriage amendment controversy, Attorney General Kane is under fire for her refusal to prosecute several Democratic legislators who were allegedly filmed receiving illegal cash donations in a sting operation. Republican members of the committee believe that both actions should be denounced and are still considering sending a resolution to the upper chamber. In Pennsylvania, impeachment resolutions require a 2/3 majority for passage. In response, the minority chairman called the potential proceedings a disagreement over policy and not actual wrongdoing and warned that continuing to pursue the matter would be a “mistake.” Although the success of this impeachment resolution is questionable, the larger issue of whether state attorney generals can arbitrarily decide which laws to defend is at stake. United States Attorney General Eric Holder has publicly stated that attorney generals can indeed decline to defend state laws that they judge to be discriminatory in nature. Attorney generals in [Nevada](#), [Illinois](#), [Virginia](#), and [Oregon](#) have declared that they do not plan to defend their respective states’ marriage amendments despite the fact that many of the amendments were passed with overwhelming support by ballot initiative. Several attorney generals from both parties have vowed to defend their state laws regardless of personal opinion. In a [Washington Post](#) opinion editorial, Attorney General John Smuthers (R-CO) explained that during his nine-year tenure “the state has enacted laws that span the philosophical and political spectrum. I personally oppose a number of Colorado’s laws as a matter of public policy, and a few are contrary to my religious beliefs. But as my state’s attorney general, I have defended them all—and will continue to.” In a similar vein, Attorney General Dustin McDaniel (D-AR) stated that while he personally is in favor of same-sex marriage, “he will defend his state’s marriage amendment because it is his duty as attorney general.” Last Friday, a judge in Arkansas overthrew the state’s marriage amendment without issuing a stay pending appeal which has caused disarray in clerks’ offices around the state. Arkansas Attorney General Dustin McDaniel announced that he will appeal the ruling. To read more about this developing story, [click here](#).

In Case You Missed It:

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

[CDC: Study Confirms Traditional Family Structure Best for Children](#)

[Three Education Innovations That Could Increase Economic Mobility](#)

[Pro-life Priests Take Obamacare Fight to Court](#)

[GOP Presidential Hopefuls Address the Common Core Standards](#)

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