



A Publication of the American Association of Christian Schools

**The Washington Flyer**  
**July 3, 2014**

*I am apt to believe that [this day] will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations....It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shews, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations from one end of this continent to the other from this time forward forever more.... I am well aware of the toil and blood and treasure that it will cost us to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these states. Yet through all the gloom, I can see the rays of ravishing light and glory. I can see that the end is more than worth all the means. This is our day of deliverance.”*

*John Adams July 3, 1776*

**Religious Liberty Protected by Supreme Court**

In a landmark decision, the Supreme Court decided in favor of religious liberty in the cases involving family-owned businesses Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties. Both of these businesses objected to the regulation created by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under the Affordable Care Act that all employers must provide the full array of FDA-approved contraceptives, abortion-inducing drugs, and sterilization procedures or face steep fines. Hobby Lobby, owned by the Green family, who are devout Christians, already provided 16 of the 20 required contraceptives in their employee health care plans but objected to providing coverage for the other four, as these are known abortion-inducing drugs. Conestoga Wood Specialties, owned by the Mennonite Hahn family, had similar religious objections to the health care regulation, so the Supreme Court heard their cases together. In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that the companies could not be forced to comply with the HHS preventative services mandate as it placed an undue burden on the religious liberty of these companies, as defined by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act ([RFRA](#)). In the majority opinion, Justice Samuel Alito [wrote](#), “Because the contraceptive mandate forces them to pay an enormous sum of money—as much as \$475 million per year in the case of Hobby Lobby—if they insist on providing insurance coverage in accordance with their religious beliefs, the mandate clearly imposes a substantial burden on those beliefs.” The ruling applies only to “closely-held corporations,” or family businesses, and not to all for-profit companies or non-profit organizations. Lawyers for the Becket Fund who provided counsel for Hobby Lobby are hopeful that this Supreme Court decision signals a positive outcome for the religious liberty protection of non-profit organizations as well, as there are over 50 lawsuits involving non-profit organizations that are also challenging the HHS mandate. Barbara Green, co-founder of Hobby Lobby, [stated](#), “Today the nation’s highest court has re-affirmed the vital importance of religious liberty as one of our country’s founding principles. The Court’s decision is a victory, not just for our family business, but for all who seek to live out their faith. We are grateful to God and to those who have supported us on this difficult journey.”

**Supreme Court Rules in Favor of Pro-Life Speech**

Last week, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that “buffer zones” around abortion clinics are unconstitutional, overturning a 2007 Massachusetts law which created 35-foot buffer zones around abortion clinics to prohibit pro-life counselors from discussions with patients entering the clinics. All Supreme Court

Justices united in their judgment that the law violated the free speech rights of citizens. In his opinion, Chief Justice John Roberts [explained](#) that even though the state claimed interest in public safety as the purpose of the law, it “pursued those interests by the extreme step of closing a substantial portion of a traditional public forum to all speakers.” Justice Alito agreed, taking his opinion one step further, stating, “It is clear on the face of the Massachusetts law that it discriminates based on viewpoint.” Eleanor [McCullen](#), the 77-year-old sidewalk counselor who fought this law all the way to the Supreme Court, stated, “Today’s ruling means I can offer loving help to a woman who wants it, and neither of us will go to jail for the discussion. . . . I am delighted and thankful to God that the court has protected my right to engage in kind, hopeful discussions with women who feel they have nowhere else to turn.”

### **TN Withdraws from Common Core Testing**

Tennessee has become the [19<sup>th</sup> state](#) to push back against the Common Core Standards by withdrawing from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test, an assessment specifically designed to align with the Common Core. Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam, Commissioner of Education Kevin Huffman, and the chair of the state board of education Fielding Rolston sent a [letter](#) to the CEO of PARCC stating that a new law is requiring the state to return to its own state assessment, the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program, for the 2014-2015 school year. The U.S. Department of Education financed the creation of the PARCC assessment as well as the Smarter Balanced assessment, both of which were written specifically to align with the common core standards. Tennessee is the 9<sup>th</sup> state to withdraw from PARCC, leaving only 16 of the original 25 states in the testing consortium.

### **IRS Agrees to Pay for Leaking Marriage Group’s Donor List**

The IRS has admitted [wrongdoing](#) and agreed to pay \$50,000 in damages for leaking confidential information from the 2008 tax return of the non-profit National Organization for Marriage (NOM). In 2012, the names and contact information of NOM’s donors, including then-Presidential candidate Mitt Romney, appeared on the website for the Human Rights Campaign and was later published by the *Huffington Post* and other liberal-leaning media outlets. After two years of investigation and a lawsuit, gay rights activist Matt Meisel admitted to receiving the leaked information from the IRS, and the IRS agreed to settle. Disclosure of confidential tax information is a federal crime, yet the Department of Justice has yet to make any criminal charges. NOM chairman John Eastman stated, “We urge the Congress to explore this issue with the appropriate government officials. It’s imperative that all those who have engaged in corrupt practices and illegal acts in the IRS be identified and held accountable.”

### **Next Week! AACS Hosts Youth Legislative Training Conference**

The annual AACS Youth Legislative Training Conference will take place next week in Washington, D.C. This week-long conference is designed to give high school students from AACS member schools the opportunity to experience the political work in our nation’s capital from a biblical perspective. The students will participate in a mock senate, attend a Congressional briefing organized just for them, tour historical sites, and hear from like-minded conservative leaders on the importance of preserving our freedoms and how young people can make a difference. **For updates and pictures from this exciting week, follow us through Twitter (“@AACS\_DC”) or our Facebook page (“[AACS Legislative Office](#)”).**

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

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

[House Ed Committee Outlines Plans to Strengthen Higher Education Act](#)

[Supreme Court Rules Pro-Life Group Can Challenge OH Law](#)