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Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.
John Quincy Adams

Religious Liberty Protected by Supreme Court Now Threatened by Legislation

In the wake of the landmark Supreme Court decision in favor of religious liberty protections for the owners of Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties, Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and Mark Udall (D-CO) quickly introduced S. 2578 [Protect Women's Health from Corporate Interference Act](#). Although the bill's supporters claim that it will not amend the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), the bill's purpose removes the religious liberty protections of the owners of closely held corporations and attempts to reverse the ruling of the Supreme Court. In the case, Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties argued that the HHS mandate violated their religious liberty protections by requiring company-sponsored health plans to provide coverage for abortion-inducing drugs and devices. The Supreme Court ruled that the HHS mandate does indeed violate RFRA and that closely held corporations can exercise religion in their business practices. (Click [here](#) for a clear and concise explanation of the ruling and its impact.) Although the stated purpose of the bill is to reinstall contraception coverage mandated by the HHS under the Affordable Care Act, in reality it removes religious liberty protections from one group of Americans while advancing the idea that women have a fundamental right to demand that their company pay for the cost of abortion-inducing drugs. Although Senator Harry Reid fast tracked the legislation avoiding assignment to committees and bypassing the Senate's more deliberative processes in order to bring it to a quick vote, the bill did not achieve the 60 votes needed for cloture in a Wednesday afternoon vote. Earlier in the day, on the floor of the Senate, Senator Orin Hatch said, "This is the first time in American history that Congress will consider a bill intended to diminish the protection for the religious liberty of all Americans. It is part of a broader campaign to demonize religious freedom as the enemy, as an obstacle to certain political goals." Many see this attempt to attack religious liberty as the first of many battles to come post Hobby Lobby that may include future [legislation to weaken](#) or even possibly eliminate RFRA.

States Face Battles to Replace Common Core Standards

As support for the Common Core continues [to shrink](#) and states continue to drop the nationalized standard, new challenges for state legislators and policy makers have arisen. Although the rapid adoption of the Common Core standards was sometimes accomplished outside of the normal legislative processes and by using emergency powers, states that have withdrawn from the standards are now facing lengthy battles in politically charged environments to replace them. The next step for parents, educators, and politicians seems to be finding a way to craft [improved, workable standards](#) that can be adopted in time to replace the Common Core. States like Indiana have chosen to modify the Common Core standards only slightly and adopt them as a state standard, while other states like Kansas have chosen to enlist the help of educators in their state university system to help develop new state standards. [Oklahoma](#) and [Louisiana](#) are now facing opposition from state boards of education and lawsuits in state courts to determine which branch of government has authority over education standards. In states that have opted out of the Common Core, [time concerns](#) about what standards will be used in the

meantime compound the pressure felt by those trying to convince citizens that educational standards should be decided on the state and not the federal level. Grassroots activists are not dissuaded, as pointed out by Emmett McGroarty of the American Principles Project. “The pushback against the Common Core system gains momentum by the day,” McGroarty commented to Breitbart News. “At its heart are mothers and fathers who are reclaiming control over their children’s education. They are well informed, and will recognize any attempt to deceive them by trying to re-brand Common Core.”

Missouri and North Carolina Plan to Replace Common Core Standards

State legislatures in [Missouri](#) and [North Carolina](#) have successfully passed legislation written to replace the Common Core Standards within their states. In Missouri, Democratic governor, Jay Nixon, signed legislation that would create a panel whose task would be to formulate new academic standards to be implemented in classrooms by 2016. This panel would be comprised of teachers, legislators, and parents of students enrolled in Missouri public schools. According to the Missouri Coalition Against Common Core the legislation is “a good first step towards reclaiming state sovereignty over education.” In North Carolina, a bill to replace the Common Core Standards has passed and now awaits the signature of Governor Pat McCrory, who has suggested that he would indeed support such legislation. Much like that of Missouri, North Carolina’s bill would enlist a commission, which would include government appointees, legislators, and Governor McCrory, to propose new academic standards to be adopted by the State Board of Education.

“The Most Radical Pro-Abortion Bill Ever Considered by Congress”

On Wednesday, two important bills dealing with contraception and abortion were debated in the Senate. One, S. 2568 (see the first article for more information) did not achieve enough votes for cloture; but overlooked by some, another more radical bill was debated in a hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee. National Right to Life president Carol Tobias testified against the misnamed “Women’s Health Protection Act” (S. 1696) stating, “The bill is really about just one thing: it seeks to strip away from elected lawmakers the ability to provide even the most minimal protections for unborn children at any stage of their pre-natal development.” She proposed that a more truthful name for the bill would be the “Abortion Without Limits Until Birth Act.” [Review of the bill](#) shows that it would invalidate nearly all state (and most federal) regulations and limitations on abortion and would also prohibit states from adopting any future commonsense limitations.

AACS Youth Legislative Training Conference

Thank you very much to all those who prayed for the annual AACS Youth Legislative Training Conference last week! High school students from AACS-member schools enjoyed the opportunity to experience the political work in our nation’s capital from a biblical perspective. The students participated in a mock senate, attended a Congressional briefing organized just for them, toured historical sites, and heard from like-minded conservative leaders on the importance of preserving our freedoms and how young people can make a difference. We had many excellent comments from students and teachers who attended, like this one from a Wisconsin student: “I can not express enough how much this has changed my life. I feel like this conference was the launching point for my political career. Thank you.” **For pictures from this exciting week, go to 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](#)

[Women Senate Candidates in the South Keep Quiet on Abortion](#)

[2014 Schooling in America Survey: Perspectives on School Choice, Common Core, and Standardized Testing.](#)

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