**The Washington Flyer**

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*Laws alone can not secure freedom of expression; in order that every man present his views without penalty there must be spirit of tolerance in the entire population.*

***Albert Einstein***

**President Obama Uses His “Pen” to Implement ENDA for Federal Workers and Contractors**

On Monday, President Obama released his [executive order](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/07/21/executive-order-further-amendments-executive-order-11478-equal-employmen) prohibiting the federal government and federal contractors from making employment decisions based on a person’s “sexual orientation” or “gender identity.” For workers in the federal government and contracting companies the executive order implements what the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) would require of all US companies by amending the Civil Rights Act to include “sexual orientation” and “actual or perceived gender identity” to the protected classes. Since ENDA’s passage in the Senate, the bill has been held in the House. The [President’s move](http://www.nationalreview.com/article/383322/contractors-and-culture-war-editors) signals his willingness to implement his agenda outside legislative process as he promised to do in his January State of the Union address. In spite of calls from a very broad coalition of religious organizations and religious leaders close to the Administration, the President’s order did not include even the basic religious liberty protections that are contained in the Senate version of ENDA. This has disturbed religious liberty advocates who see it as part of an overall trend to [elevate LBGT issues above religious liberty rights](http://dailysignal.com/2014/07/21/obamas-lgbt-executive-order-undermines-pluralism-religious-liberty/).

**House Member Moves to Remove Religious Liberty Protections from ENDA**

[Over the last month](http://www.buzzfeed.com/chrisgeidner/quickly-and-quietly-rep-jared-polis-just-created-a-new-lgbt) Representative Jared Polis (D-CO) has been quietly preparing for a little used maneuver called a discharge petition to force the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) out of committee for a vote in the House. Additionally, on Tuesday, Polis filed a resolution that would amend the bill by removing the religious protections added in the Senate version. Supporters of the legislation have repeatedly called for the religious protections to be removed. Some gay rights groups that had removed their support for ENDA due to the religious organization protections added to the Senate version have praised Polis’ move to narrow the exemption. ENDA would amend the civil rights act and prohibit US companies from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation or actual or perceived gender identity in their employment practices. Although observers doubt the success of the discharge petition, the threat of its use shows the seriousness of those working to achieve passage of ENDA.

**Meriam Ibrahim Leaves Sudan**

National and International news agencies reported [Meriam Ibrahim and her family landed in Rome](http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/07/24/sudanese-christian-woman-spared-death-sentence-for-apostasy-flown-to-italy/) on Thursday escorted by an Italian diplomat and flown in on an Italian government jet. Meriam’s arrest, imprisonment and sentencing for apostasy under Islamic law shocked the world as news stories followed the story of her persecution for her Christian beliefs. After having been convicted on trumped up charges of apostasy and adultery, Miriam’s case drew world attention as she was forced to give birth while shackled in deplorable prison conditions. Although world pressure on the Sudanese government eventually secured her release from prison, she had been prevented from leaving the country by the national security arm of the Sudanese government and had been staying in the American embassy in Khartoum. Intense negotiations resulted in the return of her passport and enabled her sudden departure from Sudan. Events transpired so quickly that even her lawyer was unaware she had left until news reports confirmed her arrival in Italy. Meriam and her husband Daniel, a US citizen, plan to travel to his home in New Hampshire soon. Groups expressed great happiness for Meriam’s release but continue to highlight the intense systematic persecution of Christians under Sudanese President Bashir’s plan to eliminate all non-Muslims from Islamic Sudan.

**North Carolina Governor Signs Bill to Revise Common Core Standards**

On Tuesday, North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory signed legislation initiating the process for the state to [revise the Common Core](http://www.citizenlink.com/2014/07/23/north-carolina-governor-signs-bill-to-revise-common-core/). The process now moves to an advisory committee that will review the standards and make recommendations for approval to the State Board of Education. North Carolina joins four other states this year in moving to repeal or replace the federally-supported Common Core with standards developed by the state.

**Senator Rubio Gives a Values Speech**

On Wednesday, in what may be considered a run up to a Presidential campaign, Senator Marco Rubio gave a speech best summed up by his assertion that a strong America can only be built by strong American values. While many have already presented his comments as an argument against gay marriage, Rubio’s speech also included a much broader discussion on family values and the importance of maintaining those values in order to achieve economic success. Given the [coverage](http://online.wsj.com/articles/florida-gop-sen-marco-rubio-makes-case-against-gay-marriage-1406170953) following his speech, Rubio sounds nearly prophetic by stating, “Too often in modern politics, debates about our values have been viewed as either wedges to win elections or unnecessary distractions to be avoided. But the truth is that the social and moral well-being of our people has a direct and consequential impact on their economic well-being.” He defined a “success sequence” to follow by saying, “In America, if you get an education, find a good job, and wait until marriage to have children, your chances of achieving economic security and professional fulfillment are incredibly high. In fact, if everyone in America lived lives that went in this order, in the order I’ve just outlined, some estimates are that the poverty rate would be cut by an estimated 70 percent.” His talk focused on the family as the primary institution where the values that make for economic success should be taught but struggled to suggest many ways that the federal government could have a role in encouraging the types of choices that lead to successful lives. A panel discussion following the speech included more elaboration on the idea that teaching and upholding certain basic values is a necessary component to achieving successful living. Although the panelists came from different perspectives, all seemed to agree that there must be a cultural acceptance of basic values and a population that embraces them and then lives them out as an example to others in order to correct the social ills of single parenting, divorce, and poverty.

**In Case You Missed It:**

[Weekly Market Update](http://wealthmanagement.ml.com/wm/pages/Research-and-Insights.aspx?Referrer=HomeL2) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](http://wealthmanagement.ml.com/wm/system/ViewFAPage.aspx?pageurl=jcb)

[Illegal To Be Faithful: One-Quarter Of The World Has Blasphemy Laws](http://blog.acton.org/archives/69735-one-quarter-world-blasphemy-laws.html)

[State lawmakers push Common Core agenda with 340 bills](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/06/13/stateline-lawmakers-common-core/10415269/)

[Premature Talk of Surrender on Same-Sex Marriage](http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2014/05/13106/)

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