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The foundations of our society and our government rest so much on the teachings of the Bible that it would be difficult to support them if faith in these teachings would cease to be practically universal in our country.”
Calvin Coolidge

I Stand Sunday—Supporting Religious Liberty in Houston and Across the Nation

In response to the recent attack on the religious freedom of certain Houston pastors, a special service has been planned for Christians to stand together in support of religious liberty in our nation. “[I Stand Sunday](#)” will take place this Sunday evening, November 2, at Houston’s Grace Community Church, home church of Pastor Steve Riggle, who was one of the pastors subpoenaed for fighting against the city’s new non-discrimination ordinance. Even though Houston’s Mayor Annise Parker [withdrew](#) the subpoenas earlier this week, there is still grave concern that she and the city’s attorney will not allow the people to vote on whether or not they approve of the equality bill which prohibits gender-based discrimination in public facilities, including public restrooms. Over 50,000 signatures were collected for a petition to place a referendum on the November ballot to overturn the ordinance—well over the required 17,000, but the mayor and city attorney denied the petition claiming irregularities in the signatures. Opponents of the new law then filed a lawsuit, and the city’s attorneys responded with the subpoenas to the pastors. This sparked a firestorm of criticism that this was an infringement on First Amendment rights. However, when the mayor announced the withdrawal of the subpoenas, she made it clear that her decision was not because of any legal pressure or criticism about infringement on religious liberties. Rather, she said, “I did it because it was not serving Houston.” However, Christians nationwide have responded passionately to her disregard for religious freedom. Hundreds of Christians showed their solidarity with Houston’s pastors by [sending](#) Bibles to Mayor Parker (she reportedly received close to 1,000!), and several organizations have joined with Family Research Council to sponsor “[I Stand Sunday](#)” to give opportunity for Christians to stand together in support of religious liberty. The event will be web cast, to allow participation of those who cannot travel to Houston. The service begins at 7:00 p.m. EST, and more information can be found [here](#).

NC Magistrates Resign Over Requirement to Perform Same-Sex Marriages

In the wake of the sweeping judicial decisions which overturned marriage amendments in eleven states, the conflict between “marriage equality” and religious freedom continues to intensify. In addition to the pastors in Houston and Idaho who are under attack because of their stand for Biblical marriage, some government officials in North Carolina are finding that their job responsibilities now conflict with their faith. At least six North Carolina magistrates have [resigned](#) their positions because of the new requirement that they must officiate same-sex weddings. Since the 4th Circuit Court ruled earlier this year that North Carolina’s state marriage amendment was unconstitutional, state government employees were put on notice that they would have to comply with the change which legalized same-sex marriage in North Carolina. Several judges have determined that this would cause them to violate their deeply held religious beliefs and, therefore, have resigned their posts, counting the financial costs of such a move as a sacrifice worth making for their faith in God. Judge John Kallam, Jr., [wrote](#) in his resignation letter that having to perform a same-sex ceremony “would desecrate a holy

institution established by God Himself.” He noted that he has performed countless wedding ceremonies as part of his job responsibilities. However, as he stated, “I can no longer fulfill my oath of office in good faith.” North Carolina Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger has [introduced](#) legislation which will protect magistrates from being required to perform same-sex marriages. He stated, “The court’s expansion of the freedoms of some should not violate the well-recognized constitutional rights of others. Complying with the new marriage law imposed by the courts should not require our state employees to compromise their core religious beliefs and First Amendment rights in order to protect their livelihoods.” Berger’s legislation is receiving criticism from LGBT advocacy group Equality NC, whose executive director Chris Sgro claims that such legislation would let people choose which laws they wanted to follow and claims that this has nothing to do with religious liberty.

Early Education Expansion Update

The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) [reported](#) this week that 35 states and Puerto Rico have submitted applications for the Preschool Development Block Grant competition which is jointly sponsored by the DOE and the Department of Health and Human Services. The \$250 million competition is intended to help states prepare for participation in President Obama’s Preschool for All program by building, developing, and expanding state-run early education programs. While efforts to establish universal preschool seem to garnish wide support and universal preschool has become a top [issue](#) in several state campaigns across the country, a recent [report](#) by the Cato Institute suggests that the research and programs which are being used to prove the need for more government funding have flaws when applied to a national program. The Cato report offers an analysis of the programs that are generally viewed as basis for the call for increased government funding, including the Perry Preschool Program, the Abecedarian Program, Head Start, Early Head Start, and the current programs being implemented in Boston, Tulsa, and Georgia. The report concludes that while some of these programs may show measures of success in preparing children for kindergarten, the gains generally fade between first and third grades. Furthermore, none of the programs offer sound evidence that a national program is the necessary antidote to close the achievement gap for students or provide them a better education or career.

Common Core Support Continues to Fall

A recent Gallup [poll](#) shows that public support for the Common Core Standards continues to wane among parents as they hear more about the standards. According to the [data](#), the percentage of parents who viewed the standards negatively increased by seven points, while those having a positive view decreased by two percentage points. The data reflects a poll taken of public school parents; but a recent Heritage Foundation article shows that home school parents also have concerns, and these concerns could translate into private school issues as well. A New Jersey district recently [directed](#) a home school family that its curriculum should be following the CCS. Indeed, the potential threat that the CCS would present to the autonomy of home schools and private schools has been a top [concern](#) of the private education community. In a recent [article](#) in *Christianity Today*, the effects common core could have on religious liberty are explored, and one of the authors notes that private and parochial schools face immense pressure to align with the standards in order to prepare students adequately for college entrance exams which are common core aligned.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Voter Score Card – Family Research Council](#)

[Homosexual Marriage: A Watershed Issue for Evangelicals](#)

[LGBT Report or Pro-Family Hit List?](#)