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Freedom is not a gift bestowed upon us by other men, but a right that belongs to us by the laws of God and nature.

Benjamin Franklin

18 States Awarded Preschool Grants by the Department of Education

The Department of Education joined with the Department of Health and Human Services in [announcing](#) that 18 states received federal funds to expand their state-run early education programs through the [Preschool Development Grant](#) program. Under this program, two types of grants were available: Development Grants for states that had small state-funded programs (serving less than 10 percent of 4-year-olds), and Expansion Grants for states that either already had programs serving more than 10 percent of 4-year-olds or had previously received Race to the Top funds for early education programs. Five states were recipients of the Development Grants (Alabama, Arizona, Hawaii, Montana, and Nevada), and thirteen states received Expansion Grants (Arkansas, Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont, and Virginia). The announcement of the winners coincided with the White House Early Education Summit on Wednesday in which the Administration urged even more expansion of early education programs for children from birth to age five for low- and middle-income families. Both President Obama and Vice-President Biden spoke at the Summit, signaling the Administration's commitment to continue its work to expand government involvement in early education. During his speech, the President announced yet another early education campaign, "Invest in Us," to encourage business leaders and private entities to invest in early education programs. As part of this campaign, the President announced there will be up to \$750 million in new federal awards available to states, and a total of \$330 million from the private sector towards programs for preschool development and expansion and for education of parents. In a conference call prior to the Summit, Education Secretary Arne Duncan reiterated the Administration's call to action regarding expansion of early education, claiming that less than one-third of all 4-year-olds currently attend a state-funded preschool. However, a recent statistic shows that approximately [74% of 4-year-olds](#) are actually enrolled in some form of preschool when including those children also enrolled in private preschool or home care setting. This fact causes many conservatives to believe that the Administration's agenda for early education is merely to increase the number of children in state-run schools. The American Association of Christian Schools has expressed concern that an increase in government involvement in early education will result in a decrease of the number of options for a private, faith-based preschool.

National Summit on Education Reform Includes School Choice

Last month, the 2014 National [Summit](#) on Education Reform was held in Washington, D.C., and attracted hundreds of policy makers, state legislators, education stakeholders, and businessmen from across the country. The Summit was hosted by the [Foundation](#) for Excellence in Education whose stated mission is to "build an American education system that equips every child to achieve his or her God-given potential." Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush served as the keynote speaker for the Summit as he is the chair of the Foundation for Excellence in Education. In his keynote address, Governor Bush [summarized](#) his philosophy for education

reform as being “abundant choices for parents, a 21st century teaching profession, and the full embrace of digital learning.” The agenda of the Summit reflected his goals, including sessions on school choice programs including education savings accounts. Interestingly, the Governor was introduced by Denisha Merriweather who was able to [attend a Christian school](#) because of the Florida tax credit scholarship program and is now the first person in her family to graduate from college. In addition to a strong emphasis on parental choice, the Summit also included a strategy session on assessments and standards. Governor Bush has received much criticism from conservatives for his support of the Common Core Standards, and he addressed the Common Core debate during his keynote address by speaking to the states: “For those states choosing a path other than Common Core, I say this: Aim even higher...be bolder...raise standards and ask more of our students and the system. Because I know they have the potential to deliver it. Even if we don’t all agree on Common Core, there are more important principles for us to agree on. We need to pull together whenever we can.” He further stated, “Education should be a national priority, not turned into a federal program.”

Anti-Common Core Bill Introduced in Senate

Senator Vitter (LA) recently [introduced](#) the “Local Control of Education Act” which would prohibit the federal government from “mandating, incentivizing, or coercing states to adopt the Common Core State Standards or any other specific academic standards, instructional content, curricula, assessments, or programs of instruction.” The bill would also make it possible for states to repeal the implementation of the Common Core without being penalized through loss of federal funds from NCLB waivers. Senator Vitter formerly supported the Common Core Standards but [says](#) that he was persuaded to change his position after hearing from “literally thousands” of people regarding the need to stop federal control over the standards. The current Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal has filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Education for using Race to the Top funds to incentivize states to adopt the CCS, calling the incentives an attempt to establish a national school curriculum.

Michigan House Approves Religious Freedom Restoration Act

The Michigan House of Representatives recently [passed](#) a state version of the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), causing a stir of opposition by those who claim that the bill will just give people of faith a license to discriminate. The Michigan version of RFRA is basically a copy of the federal law, which was a key [component](#) of the Supreme Court decision in the *Hobby Lobby* case earlier this year. Passed by the U.S. Congress in 1993 and signed into law by President Clinton, the law [states](#) that “governments should not substantially burden religious exercise without compelling justification.” In 1997, the Supreme Court ruled that RFRA could not be applied to states, and consequently there has been a campaign in states to establish their own RFRA laws, with 22 states establishing such a law to date.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Why the Supreme Court Might Agree to Hear a Same-Sex Marriage Case](#)

[Data on Millions of Students Sold in Bankruptcy Case](#)

[Midterm Exit Poll Shows Americans Equally Divided on Gay Marriage](#)