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"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."
Isaiah 9:6

Victories and Losses for Social Issues in "CROmnibus"

The spending bill passed by Congress garnered criticism from both conservatives and liberals for a variety of issues. Dubbed the "CROmnibus" by many in Washington, the bill combined an omnibus bill (funding eleven areas of the government till next September) with a continuing resolution that will fund the twelfth area, the Department of Homeland Security, only through February. House leadership claims this method will give the new Republican-controlled Senate a chance to address the President's immigration plan in the new year. Many conservatives in both the House and Senate fought the $1.1 trillion spending plan, arguing that the bill included much unnecessary and wasteful spending and that the bill did not immediately address President Obama's recent unilateral executive actions on immigration. However, Republican leadership pushed the bill forward using legislative maneuvers in order to avoid a government shutdown before the holidays. House leadership justified the push by claiming that the President would be unlikely to sign any bill that cut spending. Republicans did, however, include many pro-life and education measures that are important to conservatives. An Explanatory Statement was added to the bill that instructs the HHS Secretary to address the serious complaints arising in California regarding the new state requirement that all insurance plans, including those purchased by churches, must cover certain types of elective abortion. Funding related to education included $45 million appropriated for the continued operation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program—a very successful school choice program for disadvantaged children that the President and Education Secretary have repeatedly tried to defund in previous years. Also, a generous amount was appropriated for early education, including $250 million for a second year of the Preschool Development Grant competition. Additionally, the Child Care Development Block Grants received $2.4 billion, an increase of $75 million from previous years, while the President's Race to the Top programs received no funding.

Arkansas City Repeals Bad Discrimination Ordinance

After the city council in Fayetteville, Arkansas, passed a "non-discrimination" law last August, the people of the city rose up in protest and repealed the ordinance in a special election last Tuesday. Ordinance 119, which became known as the Civil Rights Ordinance, prohibited businesses from discriminating against employees and customers on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The people waged a "Repeal 119" campaign, led by local minister Duncan Campbell, and collected enough signatures on a petition to force the special election and give the people a chance to vote. Mr. Campbell explained, "We wanted to repeal the ordinance because we didn't believe it made Fayetteville a fairer city or a freer city. It did just the opposite. It was called the Civil Rights Ordinance, but it was misnamed. It was an ordinance that actually took away civil rights and freedom from people. It criminalized civil behavior. It didn't accomplish the stated purpose of the ordinance, and it was crafted by an outside group; it wasn't something Fayetteville residents put together." The city ordinance, much like other "nondiscrimination" laws that have been passed in other cities across the country,

created real threats to the religious liberty of business owners and pastors. As Ryan Anderson of the Heritage Foundation points out, "Laws that create special privileges based on sexual orientation and gender identity are being used to trump fundamental civil liberties such as freedom of speech and the free exercise of religion."

New Marriage Cases Headed to Supreme Court
Since the Supreme Court chose not to take up the issue of marriage in October, several new marriage cases have been filed with the High Court. A group of same-sex couples from Ohio filed a petition with the Supreme Court after the 6th Circuit Court upheld the constitutionality of the marriage laws in Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The issue in these Ohio cases is called a "recognition" issue since the couples—who married in other states—want the state of Ohio to officially recognize their marriages on death certificates and children's birth certificates. In North Carolina, state legislators are planning to send a petition to the Supreme Court, requesting that the High Court rule on the constitutionality of the state's marriage law after the 4th Circuit Court ruled such a law was unconstitutional. Thom Thillis and Phil Berger, leaders of the state House and Senate respectively, notified the 4th Circuit Court of their plans to send an appeal to the Supreme Court, and asked that a hold be placed on the appeal currently pending at the 4th Circuit. Earlier this year, the 4th Circuit struck down the marriage law in Virginia, and the ruling subsequently affected all the states in the 4th Circuit region (MD, NC, SC, VA, WV,). South Carolina officials also plan to send an appeal to the Supreme Court in an effort to uphold the constitutionality of the marriage law in their state. The justices meet again in January and will have another opportunity to take up the marriage issue at that time.

In Case You Missed It:

Weekly Market Update provided by Jeff Beach of the AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch

The Right to Life and the Culture of Marriage

"Non-Common Core" Category on Jeopardy

New Prenatal Screening Tests Are Leading to Abortions of Healthy Babies