



The Washington Flyer
January 23, 2015

“To the security of a free constitution [knowledge] contributes in various ways—by convincing those who are entrusted with the public administration that every valuable end of government is best answered by the enlightened confidence of the people, and by teaching the people themselves to know and to value their own rights; to discern and provide against invasions of them; to distinguish between oppression and the necessary exercise of lawful authority; between burdens proceeding from a disregard to their convenience and those resulting from the inevitable exigencies of society; to discriminate the spirit of liberty from that of licentiousness—cherishing the first, avoiding the last—and uniting a speedy but temperate vigilance against encroachments, with an inviolable respect to the laws.”

George Washington, January 8, 1790, first State of the Union Address

Education Priorities Outlined During State of the Union

During his State of the Union [address](#) on Tuesday, President Obama emphasized his education agenda of providing education for every child from cradle to career. While Congress is focusing on ESEA reauthorization this year, the President indicated his priorities would be to provide child care for working families and to implement a plan that would provide free community college to students for two years. When discussing his plans for child care, he called free child care a matter of economic importance since many families need both parents to work. He explained that his plan “will make quality child care more available, and more affordable, for every middle-class and low-income family with young children in America—by creating more slots and a new tax cut of up to \$3,000 per child, per year.” (To date, the Administration has already spent over \$1.25 billion on expanding state-run early education programs through three different Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge competitions and a Preschool Development Grant competition.) The plan for free community college was also stressed as vital to “middle-class economics” in order to ensure that everyone has the opportunity for a higher education and, thus, a high-paying job. The President explained that under his plan students would have to “earn” the free college by keeping their grades up and graduating on time, but he did not share how the program would be funded. Although he had explained in an earlier speech that the cost would be covered through a federal-state partnership with the federal government covering 75% of the cost, the details of how the federal and state governments would obtain these funds was not disclosed. Neither House of Congress has indicated that they will fund the President’s plans for free child care and community college. Interestingly, the President made no mention of ESEA, even though it has been up for reauthorization since 2007 and it is likely that the Republican-controlled Congress will be able to pass a bill for the President to sign this year.

Supreme Court Decides to Hear Marriage Case

The United States Supreme Court has finally agreed to take up the issue of marriage and decide on the constitutionality of marriage laws and amendments that define marriage as between one man and one woman. The High Court announced last week they will hear oral arguments on the cases appealed to them from the 6th Circuit Court which ruled last fall to uphold the marriage laws in four states (Ohio, Michigan, Tennessee, and Kentucky). The Court has indicated it will [focus](#) on two basic issues: whether the 14th amendment requires states to license same-sex marriages, and whether states must recognize same-sex marriages performed in other

states. Oral arguments will likely be heard in April, with a final decision expected in June. Conservatives expect the arguments supporting traditional marriage to point to the precedent set by the Supreme Court in the 1972 case *Baker v. Nelson*, in which a [one-line decision](#) declared there was “no substantial federal question” for a case regarding marriage. This dismissal upheld a decision that had been made by the Minnesota Supreme Court that the Constitution did not grant the right to same-sex marriage. Ryan Anderson of the Heritage Foundation [points out](#) that “there is nothing in the Constitution that requires the redefinition of marriage. . . . Judges should not insert their own policy preferences about marriage and declare them to be required by the Constitution.”

Conservative Policy Summit—“Opportunity for All, Favoritism to None”

Last week, the Heritage Foundation laid out a conservative agenda for the new 114th Congress at their 2015 Conservative Policy Summit. Following a theme of “Opportunity for All, Favoritism to None,” the two-day summit tackled the issues of government spending and budget reforms; energy solutions; labor reforms; education reforms; social issues; national defense and foreign policy; and social issues including life, marriage, and religious liberty. Keynote speakers included former Senator and current Heritage president Jim DeMint, Senator Ted Cruz, Senator Rand Paul, Senator Mike Lee, and Representative Jim Jordan. Rep. Luke Messer, founder and chairman of the Congressional School Choice Caucus, [spoke](#) on the importance of educational reform that will provide an equal opportunity in education for every American. He championed school choice as the only educational solution that truly empowers parents, expands educational freedom, and raises the quality of education in schools. He also recognized legislative efforts on the federal level to advance school choice, specifically referencing Sen. Tim Scott’s bill that expanded options for military and low-income families and students with disabilities, and also referencing Sen. Lamar Alexander’s bill that provided scholarships for children who were eligible for Title 1 funds. Both bills were introduced last Congress and will likely be introduced again this Congress. To watch excerpts of the summit, click [here](#).

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Coming Soon - National School Choice Week: January 25-31, 2015](#)

[Free Community College Is Anything But Free](#)

[GOP Hopes It Has Cracked the Abortion Code](#)

[Legislatures Should Curb Judicial Supremacy Over Marriage](#)

[What Our Founders Understood About Freedom of Faith](#)

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