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Education means emancipation. It means light and liberty. It means the uplifting of the soul of man into the glorious light of truth, the light by which men can only be made free.

Frederick Douglass

President's Budget Proposal Expands Government Involvement in Early Education

Last week President Obama laid out an aggressive budget proposal detailing his plans for greater federal involvement in early education. The proposal includes requests for funding for five areas the Administration believes will provide for comprehensive coverage of early education: child care, home visitation, preschool, Head Start, and IDEA programs (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). While the funding request for the home visitation program remained the same as in years past (\$500 million), the requested amounts for preschool, Head Start, and IDEA increased substantially. The President requested \$750 million for a second round of Preschool Development Grants, allowing up to 22 more states to receive funds to expand state-run early education programs, increasing the total number of participating states to 40. The goal of the Preschool Development Grants is to help states prepare to implement the President's Preschool for All plan, which seeks to offer free full-day preschool for 4-year-olds from low- to middle-income households. The budget proposal also requested \$907 million for early screening and intervention programs provided through IDEA, and a \$1.5 billion increase for Head Start funding. Perhaps the most notable expansion of the President's early education agenda is the request for \$82 billion over ten years to establish a new child care program for low- to moderate-income families. The [proposed program](#) would create a fund requiring participating states to provide matching funds for the purpose of developing child care programs that focus on health development and school readiness. Additionally, the plan would increase the child care tax credit to \$3000 and would invest \$266 million for implementing the new requirements under the recently reauthorized Child Care and Development fund. In his State of the Union address, the President [declared](#) that providing child care was a "must have" and a "national economic priority" since many families have both parents in the workforce. The goal of the President's child care program is that all children ages 0-4 who need care will be in child care by 2025. However, Lindsey Burke of the Heritage Foundation [points out](#) that the federal government already spends more than \$20 billion each year on 45 different early learning and child care programs, and that over two-thirds of 4-year-olds are already enrolled in some form of preschool. She contends, "Efforts to grow government preschool would be duplicative of existing options, and, instead of assisting families with unmet needs, would create an unnecessary preschool subsidy for middle- and upper-income families."

Marriage Battle Intensifies in Alabama

Since the Supreme Court's infamous 2013 *Windsor* decision that overturned parts of the Defense of Marriage Act, federal judges across the country have issued rulings that have overturned state marriage laws and amendments in 28 states. Most recently in Alabama, a federal judge ruled that Alabama's state marriage amendment was unconstitutional, but the decision has been met with strong opposition from Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore who believes it is his responsibility "to take affirmative and appropriate action to correct or alleviate any condition or situation adversely affecting the administration of justice within this state." In two

letters and a memorandum, Judge Moore has instructed the state's probate judges that they would be in violation of their duty under the state's constitution if they issued licenses to gay couples. The state attorney general sent a request to the Supreme Court for a stay in the court's decision in order to avoid chaos and confusion until a decision is made by the High Court, but the request was [denied](#). As a result, judges in 54 out of 67 counties either refused to issue licenses to gay couples or to issue marriage licenses completely, causing increased tension and confusion in the state. The Supreme Court plans to hear oral arguments in April on the marriage cases from the 6th Circuit Court. In deciding whether or not the Constitution grants a right to same-sex couples to marry, the Court will focus on two questions which are at the heart of the cases before them: whether or not states have the power to ban same-sex marriage and whether or not states should be required to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states.

ESEA Reauthorization—Conservatives Weigh In

As the House and Senate consider versions of ESEA reauthorization, a group of conservative education experts released a [statement](#) providing their outline of what should be included in the bill. Guiding their specific recommendations is the principle that “effective education is paved with local control and parent power.” To that end, they call for a bold reform that would allow states to opt out of all ESEA requirements in order to best meet the educational needs of their students. They argue that such a move would drive control to the local level and away from the federal government. Further reforms, they contend, should include eliminating mandates such as those requiring annual testing and certain teacher qualifications, eliminating competitive grant programs, allowing for Title 1 portability to provide school choice options, and strengthening prohibitions against national standards and testing. On Tuesday, the House Education and Workforce Committee [passed](#) The Student Success Act (H.R. 5), a bill they believe will “repair the nation’s broken K-12 education system by reducing the federal footprint, restoring local control, and empowering parents and education leaders to hold schools accountable.” While the bill contains strong language prohibiting the establishment of a national standard and test, it does not go so far as to allow states to completely opt out of the law’s requirements. Meanwhile, the Senate HELP Committee is considering its own version of ESEA reauthorization, Every Child Ready for College or Career Act of 2015. Both versions maintain language that protects the autonomy of private, religious, and home schools.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Obama's Proposed Budget Cuts out DC School Choice Program](#)

[At Prayer Breakfast, Obama Serves Up Controversy](#)

[Congressional Prayer Caucus Committed to Protecting Religious Liberty](#)

[GOP Lawmakers Host School Choice Forum in Washington, D.C.](#)

[Girl Scouts Joins Planned Parenthood at Pro-Abortion Conference](#)

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