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*No man, who continues to add something to the material, intellectual and moral well-being of the place in which he lives, is left long without proper reward.*

***Booker T. Washington***

**School Choice Forum Held on Capitol Hill**

South Carolina's Senator Tim Scott hosted an all-day school choice forum on Capitol Hill last week to [highlight](#) "the urgency of promoting academic excellence for every child, regardless of family income, socio-economic status or background." Choosing Excellence: A Forum on the Freedom to Choose Academic Excellence for Every Child was hosted by the American Federation for Children and the Friedman Foundation, along with Senator Scott's office. Senator Scott is known as an outspoken champion for school choice and has introduced the CHOICE Act which would which would expand school choice options for students with special needs, military dependents, and participants in the highly successful DC Opportunity Scholarship program. The forum welcomed [top legislative leaders](#) who are also working to promote choice in education policy, including Senate HELP Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander, House Republican Conference Chairwoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, former U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige, and Rep. Luke Messer who serves as the Chairman of the Congressional School Choice Caucus. During his remarks, Sen. Scott emphasized the importance of choice in providing an excellent education for each child and announced that he will be introducing an amendment to the Senate version of ESEA that would expand Title 1 portability dollars to allow them to be used for private schools. Currently, the Senate version only allows for public school choice with Title 1 dollars. Sen. Alexander, the lead sponsor for the bill, noted that while he agrees that private school choice should be included, he thinks the American public is not familiar enough with choice policy to support the idea fully. Rep. McMorris Rodgers gave testimony to the impact that school choice has had on her family and emphasized the need to advance the idea of blended instruction along with choice options. Governor Jindal, who has seen huge results through the scholarship program in Louisiana, recognized choice as the best way to improve education, stating, "The most important thing, and it's not real complicated, is you let the dollars follow the child instead of the child follow the dollars." Governor Jindal and Sen. Scott also released a [joint op-ed](#) the day of the forum, titled "An Education System for the 21st Century," in which they explained three principles which would create a strong, modern educational system: parental choice, less government control, and more freedom for teachers to be truly effective in the classroom.

**School Choice Legislation Advancing on the State Level**

School choice programs are continuing to grow on the [state level](#), with several states advancing school choice legislation this year. The state legislatures in Mississippi and Montana are considering bills that would create education savings accounts for students with special needs, and these bills are moving quickly through the appropriate committees. In addition, tax credit legislation is being considered in five different states. Maryland Governor Larry Hogan declared in his state of the state address that he intends to support the BOAST bill—Building Opportunities for All Students and Teachers—which would provide a tax credit for voluntary donations to a private or parochial school. Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval also used his state of the state

address to highlight his support for a tax credit proposal that would give businesses a tax credit for donations to a scholarship-giving nonprofit organization. In Nebraska, state Senator Bob Krist introduced the CHANCE Act—Choice for the Advancement of Nebraska Children in Education—which provides a tax credit to individuals and businesses that contribute to a scholarship organization. North Dakota state Representative Mark Dosch introduced two bills: one to provide a tax credit to businesses that donate to scholarship organizations, and one to provide a tax credit to individuals who make tuition payments to private schools. New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has proposed a tax credit program which would provide tax credits for donations to non-profit scholarship organizations and public schools and would also provide a tax credit to teachers, including private school teachers, for expenses incurred for professional materials.

### **Secretary Duncan Tries to Negotiate NCLB Waivers**

While both Houses of Congress are moving forward on ESEA reauthorization, the Department of Education has begun [negotiating](#) with some states over the renewal of waivers for No Child Left Behind requirements. The renewals would be for up to four years, and Education Secretary Arne Duncan is pushing for strong accountability in areas such as testing and teacher evaluations. However, the ESEA legislation that is being considered by Congress, if passed, would negate some of the main requirements of the waivers, and the Senate version would not allow any kind of waiver idea to be implemented again. This weakens the Secretary's position to strongly enforce many of the waiver requirements for states seeking renewal. Areas of contention and difficulty for states include the requirements for testing and tying teacher evaluations to students' scores.

### **In Case You Missed It:**

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

[Redefining Marriage Redefines Parenthood](#)

[Commonsense, Not Common Core](#)

[Italy's Top Court: No Right to Same-Sex Marriage](#)

[OK Senator James Lankford Backs Religious Groups Fighting for Religious Rights](#)

[Heritage Foundation: What Congress Can Do to Reform Education Policy](#)

Jamison Coppola: Legislative Director  
Maureen Van Den Berg: Policy Analyst  
Legislative Office, 119 C Street SE, Washington, DC 20003  
Phone: 202.547.2991 Fax: 202.547.2992