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**The Washington Flyer**  
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*“He that would make his own liberty secure, must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty, he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself.”*

*Thomas Paine*

**AACS Hosts National Bible, Fine Arts, and Academic Competition**

Last week, the AACS National Competition was held in Greenville, South Carolina. Approximately 1,800 students from 31 states participated in the AACS National Competition, having captured top honors in their state contests. The students, representing almost 200 Christian high schools, competed in 77 categories in the five basic areas of Bible, music, speech, art, and academics. Throughout the week, Pastor Keith Wiebe, Jr., preached a series of challenging messages. Bob Jones University faculty and staff graciously facilitated the student activities and accommodations. The three-day competition culminated at the Thursday night awards ceremony, which included a showcase highlighting some of the best entries by several individuals and schools. For the thirteenth consecutive year, Virginia (Old Dominion Association of Church Schools) won the AACS Cup of Excellence as a result of accumulating the most points of any state. Illinois, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee were also among the top states. The AACS offers our warmest congratulations to all the students who participated and made this year’s National Competition a memorable event. To view the complete list of this year’s winners click [here](#). To view pictures of the event, “like” the AACS Legislative Office Facebook [page](#) or follow us on Twitter at AACCS\_DC.

**Senate HELP Committee Passes ESEA Reauthorization**

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee has unanimously [approved](#) legislation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Titled the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015, the 601-page bill is the product of months of negotiations between HELP Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Ranking Member Parry Murray (D-WA). During the three-day mark-up of the bill last week, the HELP Committee considered 57 amendments out of a total of 87 that were offered. Key issues which were discussed included Title 1 portability, student assessments, early education funding, and bullying. The final bill eliminates annual yearly progress (AYP), a key component of No Child Left Behind that has been criticized for being an unattainable requirement, and allows states to submit their own accountability process for approval by the education secretary. Early education, a priority for Senator Murray, is included by allowing states the option to apply funding for a variety of programs towards early education programs, a move that has been applauded by Secretary Arne Duncan who also calls for even more funding for early education. Senators Tim Scott (SC) and Rand Paul (KY) offered amendments which would have allowed Title 1 dollars to follow low-income students to the public or private school of their choice, but these were struck down. Both Senators have indicated they will bring the amendments up on the Senate floor. This idea has strong Republican support, with Senators Ted Cruz and Mike Lee indicating they will also push for a vote on the Senate floor to amend the bill with language from their bill, Enhancing Educational Opportunities for All Students Act (S. 306), which would also allow for Title 1 portability. While the bill has similarities to the conservative House version, Student Success Act (H.R. 5), in restoring more state and local control over schools, some conservatives [claim](#)

neither version goes far enough in giving power to the states and decentralizing education mandates. Despite the steps taken to gain bipartisan support, the Senate bill has not yet been placed on the calendar, causing many to wonder if it will actually receive a debate and vote on the Senate floor.

### **Nevada Passes School Choice Bill**

Nevada has joined the growing number of states that offer school choice programs with the recent passage of Assembly Bill 165 which establishes a tax credit scholarship program for low-income students. [Signed](#) into law by Governor Brian Sandoval, the bill provides for tax credits to businesses that contribute to the Nevada Educational Choice Scholarship Program, which in turn can provide scholarships of up to \$7,755 per year to low-income students to attend the private school of their choice. The program is capped at \$5 million the first year, with an increase to \$5.5 million the second year. Governor Sandoval has been working to establish school choice in Nevada for several years but was not able to get legislation to advance until Republicans gained control of the state legislature in the last election. The bill passed largely along party lines with Democrats opposing the program, arguing that it would take funds away from public schools. The governor chose to sign the bill into law at the historic Fourth Ward School which dates back to 1876, because he believes the “bill is going to make history.”

### **House Committee Takes Steps to Protect Religious Freedom**

Tuesday night, by a vote of 20-16, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee advanced H.J. Res. 43, the Resolution of Disapproval of the Reproductive Health Nondiscrimination Amendment Act (RHNDA). Last year two [anti-religious freedom laws](#)—RHNDA and the Human Rights Amendment Act (HRAA)—were passed by the D.C. City Council. These laws were transmitted to Congress last month for a review period of 30 legislative days in which Congress has the opportunity to pass a joint resolution of disapproval to block the laws. Rep. Diane Black (R-TN) introduced the resolution to disapprove RHNDA, and was joined by Republican Study Committee Chairman Bill Flores (R-TX) and Rep. Mark Meadows (R-NC). Chairman Flores [stated](#), “This resolution is about protecting Americans’ sacred right to exercise their freedom of conscience, the District of Columbia’s law not only ignores the Supreme Court’s clear ruling in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, it violates the religious freedom enshrined in the First Amendment of our Constitution.” The resolution must be passed by the House and Senate and then signed by the President in order to overturn the D.C. law.

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

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

[My Father Was Gay: Why I Oppose Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage](#)

[School Testing Suspended in Florida as Computer Problems Resurface](#)

[This Saturday, April 25: the March for Marriage](#)

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