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To those who cite the First Amendment as reason for excluding God from more and more of our institutions and everyday life, may I just say: The First Amendment of the Constitution was not written to protect the people of this country from religious values; it was written to protect religious values from government tyranny.

Ronald Reagan

AACS Joins Fight to Protect Religious Liberty in Our Nation's Capital

Last week, the American Association of Christian Schools sent a letter to Members of Congress expressing concern and urging action on the Reproductive Health Nondiscrimination Act (RHNDA), a measure recently passed in the city of Washington, D.C. Last year two [anti-religious freedom laws](#)—RHNDA and the Human Rights Amendment Act (HRAA)—were passed by the D.C. City Council and were transmitted to Congress for review. The U.S. Congress has the authority to overturn laws passed by the D.C. Council by passing a “resolution of disapproval” in both the House and Senate and then gaining the President’s signature. Rep. Diane Black (TN) introduced H.J. Res. 43 to block RHNDA, while Rep. Vicky Hartzler (MO) introduced a similar measure to block the Human Rights Amendment. House Leadership brought RHNDA to the floor for a vote, and the resolution passed late last Thursday night with a vote of 228-192. In a [press release](#) praising the passage of the bill, House Majority Whip Steve Scalise (LA), noted that RHNDA put “faith-based and pro-life organizations squarely in the crosshairs, forcing them to compromise their core values and violate their religious beliefs.” He continued, “This resolution of disapproval blocks D.C.’s unconstitutional measure, maintains current law, and takes a strong stand in defense of religious freedom.” A similar resolution was introduced [in the Senate](#) by Senators Ted Cruz (TX) and James Lankford (OK), but Senate leadership failed to bring the bill to the floor for a vote. In the absence of agreement by the House and Senate in passing the resolution, both RHNDA and the Human Rights Amendment went into effect on Saturday, May 2. However, conservatives note that the passage of H.J. Res. 43 in the House was an important step in the battle to protect religious liberty for the following reason: Should a court case ensue as a result of the D.C. law causing infringement on the religious liberty of an individual or organization, the House passage of the bill will be a strong defense in showing that Congress did take steps to protect religious liberty and disapprove of the D.C. law. The AACS worked hard to encourage Congress to vote for the resolution through lobbying efforts and a letter sent to Congressional Members. In the [letter](#), AACS President Keith Wiebe stated, “By requiring organizations to make employment decisions that violate deeply held moral and religious beliefs on abortion and the sanctity of life, RHNDA is a serious threat to the religious liberty and conscience rights of the AACS and many other organizations operating in D.C. Passage of this resolution by Congress will show that Representatives understand the important role they have in defending the foundational American rights of religious liberty, freedom of association, and freedom of conscience.”

Religious Liberty at Center of Marriage Debate

In the wake of the marriage arguments before the Supreme Court last week, conservative groups are expressing grave concern over the admissions of Solicitor General David Verrilli that national legalization of gay marriage would indeed cause serious threats to the freedom of religious schools. In responding to questions from Chief

Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito, Mr. Verrilli [revealed](#) that the Administration recognizes that a Supreme Court decision legalizing gay marriage would pose a serious threat to the tax-exempt status of non-profit organizations that oppose same-sex marriage, and also to the freedom of religious schools that provide student housing for married couples. The Administration's [record](#) of sacrificing religious liberty for the advancement of its social agenda is well established, so the admission comes as no surprise to conservatives fighting to protect natural marriage. However, Mr. Verrilli's candor has sent a wave of [renewed effort](#) to seek protection through legislation, specifically through the Marriage and Religious Freedom Act, which would protect all persons who hold to the belief that marriage is the union of a man and a woman from discrimination by the federal government.

School Choice Advances in States During April

During the month of April, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi all established school choice programs for students with disabilities. Arkansas did so through a scholarship program, while Tennessee and Mississippi followed Arizona and Florida in creating ESA programs. On April 8th, Arkansas passed legislation to establish the [Succeed Scholarship Program](#) which will grant approximately \$6,600 to qualifying students with disabilities and allows for the students to attend any accredited religious or private school starting in 2016. Just over one week later, Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant signed the [Equal Opportunity for Students with Special Needs Act](#). This act grants to students with special needs \$6,500 to be deposited into a savings account by the state. The parents can use these funds for educational related expenses such as private school tuition, textbooks, therapies, tutor payments, and online learning programs. And finally on April 22, just before the legislative session ended, Tennessee became the fourth state to create an ESA program when the state legislature passed the [Individualized Education Act](#). Like Mississippi, the statute grants funds to eligible students and allows for school portability.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Judicial Activism on Marriage Like Abortion Can Cause Harms](#)

[Gordon College Keeps Its Faith and Accreditation](#)

[Michigan Approves Bill That Protects Religious Liberty of Adoption Agencies](#)

[Pro-life Organizations Pledge to Risk Violating DC Anti-discrimination Law](#)

[The Soccer Mom Revolt Against Common Core](#)

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