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*“Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.”  
Abraham Lincoln*

**Common Core Tests Not Meeting Goals**

Recently released test scores from several states (CT, ID, MO, OR, VT, WA, and WV) which administered the Smarter Balanced assessment are proving the Common Core Standards ([CCS](#)) [are not achieving](#) one of the primary goals for which they were established: creating a common benchmark of success for students and schools nationwide. The Smarter Balanced test is one of two assessments created by a consortium of states to align with the CCS. In 2010, the Department of Education awarded \$300 million in grants to the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Since then, both groups have seen a significant decrease in support and participation, with Smarter Balanced shrinking from 31 to 18 participating states this year and PARCC down to 11 states and the District of Columbia from the initial 26 participating states. The decline in participation is largely due to the grassroots pushback against the CCS, which has caused many state legislatures to reevaluate their participation, with most states considering financial obligations and federal control versus state and local control over educational decisions. Those states which have withdrawn or plan to withdraw are replacing the assessment with their own tests created to align with the standards in their schools. In addition to the loss of participating states, the assessments have also experienced technical glitches and a large opt-out movement of parents and students who are refusing to participate in the assessments. The test scores for the states which participated in the PARCC assessment have not yet been released as PARCC is still finalizing the benchmarks for the performance levels on the test. In 2010, Education Secretary Arne Duncan praised the two testing consortiums, saying they would “help put an end to the insidious practice of establishing 50 different goal posts for educational success.” However, this goal is unlikely to be realized with the number of states following their own tests and the lack of confidence and participation in the two federally supported assessments.

**ACLU Attempts to Stop School Choice**

The ACLU has [filed a lawsuit](#) against the newly established school choice program in Nevada, charging that it “violates the Nevada Constitution’s prohibition against the use of public money for sectarian (religious) purposes.” Last month, the Nevada legislature approved the funding for the Education Savings Account (ESA) program which was signed into law in June by Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval. While four other states currently have ESA programs (Arizona, Mississippi, Tennessee, Florida), Nevada’s program is the most inclusive program as it allows parents of any public school student to participate in the program, the only requirement being that the student has to attend a public school for at least 100 days. Approximately 2,200 parents have already filed applications. The ESA funds will go directly to the parents who can then use them for a variety of educational services, including tuition, textbooks, special education services, and tutoring. Unused funds can be rolled over for use the next year or for college. The Nevada program provides parents with a

portion of the per-pupil funding for the public schools. Tim Keller, senior attorney for the Institute for Justice who is defending the program, is confident the program will survive the challenge. He stated, “The United States Supreme Court, as well as numerous state supreme courts, have already held that educational choice programs, like Nevada’s ESA Program, are constitutional. We expect the same from Nevada courts.”

### **The Fight for Life—Update on Planned Parenthood Saga**

As the Planned Parenthood saga continues to unfold, the fight intensifies as more states continue to battle the abortion institution. Planned Parenthood, backed by the ACLU, has [filed lawsuits](#) against Alabama and Louisiana following these states’ decisions to defund the institution. Planned Parenthood claims that Gov. Robert Bentley’s (AL) and Gov. Bobby Jindal’s (LA) decisions to terminate their contracts are illegal and will result in health care services becoming unaffordable for low-income women. Republicans point out, however, that federal funds no longer going to Planned Parenthood will go to other health centers that provide the same services but do not offer abortions. Earlier this week the Wisconsin health department released new abortion numbers which provide additional evidence that cutting taxpayer funding to Planned Parenthood saves unborn babies from abortion. The report shows a decline in abortion from 6,462 abortions performed in 2013 to 5,800 in 2014. These numbers are largely a result of pro-life legislation signed into law by Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker three years ago [to cut taxpayer funding to the Planned Parenthood abortion business](#). Public funds totaling \$300,000 were successfully diverted away from Planned Parenthood in 2011 by the state legislature and governor. The White House has since [responded to the state](#) by cutting its federal Medicaid funding by approximately the same amount.

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

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

[Kentucky Clerk Causes Uproar; North Carolina Shows a Better Way](#)

[House Moving Towards Vote to Defund Planned Parenthood](#)

[Video: AACCS Youth Legislative Training Conference 2015](#)

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