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“The Bible is the best of all books, for it is the word of God and teaches us the way to be happy in this world and in the next. Continue therefore to read it and to regulate your life by its precepts.”
John Jay, Original Chief Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court

AACS Hosts National Legislative Conference

Last week, the AACS hosted the annual National Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., for pastors, administrators, state leaders, and students and teachers involved in AACS ministries. The theme for the conference was “Let us be strong,” based on 2 Samuel 10:12 which states, “let us be strong for our people and...for God. And may the Lord do what is good in His sight.” Messages were shared by AACS President Dr. Keith Wiebe and Pastor Jeff Redlin (Colorado Association of Christian Schools) which both encouraged and challenged the attendees to stand strong in their faith, their ministries, and their commitment to fight for religious freedom in our country. The conference included a legislative briefing in which the AACS legislative staff updated the attendees on the legislative issues facing Christian education, emphasizing the need for protecting religious liberty through the First Amendment Defense Act and educating legislators about the pitfalls of federally funded universal preschool initiatives. A highlight of the conference was the Congressional briefing, held on Capitol Hill, which featured comments from Senator Chuck Grassley (IA), Senator Orrin Hatch (UT), and Senator Mike Lee (UT), all of whom spoke passionately about the grave need to pass legislation which protects religious freedom. David Cleary, Chief of Staff for Senator Lamar Alexander, also gave an update on the work to protect the autonomy of private schools and provide school choice in ESEA reauthorization. Attendees also had the opportunity to meet with their own Representatives and Senators to educate them about these issues that affect Christian schools. At the legislative banquet, Senator James Lankford (OK) was honored with the American Freedom Award for his tireless efforts to defend religious liberty, promote educational freedom, and protect the unborn. He gave a stirring address, based on 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, in which he encouraged the attendees to continue in their ministries of being ambassadors for Christ and proclaiming God’s message of reconciliation. Following the banquet, Dr. Tim Schmig (Michigan Association of Christian Schools) led a Stories in Stones tour of the Jefferson Memorial. The conference concluded on Wednesday morning with an informative briefing at the Heritage Foundation, which included presentations made by education and religious liberty policy experts Lindsey Burke, Sarah Torre, Ryan Anderson, and Roger Severino.

DOE Hosts Private School Leadership Conference

Last Thursday, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Non-Public Education (ONPE) hosted its annual National Private School Leadership Conference. The AACS legislative staff attended the conference which provided an overview and update about the work of ONPE, along with information about future goals and challenges. One of the highlights from the conference was a session entitled “State Regulations of Private and Home Schools,” in which Ashley Gardner, a management and program analyst for ONPE, walked attendants through the broad strokes of ONPE’s [online resource](#) containing information about state regulations of private

and home schools. This information would be extremely helpful to anyone wanting to start a private or home school but unsure of the regulations in his or her state. An additional panel highlighted the equitable services available to private school students and teachers through current provisions under No Child Left Behind.

Congress Takes Action Against Planned Parenthood

In the last few weeks, the House of Representatives has aggressively pursued avenues to stop the horrendous actions of Planned Parenthood as described in several [videos released](#) by the Center for Medical Progress. Just last week, the House Oversight Committee sent a follow-up [letter](#) to HHS Secretary Sylvia Burwell threatening action if they do not receive the previously requested information regarding the federal funds that are dispersed to Planned Parenthood. The Energy and Commerce Committee reviewed two draft bills which would strengthen state and federal enforcement of the existing Infants Protection Act of 2002 and the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003. The House Judiciary Committee released a [video](#) which summarizes their investigative efforts thus far and includes testimonies from abortion survivors. Most notably, the House of Representatives passed two bills which would effectively stop federal funding of Planned Parenthood: The Born Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act (H.R. 3504) passed 248-177, and the Defund Planned Parenthood Act (H.R. 3134) passed 241-287. The Senate is unlikely to take up either of these bills. Majority Leader McConnell did introduce a spending bill to fund the government through December and at the same time defund Planned Parenthood, but the bill failed to get enough votes to pass cloture on Thursday. President Obama has [vowed to veto](#) the House bills and any bill that defunds Planned Parenthood.

Supreme Court Could Take Up Landmark School Choice Case

Earlier this month, the Douglas County School District (DCSD) in Colorado [filed a request](#) with the Supreme Court to review the case involving the constitutionality of its school choice program. Created in 2011, the Douglas County Choice Scholarship Program became the first choice program to be established on the district level, providing vouchers to approximately 500 students in 21 schools. Shortly after the program was created, the ACLU led an attack against the program, claiming it violated the establishment clause and the Blaine Amendment. After a lower court ruled in favor of the program, the plaintiffs appealed to the Colorado Supreme Court, which ruled the program was unconstitutional because it violated the Blaine Amendment. Colorado is one of 37 states which currently have a Blaine Amendment—an outdated law which was originally intended to prohibit public funds from moving from supporting the largely Protestant public schools to private Catholic schools. Today, liberal groups are using the Blaine Amendments to oppose any public funds from supporting any private schools. Should the U.S. Supreme Court take up the appeal from the DCSD, the case will open the door for a Supreme Court ruling against Blaine Amendments, ruling out one of the major obstacles for school choice nationwide. Justice Sotomayor is expected to make a decision in October on whether or not to intervene in the case.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Increasingly Uncommon Common Core](#)

[White House College "Scorecard" Shuts Out Conservative Schools](#)

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