



The Washington Flyer
October 23, 2015

“[T]he only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid in religion. Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments. Without religion, I believe that learning does real mischief to the morals and principles of mankind.”

Benjamin Rush

School Choice Program Approved by House of Representatives

On Wednesday, the U.S. House of Representatives voted [240-191](#) to reauthorize the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act (SOAR), the bill which will keep the D.C. school choice program in operation. Since its creation in 2004, the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program has provided 6,252 children from low-income families the chance to attend the school of their choice, and currently more than 8,500 names are on the scholarship waiting list. The program has proved to be very successful in raising the chances for academic success for students, with 90% of last year’s scholarship recipients graduating from high school and 88% of the graduates attending a college or university, a marked improvement over the graduation rate of 58% for D.C. public schools. Speaker Boehner led the effort to establish the program during his tenure as chairman of the Education and Workforce Committee in 2004, and he has been successful in keeping it funded since that time, despite the Obama Administration’s efforts in recent years to abolish the program. The Senate has a [companion bill](#) which also enjoys bipartisan support. In a letter of support to Speaker John Boehner, AACCS states: “While America’s public schools are in desperate need of reform, it is essential that we not neglect the children who are currently enrolled. We consider school choice programs to be one of the best ways to reform the failing educational system in America. Because school choice programs encourage parental involvement, tend to create a multitude of educational options that provide for the unique educational needs of students, and produce excellent educational results, they offer an important real world example of how publicly funded education can be done better. For decades, the AACCS has been a strong supporter of school choice, and we have seen how the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program has already given parents greater choice in their child’s education. As such, we support this reauthorization effort. The AACCS will continue to urge support of the SOAR Act as a way to assist Washington, D.C. families in their efforts to provide high quality education for their children.”

Education Savings Accounts Offer True Educational Choice

Education Savings Accounts (ESA’s) are proving to be the new wave for school choice programs that truly benefit the parents and children they serve. Heritage Foundation’s Lindsey Burke has [teamed up](#) with Jonathan Butcher of the Goldwater Institute in a study which focuses on the use of funds in the Arizona’s Empowerment Scholarship Accounts, the first ESA program that was established. In a blogpost providing a brief preview of their findings which will be released later, they find that parents used the funds provided for more purposes than just sending their children to a private school. While 83% of the funds did go private school tuition, parents also took advantage of the opportunity to use the funds for tutoring (7%) and educational therapy (5%), with 28% of account holders using the funds for multiple educational services. The information proves that the ESA program

offers true parental choice, as parents have the freedom to utilize the best educational method and program that helps their children succeed.

Common Core and Public Opinion

The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) released an [analysis](#) of polls showing that public opinion of the Common Core Standards is steadily declining. The polls reviewed were issued annually by *Education Next* and *Phi Delta Kappan*/Gallup since 2012 and sought to measure the support the CCS had among Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. The AEI report noted that the wording of the polling questions often influenced the answers and cited examples where the phrasing determined whether or not there was perceived support for the standards. The AEI analysis concluded that while there does seem to be a majority that supports the CCS that support is on a steady decline, even among Democrats. The CCS is already proving to be a key educational issue for presidential candidates, with most of the GOP candidates either opposing them or expressing disapproval at the federal government's involvement with the standards.

Texas Drops Planned Parenthood From Medicaid Funding

This past Monday, Texas officials [informed](#) Planned Parenthood affiliates that they would no longer receive funding from the state Medicaid program. Texas inspector general Stuart Bowen sent a letter to the organization, writing, "The State has determined that you and your Planned Parenthood affiliates are no longer capable of performing medical services in a professionally competent, safe, legal and ethical manner." Bowen goes on to state the reasons for termination include unsanitary conditions, inadequate training of staff, and alterations to the method of abortion in order to procure body parts. This decision is a result of the undercover videos recently making national headlines depicting Planned Parenthood abortion clinics selling the body parts of aborted babies for fetal research. Texas is now the fourth state to terminate funding to the organization, joining Alabama, Arkansas, and Louisiana. These decisions, however, are currently named in a lawsuit because of the federal funding involved.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[9 Promises the Common Core Has Already Broken](#)

[Ryan Anderson: What's Next For Marriage](#)

[How the Indiana Pizza Shop Responded After Being Tricked Into Catering a Gay Wedding](#)

[What Cecile Richards Didn't Say About Donating Aborted Babies for Research](#)

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