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“[T]hat the opinions of man are not the object of civil government, nor under its jurisdiction; that to suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion and to restrain the profession or propagation of principles on supposition of their ill tendency is a dangerous fallacy, which at once destroys all religious liberty.”

Thomas Jefferson

House of Representatives Passes Strong Pro-life Bill

On Wednesday, May 13, 2015, following several months of intense debate and controversy, the House of Representatives passed the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, a bill that would [restrict abortions](#) in the United States after five months of pregnancy. Both Republicans and Democrats have recognized the significant affect this would have on curbing the abortion industry and challenging the basis of *Roe v. Wade* should it ever become law. The approval of this measure falls on the second anniversary of the conviction of abortionist Kermit Gosnell, who was found guilty of not only negligence resulting in the death of a patient but also murdering infants born alive during abortion procedures. Similar legislation was passed by the House in 2013 but was never brought up in the Senate. With Republicans taking control of the Senate in January, Congressional leadership was eager to reintroduce the bill with plans to send it to the President’s desk for a signature. However, the bill was upended by moderate Republicans in the House who objected to the requirements under the statute mandating that crimes such as rape or incest be reported to law enforcement in order to receive a late-term abortion. The bill passed by the House on Wednesday instead requires that 48 hours prior to the abortion procedure rape victims must receive licensed counseling and medical treatment. The bill received bi-partisan support and opposition with four Democrats voting for it and four Republicans voting against it, resulting in a [242-184 final vote](#). Rep. Trent Franks (AZ), the lead sponsor of the bill, [noted](#), “This is a vote all of us will remember forever, and it will be considered in the annals of history, and I believe the counsels of eternity itself. But it shouldn’t be such a hard vote. Protecting little pain-capable unborn children and their mothers is not a Republican issue, or a Democrat issue. It is a test of our basic humanity and who we are as a human family.” Although it is unlikely that the President will sign the bill, the legislation now moves to the Senate where passage is hopeful.

Senate ESEA Reauthorization Bill Includes Early Education Funding

While the Senate version of the bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act includes several efforts to return control to the state and local level, the bill also includes an expansion early education funding through several key components. Expanding government involvement in early education has been a top priority for the Obama Administration, and efforts to advance its early education agenda have included sponsoring grants and competitions (like Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge), introducing legislation, and establishing an early education office in the Department of Education (DOE). Additionally, the Administration has been lobbying for the inclusion of early education provisions in ESEA reauthorization, even though the primary purpose of the ESEA bill is to guide federal policy for K-12 public education. Recently, Deputy Assistant Secretary Libby Doggett released a newsletter in which she publicly praised the Senate version for the inclusion of early education funding opportunities provided to states through several components

in Titles I, II, IV, V, and X. Most prominently is the inclusion of a competitive grant program called the [Early Learning Alignment and Improvement Grant](#) which “would provide funding for states to improve coordination, quality, and access to early education.”

Louisiana Considers Religious Liberty Bill

Legislators in Louisiana are considering the Marriage and Conscience Act, a [bill](#) which would prohibit the state government from taking “any adverse action” against individuals who believe marriage should be between one man and one woman. In the wake of the harsh and unfounded criticism leveled at the Indiana and Arkansas religious liberty bills, Governor Bobby Jindal is taking a bold stand in supporting the legislation. He insists that passing such a [measure is important](#) in light of the many instances around the country in which business owners are finding themselves subject to consequences imposed by state governments because of their business decisions which are based on a religious conviction regarding marriage. Furthermore, the Governor notes that the bill would provide protection for religious liberty in Louisiana should the Supreme Court rule this summer to overturn all marriage laws nationwide. Supporters of religious liberty point out that religious liberty laws are simply attempts to prevent [government bullying and viewpoint coercion](#). Bobby Jindal, defending religious liberty and those who hold a traditional view of marriage, asserts, “[If it’s not freedom for all, it’s not freedom at all.](#)”

Virginia County Claims Federal Policy Mandating New “Nondiscrimination” Policy

The school board of northern Virginia’s Fairfax County Public Schools [voted](#) last week to include “gender identity” in its non-discrimination policy, despite the strong protests of parents and community religious leaders. The district leaders claim that the change in policy was necessary to keep their federal funding, according to new 2014 guidelines set forth by the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights. However, a spokesperson for the Department of Education said that it was unlikely a district would actually lose federal funding. Parents opposing the policy argue that the change will allow male students to use female restrooms and locker rooms, and vice versa. Furthermore, many parents are concerned the policy will open the door for transgender teachers. The school board plans to hire a consultant who will guide and direct the implementation of the new policy.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Warning from Canada: How Same-Sex Marriage Erodes Fundamental Freedoms](#)

[School Choice in the States April 2015](#)

[Common Core Compromise May Have Been Reached by Louisiana Legislators](#)

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