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"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the Veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."

George Washington

AACS Offers Public Comments Regarding Federal Policy for Early Learners

Last Thursday, the AACCS Legislative Office joined over 20 other organizations in offering public comments at a meeting hosted by the Early Learning Interagency Policy Board, a committee established by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services to promote coordination between the two agencies on early education policies and programs. The purpose of the meeting was to gain public input for a federal policy statement on the health and wellness of young children. Not surprisingly, the majority of the organizations represented urged further involvement of the federal government in the role of child development, with some calling for government counseling including home visitation, and one speaker even suggesting additional action should be taken to include *pre-conception* education and in-home consultation with women before children are conceived. The trend for home visitation and consultation is a continuation and potential expansion of programs established under the Affordable Care Act (ACA or Obamacare), where home visitation by social workers is encouraged. Under ACA, priority is given to "high risk populations" such as young single mothers, low-income families, parents with a history of substance abuse, or families with children that have developmental disabilities; however, there are no limitations on who can be visited. These visits are voluntary and can be refused, but intimidation by state officials into allowing such visits can be a very real problem—a [concern highlighted in the past](#) in comments by other conservative groups and advocates of parental freedom. In Thursday's meeting, Jamison Coppola, AACCS Legislative Director, spoke to the concern that increased federal involvement in the health and wellness of early learners threatens not only parental rights but also the autonomy of Christian preschools. His statement included the following comments: "We believe that any federal policy regarding health promotion in early learning should prioritize the role of parents in all decisions related to the health and welfare of their children. Specifically, we believe the role the federal government has in promoting the health and wellness of children should be limited to information gathering and dissemination, so that schools and families can continue to make informed decisions and seek to find best practices that fit within their culture and values. As such, the most helpful information for the work of our schools and the families we serve would be limited to objective standards of health and wellness for young children. Social theories of development and behavior, lifestyle practices, or psychological theories of emotional fitness should be avoided since these standards tend to be subjective."

**This article was updated November 20, 2015.*

Common Core May Be the Reason for Lower NAEP Scores

With the recent scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showing a decline in the academic progress of students nationwide, educational experts are [analyzing](#) whether or not the Common Core

Standards (CCS) are the reason for the drop in scores. A recent study conducted by Fran Stancavage, one of the key developers of the NAEP assessment, compared the NAEP tests with the CCS and found there is a significant difference in what is being assessed on the math exams and what is being covered by the CCS at the 4th and 8th grade levels. For example, the CCS introduces algebra in grade 5 rather than grade 3 or 4, as was the practice prior to CCS implementation; and other mathematical concepts such as geometry, probability, and proportional reasoning were also pushed back to be covered after grade 4. Yet, the 4th grade NAEP assessment includes questions covering these areas. Additionally, the study found only 42% of the CCS content for 8th grade math is covered in the 8th grade NAEP exam. The NAEP has not been revised since 1990, and some experts are calling for a revision of the test so that it more accurately reflects the CCS and what is currently being taught in the schools; however, other academic experts point out that a CCS-aligned NAEP would not allow for an accurate picture of how students are achieving compared to previous years. Stancavage points out that developing a new NAEP would take till 2021, and until then it will continue to appear that students are not progressing academically.

Supreme Court Will Hear Cases on Religious Liberty vs. Obamacare

The Supreme Court has [announced](#) it will hear oral arguments for seven cases in which faith-based organizations charge that a requirement under Obamacare violates their religious liberty. Last year, the Supreme Court ruled in the famous Hobby Lobby case that the HHS regulation that was implemented as a result of Obamacare violated the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) by requiring all businesses to provide “preventive care” services for women, regardless of any religious or moral objections of the owners. The required services included some abortion-inducing drugs and sterilization procedures. The ruling offered protection for some closely held corporations but did not apply to faith-based groups that objected to the regulation. Following the ruling, the HHS (Department of Health and Human Services) created an “accommodation” for religious organizations which would allow them to transfer the payment obligation of the preventive services to the insurance carrier. However, faith-based organizations still objected on the principle that since payment was going out through their insurance, it still was a violation of conscience. The most famous case being heard before the Supreme Court involves the Little Sisters of the Poor, represented by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. Other organizations involved include Houston Baptist University, East Texas Baptist University, Westminster Theological Seminary, Southern Nazarene University, and Geneva College.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Christian Daycare Worker Fired for Refusing to Call Little Girl a Boy](#)

[School Choice Programs Lead to Private School Revenue Gains](#)

[Governor-Elect to Remove Clerk Name From Kentucky Marriage Licenses](#)

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