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“While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion. To the distinguished character of Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of Christian.”

George Washington

Houses Passes ESEA Reauthorization Bill

On Wednesday evening, the House of Representatives [passed](#) 359-64 the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. ESSA is the final compromise bill which was agreed to by a bipartisan conference committee which worked to combine the ESEA reauthorization bills passed by the House and Senate earlier this year. The Senate is expected to take up ESSA as early as next week and the President will likely sign it into law. The bill takes measures to reduce the federal footprint in education by repealing 49 federal programs, and also gives states the freedom to establish their own accountability system by eliminating the burdensome adequate yearly progress put in place by No Child Left Behind. The bill also prohibits the Department of Education and the Secretary of Education from mandating standards, coercing states to adopt specific standards, and using funding to manipulate states’ use of specific standards, including the Common Core Standards. In addition, language is included which prohibits the establishment of a national test and a national teacher certification program, and language is retained which protects the autonomy of private, religious, and home schools. In the area of early education, the bill places the Preschool Development Grant program under the authority of the Department of Health and Human Services, moving it away from the control of the Secretary of Education. The program was originally established and funded through the appropriations process, and ESSA now codifies the program into law. While the inclusion of this program is concerning to many conservatives who oppose federal involvement in early education, the bill also includes a section which requires federal agencies to conduct regular reviews on all government early education programs to determine where overlap occurs, and whether the programs are proving to be successful. Additionally, a Sense of Congress is included which offers caution regarding the federal role in early education.

AACS Joins Public Comment Supporting School Choice and Religious Freedom

The AACS joined the Christian Legal Society in a public comment submission regarding proposed New Rules that will implement the new Montana Tax Credit program. Established just this year, the program allows for a tax credit for donations made to student scholarship organizations that have been established to provide scholarships for educational choice. The proposed rule would disqualify any religious school from participating in the program, claiming that the Montana constitution does not allow government funds to support religious activity. However, as explained in the submitted comments, the tax credit will go to the donor and not the schools; therefore, government funds are not going directly to any religious school. Furthermore, the comments point out that such discrimination against religious schools is unconstitutional, violating First Amendment rights. In the Statement of Interest, the AACS explained, “The Montana legislature, in establishing a student scholarship organization program, has established an environment in which diversity, individual choice, and

educational quality can flourish; however, the Proposed Adoption of New Rules I will have the effect of unlawfully discriminating against families and donors who choose a religiously informed education. . . . We urge the Department [of Revenue] not to adopt Proposed New Rule 1.”

Judges Force States to Support Planned Parenthood

After becoming the third state to cut its funding for Planned Parenthood abortion clinics, the state of Alabama has been [ordered by a federal judge](#) to fund the organization. Gov. Robert Bentley has decided not to appeal the judge’s order and, therefore, will be forced to reinstate Alabama’s contracts with Planned Parenthood. In addition, the state will also be responsible for \$51,000 in legal fees. In a statement, Gov. Bentley said, “I will always fight to protect the rights of the unborn. If any medical provider in Alabama engages in practices that are contrary to accepted standards in the future, we will use every means necessary and available to ensure that those practices end.” This past Monday in Missouri, a [federal judge has stopped](#) the state from revoking the license of an abortion clinic in the state. Missouri state law requires that all doctors working in abortion clinics have admitting privileges to hospitals within 30 miles of the facility. After the University of Missouri Health Care revoked the “refer and follow” privileges of Colleen McNicholas, the abortion doctor at the Columbia abortion clinic, the institution was set to lose its license to do abortions. In response to a lawsuit that Planned Parenthood filed Monday against the state Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. District Judge Nanette Laughrey issued a temporary injunction which allows the abortion clinic to remain open.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Why Massachusetts Gave Up On Common Core](#)

[Possible Senate Vote on Obamacare Repeal and Defunding Planned Parenthood](#)

[Court Deals Final Blow to FFRF's Attack on WWII Memorial Statue of Jesus](#)

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