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“You believe, as I do, that every human life has value, that the strong have a duty to protect the weak, and that the self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence apply to everyone, not just to those considered healthy or wanted or convenient. These principles call us to defend the sick and the dying, persons with disabilities and birth defects, all who are weak and vulnerable, especially unborn children.”

George W. Bush—[speaking to the March for Life, January 22, 2006](#)

States Take Action to Repeal Common Core

Two states are continuing the battle to remove the Common Core Standards from their school systems. In Massachusetts, the grassroots group End Common Core MA [collected 80,000 certified signatures](#) (110,000 raw signatures) to have the question regarding the repeal of Common Core placed on the 2016 general election ballot. The 80,000 certified signatures exceeded the 64,750 needed to place the question on the ballot. The signatures still need to be approved by Secretary of State William Galvin and then approved by the state legislature. However, if the state legislature fails to approve, then the group can collect a greater number of signatures to get the question on the ballot. Last November, the state’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to implement a test which was a hybrid of the Massachusetts state test and the PARCC, one of two common-core aligned assessments. However, critics claimed this was only a rebranding of the Common Core test and have been working to remove the CCS from the state entirely. Massachusetts standards are considered by many to be better than Common Core Standards. In West Virginia, State Superintendent Michael Martirano has [announced](#) the state will be replacing the CCS with College and Career Ready standards (CCR) that were developed for the state by a group of teachers, higher education officials, parents, and public office holders. The CCR standards received more than 250,000 public comments which were reviewed when drafting and revising the new standards. (One of the main complaints against the Common Core Standards is that the standards were implemented in states without knowledge and consultation from stakeholders on the local level.) On the federal level, the new education law recently passed by Congress, the Every Student Succeeds Act, was praised by many conservatives for its strong language against the CCS and the prohibition against the establishment of any national standard. While the law could not repeal the CCS already adopted and implemented by states, it does include strong language that limits the power of the Secretary of Education to establish and promote a national standard, specifically naming the Common Core Standards.

Thousands Brave Bitter Cold at Chicago March for Life

Last Sunday, over 5,000 people [gathered in Chicago](#) for the largest March for Life in the Midwest. Despite bitter cold temperatures close to zero, the large crowd gathered to mark their opposition to the 1973 Supreme Court ruling in *Roe v. Wade* which legalized abortion. The Chicago March for Life was started three years ago to provide an alternative for people who could not travel to D.C. for the national [March for Life](#). This year marks the 43rd year that the March for Life will be held on January 22, the day of the 1973 Supreme Court ruling. Despite the prediction of a massive snowstorm to hit Washington, D.C., on the day of the march, the March for Life website has indicated that “March for Life will not be canceled due to weather.” Since the infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision, the High Court has ruled in a handful of cases concerning abortion, the most notable being the 2007 ruling which upheld the ban against partial birth abortion. The Supreme Court is

expected to rule this year on the new Texas law which requires abortion clinics to meet the same standards as ambulatory surgical centers and requires doctors who perform abortions to be qualified with admitting privileges at a nearby hospital. If the Supreme Court rules the law as constitutional, it will likely cut the number of Texas abortion clinics from 40 down to 10.

Supreme Court to Hear Case on School Choice and Religious Liberty

Trinity Lutheran Church Learning Center is a day care program located in Columbia, Missouri, that was denied a grant to upgrade its playground because of the religious nature of the school. Missouri is one of 37 states that currently have a Blaine Amendment. Originally intended to discriminate against Catholics by prohibiting their parochial schools from receiving state education funds, the law has been used in many states to prohibit school choice programs. Today, anti-school choice groups are using the Blaine Amendments to oppose any public funds from ending up in any faith-based schools. Missouri state officials cited the Blaine Amendment when they denied the grant that would have provided materials from the state's scrap tire program to upgrade the school's playground. The learning center sued the state of Missouri in 2013 for violating its First Amendment rights but lost the case in a district court and then in the Eighth Circuit Court in 2015. The U.S. Supreme Court recently decided to review the case, with oral arguments likely to be heard in the spring of 2016. The [Alliance Defending Freedom](#) is representing the center in *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Pauley*, challenging the constitutionality of the Blaine Amendment. A Supreme Court ruling against the Blaine Amendment would remove one major obstacle for school choice nationwide. The AACS is in the early stages of consulting with a law firm regarding joining an amicus brief in this important case.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Watch the March for Life TODAY Livestream](#)

[NEXT WEEK: National School Choice Week, January 24-30, 2016](#)

[Open Individualized Learning from Kindergarten to College](#)

[How to Speak Up for Life](#)

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