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“Our goal is to have a system in which every family in the U.S. will be able to choose for itself the school to which its children go. We are far from that ultimate result. If we had that—a system of free choice—we would also have a system of competition, innovation, which would change the character of education.”

Milton Friedman

Education Savings Accounts Proposed for Washington D.C. Children

A bill which would provide universal school choice for all students in Washington, D.C., was introduced last week by Senator Ted Cruz (TX). The Educational Freedom Accounts Act (S. 2455) would create an education savings accounts (ESA) program which would allow parents of all children in the D.C. public schools to receive funds to use on a variety of educational services that best meet the educational needs of their child, including private school tuition, tutoring, and online courses. Modeled after the recently established program in Nevada, the program would give participating parents money through a debit account only they could access. Currently, there are five states which have enacted ESA programs, and a recent [report](#) shows that this type of program is proving to offer true parental choice as parents have the freedom to utilize the best educational methods and programs that help their children succeed. In a [press release](#), Sen. Cruz stated, “School choice continues to be the civil rights issue of our era. . . . Not only does school choice give low-income children the same choices and opportunities that children from wealthy families have always had, it also improves the public schools, making them stronger and more effective.” This week is [National School Choice Week](#), and several other GOP candidates have used this as an opportunity to express strong [support](#) for various forms of school choice, with some specifically recognizing the benefits of ESAs. Jeb Bush recently published his educational plan which includes giving states the option to use federal dollars to establish ESAs, and Carly Fiorina [recalled](#) her time with Nevada parents who worked hard to establish the ESA program in their state. Senator Marco Rubio [expressed](#) gratitude for the Christian education his children are receiving, and stressed the need to provide the same opportunity of choice for all children and parents.

Note: As a 501c3 organization, the AACCS does not offer endorsements of any candidate.

Thousands Attend March for Life

Last Friday, thousands of pro-life supporters gathered in Washington, D.C., for the 43rd annual March for Life, despite the threat of the blizzard which hit the area just hours after the march ended. While the weather may have caused a slight decrease in numbers from previous years, it did not affect the enthusiasm of those who attended to show their unwavering support for protecting life. Prior to the start of the march, pro-life leaders spoke to the crowd during a rally, encouraging the crowd to continue in the fight to protect life. AACCS Legislative Director Jamison Coppola had the opportunity to stand with these leaders on the [platform of the rally](#), showing the strong support of the AACCS for the pro-life cause. Organizers for the march chose a [theme](#) of “Pro-Life and Pro-Woman go hand in hand,” explaining that “the truth is that life is the empowering choice for women. It’s best for women and families facing unplanned pregnancies, and it’s best for developing female babies in the womb. Abortion harms women, and affects our society as a whole.” Prior to the march on Friday, a special conference, [Evangelicals for Life](#), was hosted by Focus on the Family and the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in an effort to equip evangelicals who desire to be more involved in the pro-life

movement. On the legislative level, Senators Ben Sasse (NE) and James Lankford (OK) together penned an [op-ed](#) highlighting the accomplishments that have been made to protect the lives of the unborn. They noted, “The pro-life community continues to make significant progress. Momentum is on the side of life. Science is on our side. Hope is on our side.”

Christian Colleges Seeking Religious Liberty Exemptions

The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) has agreed to publish a list of all colleges and universities (mostly Christian) that have requested or been granted a religious exemption from Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in areas such as housing, admissions, and athletic opportunities. Christian colleges began applying for the religious exemption in 2014 when the DOE expanded its interpretation of the word *sex* to include gender identity. This reinterpretation created a host of problems and potential violations of the religious beliefs of various universities. Under this interpretation, a transgender male student could file a complaint against a university if he was denied access to the women’s showers, locker rooms, or housing. “When Congress wrote that law,” Greg Baylor, senior counsel with Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), [stated in an interview](#), “it obviously did not intend that colleges receiving money from the government should allow males who think they’re female to shower with other women.” While liberal groups claim the exemption is only a license to discriminate, there is a legitimate concern that this new database being created by the DOE will basically become a hit list of all the colleges that have been granted the exemption and will be used to intimidate other colleges from applying for the Title IX religious exemption.

Pro-Life Leaders Indicted in Planned Parenthood Case

In a shocking turn of events, a [grand jury](#) from Harris County in Texas has indicted the two people responsible for exposing Planned Parenthood’s horrific practices of selling fetal body parts but found no fault with Planned Parenthood. The jury’s decision charged David Daleiden and Sandra Merritt with tampering with governmental records and also indicted Mr. Daleiden with violating the prohibition against the attempted purchase of human organs. Conservatives have expressed outrage with the charges, noting that if an indictment was issued for the effort to purchase human organs, then a similar and equal charge should be made against the seller. Texas Governor Greg Abbott, who called for the grand jury investigation last summer, responded to the decision with the following [statement](#): “The Health and Human Service Commission’s Inspector General and the Attorney General’s office have an ongoing investigation into Planned Parenthood’s actions. Nothing about today’s announcement in Harris County impacts the state’s ongoing investigation. The State of Texas will continue to protect life, and I will continue to support legislation prohibiting the sale or transfer of fetal tissue.” On the federal level, the U.S. House of Representatives has appointed a special committee to investigate the practices of Planned Parenthood, and committee member Rep. Diane Black (TN) [noted](#) the charges will “not deter our efforts in Congress to hold Planned Parenthood accountable.”

In Case You Missed It:

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

[5 Cases to Watch at the Supreme Court in 2016](#)

[School Choice Programs Across the Country](#)

[What a Gay Man's Court Victory Over a Catholic School Means](#)