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“If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity.”

Daniel Webster

Religious Liberty Battles in Georgia and North Carolina

Succumbing to pressure from big businesses, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal [vetoed](#) a narrow religious freedom bill that would have protected the right of clergy and religious organizations to act and operate according to a belief that marriage is between a man and a woman. Specifically, the bill would protect pastors from being forced to perform same-sex wedding ceremonies, religious organizations from having to rent their facilities for wedding ceremonies that were contrary to their beliefs, and businesses that close on Saturday or Sunday because of religious beliefs. The bill had gone through a series of revisions as the legislators worked to find a compromise, resulting in the narrow protections that do not extend to business professionals such as florists, bakers, and others who offer wedding services. However, several [big businesses](#) claimed the bill was a license to discriminate against the LGBT community and threatened to remove their business from the state if the bill became law. Gov. Deal claims his decision to veto is based on the belief that the bill “doesn’t reflect the character of our state or the character of its people,” and that the First Amendment offers the necessary protections for religious freedom. Dr. Ryan Anderson of the Heritage Foundation disagrees and has written several papers offering proof that, as he says, “Religious Freedom Restoration Acts and other religious freedom protections are needed against our contemporary overactive progressive government.” The state of North Carolina is facing a [similar battle](#) over religious liberty after passage of a law that specifies that use of government bathrooms will be determined by biological sex and that also allows private organizations and businesses to establish their own policies regarding who uses what restroom. Additionally, the new law bars cities and counties from passing an “anti-discrimination” ordinance that would conflict with the law. House Bill 2 (HB 2), titled the Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act, was passed when the state legislature held a special session as a response to an ordinance that was recently passed in Charlotte which allows transgender individuals to use the bathroom for the gender they identify with, regardless of their biological sex. North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory signed HB 2 into law, calling it a matter of safety and privacy. A lawsuit has been filed by the ACLU and two individuals who claim the law is discriminatory, and big businesses have threatened to remove their business from North Carolina as well.

School Choice Offers Wide Benefits

Two recent studies conducted for the school choice programs in Wisconsin are offering proof that school choice programs offer wide benefits to participating students that extend beyond academics. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) [conducted a study](#) of three choice programs in the state, and the data showed participating students outperformed their peers from public school settings in virtually every area of academic testing. Betsy DeVos, chairman of the American Federation for Children, noted, “These test results should serve as an opportunity to celebrate school choice and reinforce the need for all involved in education to work together to ensure every child has access to a quality school, whether it is traditional public school, public

charter school or one of the many high-quality private schools throughout Wisconsin.” Another [study](#) conducted by researchers from University of Arkansas looked specifically at the Milwaukee choice program, often referred to as the “nation’s longest running program,” and found that students in that program were 5–7% less likely to commit a misdemeanor and 5–12% less likely to be accused of a crime.

Florida Defunds Planned Parenthood

Florida Governor Rick Scott has [signed a bill](#) defunding Planned Parenthood and other abortion businesses in the state. This bill came as a response to the undercover videos released over the past year revealing Planned Parenthood clinics all over the country involved in the selling of aborted baby body parts. The new law bans any clinic from selling or donating any aborted baby body parts and ensures proper disposal of the aborted child by increasing the penalties for failing to do so. This law also requires that abortion doctors and clinics meet certain health and safety standards along with increasing inspection requirements and licensing fees. Another important aspect is that the law protects women by requiring all clinics and abortion doctors that perform first trimester abortions to have admitting privileges to nearby hospitals in case of an emergency. “Abortionists will finally be held to the same standard as all other physicians who perform invasive procedures in a non-hospital setting by the requirement to have admitting privileges or a transfer agreement with a nearby hospital,” Ingrid Delgado of the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops said in a statement.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[FRC Action Presidential Voter Guide](#)

[Common Core and the Centralization of American Education](#)

[Justice in Education: Why Religious Freedom is Important](#)

[Senator Lankford Delivers Powerful Speech on Religious Freedom](#)

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