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“America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it is because we destroyed ourselves.”

Abraham Lincoln

Parents’ Rights and Responsibilities in School Choice laws

As school choice programs rapidly expand across states, Gerard Robinson of the American Enterprise Institute has [published a study](#) in which he analyzes the extent to which choice programs actually empower parents by accurately expressing the rights and responsibilities parents have for their children’s education. He reviewed 102 choice laws from 45 states and the District of Columbia—including vouchers, education savings accounts, tax credit/deduction programs, and charter school programs—and categorized the programs into one of four groups by how the word “parent” was used: “legal” referred to those programs which define the parent and relationship to program; “window-dressing” referred to those which mention parents but offer no substantive information regarding their role; a “rights” designation referred to programs which actually give decision-making power to parents; and a “responsibilities” designation referred to programs which require something in exchange from the parents. Surprisingly, he found that the majority of programs mention parents as merely a “legal” or “window-dressing” reference. For example, about 60% of the tax-credit and voucher programs and over 70% of the tax deduction and ESA laws do not include language that would articulate the rights and responsibilities of parents. In his conclusion, he notes that as lawmakers continue to pursue choice laws as a means to empower parents, defining the rights and responsibilities of parents is key to offering strong educational options. He states, “Carefully crafted school choice policies must maintain a healthy number of ‘parent’ mentions, but these mentions should be more than merely window-dressing. State legislatures must also do more than sprinkle statutes with legal jargon and feel-good phrases related to parents. If states want school choice to truly work, they must have a critical eye for how laws treat parents, how they invite them into the lifelong process of a child’s schooling, and how they call equal attention to both rights and responsibilities.”

Early Ed Research Raises Questions of Program Effectiveness

A [report](#) recently released by Heritage Foundation offers a summary of government-funded early education programs with a strong conclusion that such programs do not produce positive effects for children. In the report titled “Research Review: Universal Preschool May Do More Harm than Good,” authors Lyndsey Burke and Salim Furth analyze study reports which have been released for the Head Start program, Tennessee’s Voluntary Pre-K program, and the universal pre-K program in Quebec and purport that not only is there is no sign of academic advantage from these programs but they also actually produce negative behavioral and emotional outcomes in some cases. Specifically, the authors note that in the Head Start and Tennessee programs, any academic advantage was gone by the time students reached 3rd grade. In Quebec, which has the “highest rate of

subsidized child care in Canada,” children who participated in the program were more likely to commit crimes and their “health and life satisfaction were worse.” The authors also point out that the two studies that are often used to claim the necessity for early education programs—the Abecedarian Preschool Study and the Perry Preschool Project—would be impossible to duplicate on a national level because of the small sample sizes and very controlled environments that were used in the studies. The report concludes: “Policymakers should recognize that expanding subsidies for preschool is unnecessary, provides no new benefits to low-income parents, and would create a new subsidy for middle-income and upper-income families, while adding to the tax burden for Americans. A growing body of empirical evidence also suggests that such policies fail to improve a range of outcomes for preschool’s young participants.”

Louisiana Poised to Ban Some Abortions

The Louisiana state senate recently [passed a bill](#) to prohibit the abortion of babies who have been diagnosed in the womb with Down syndrome or other abnormalities. Under the proposed law, doctors who perform these type of abortions would be prosecuted and could be sentenced for up to two years in prison. The senate voted 29-6 to approve the bill after a change was made to allow exceptions to the law for abortions performed in order to save the life of the mother. If this version of the bill is approved by the state house and is signed into law, Louisiana will become the third state to pass legislation of this type, following North Dakota and Indiana. The Indiana law, which prohibits doctors from performing abortions for genetic purposes, is being challenged by Planned Parenthood through a lawsuit to overturn the law. Mike Fichter, President and CEO of Indiana Right to Life, stated, “This is the same song and dance we have seen from the abortion provider anytime they feel their lucrative abortion business is threatened. They look to the courts and activist judges to rule in their favor. Planned Parenthood boasts \$2 million a year in abortion revenue in Indiana alone. They oppose any commonsense law that protects women and children because they want to protect their bottom line.”

Early Bird Registration—AACCS National Legislative Conference

Each year the AACCS hosts the National Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., to give pastors, administrators, state leaders, and teachers an opportunity to learn first-hand about the top issues for Christian education and to communicate with their congressional leaders. This year’s conference will be held September 12-14 and looks to be an exciting conference for all attendees. [Register](#) by August 15 to receive the special conference rate on your hotel room and the discounted registration fee. The [registration form](#) can also be found under the "Legislative/Legal" tab on the AACCS.org website.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Society's Most Vulnerable Hurt Most by Government Crackdown on Religious Freedom](#)

[Battle Over LGBT Amendment Threatens to Stall Entire Appropriations Process](#)

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