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"We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that 'except the Lord build the House they labour in vain that build it.' I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better, than the Builders of Babel."

Benjamin Franklin

Debate over Federal Tax Credit for School Choice

With the Trump administration declaring school choice as its top education agenda item, school choice advocates are engaged in a serious debate as to the best method for advancing school choice on a national level. The administration has indicated a preference for a tax credit scholarship program, pointing to the great success that 21 such programs have experienced in 17 states. A tax credit program generally works by granting tax credits to individuals or businesses that contribute to an educational scholarship organization (ESO). ESO's then grant scholarships or tuition grants to parents to use at the private school of their choice for their children. Although school choice opponents have tried repeatedly to stop these programs, four different courts—including the U.S. Supreme Court—have declared these programs to be constitutional based on the fact that no public funds are directly funding private religious schools. The qualifications for an ESO are established by the state creating the choice program, and the qualifications for students to receive scholarships are established by the ESO. These programs are most effective when the requirements for ESO's are broad enough to include faith-based organizations whose focus is solely on Christian, Jewish, or Catholic faith-based schools. This allows for a greater number of ESO's to be established, benefiting more parents and children. However, some school choice advocates are questioning whether a tax credit scholarship program on the federal level would open the door for increased federal control over education. Lindsey Burke, director for the Heritage Foundation's Center for Educational Freedom, recently [pointed out](#) her concerns that burdensome regulations could accompany a federal tax program. Referring to a bill introduced last Congress (which has been reintroduced this Congress), she specifically questioned, "Would regulations accompanying a new federal tax credit allow scholarship-granting organizations to operate in a mission-specific way?" (The current bill being considered on Capitol Hill would not allow single-focused ESO's). She further explained that requirements which prohibit mission-specific ESO's would ultimately limit the number of faith-based participating schools, which in turn would limit the number of options for parents. John Schilling, COO for American Federation for Children, sharply [disagreed](#) with Lindsey Burke's assessment of the tax credit bill and offered the claim that the current bill would allow faith-based schools to participate. However, he did not address the fact that the bill would not allow for single-focused ESO's. The AACCS has joined with [several school choice advocates](#) to urge Congress to adopt a plan that would include mission-driven ESO's which would in turn allow for the largest number of ESO's and participating schools, and thus, create the greatest opportunity for the largest number of students.

NJ Governor Christie Signs Law Giving New Protections for Individuals Identifying as LGBT

Last Friday, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie signed into law two bills instituting new controversial special protections for New Jersey residents who identify as LGBT. The first bill (A 4652) directs New Jersey schools

either to allow students to use bathrooms and locker rooms that correspond with their gender identity, regardless of biological sex, or to provide “reasonable alternative arrangements.” Furthermore, the law instructs the state education commissioner to establish guidelines for handling name and gender-identity changes, to ensure that the correct pronoun is used to correspond with the student’s gender identity, and to find ways to allow LGBT students to participate in gender-segregated activities and sports teams. The second bill (A 4568) prohibits health insurance companies from listing gender identity as a pre-existing condition for which coverage can be denied or premiums raised. Governor Christie has received praise from LGBT activists in the past for signing pro-LGBT legislation such as this.

Record Number of Regulations Removed During President Trump’s First Six Months

In only six months since the inauguration, the Trump administration has [eliminated or withdrawn](#) over 860 regulations. While campaigning, President Trump promised that his administration would kill two regulations for every one it created. However, the administration has exceeded that plan by eliminating 16 regulations for each new one created this year. Of the withdrawn regulations, 469 were created by the Obama administration’s agenda last year. Neomi Rao, administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), declared in a recent interview that the administration’s efforts are just the beginning of massive deregulation. An annual report by the OMB, [Unified Agenda of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions](#), shows that the drop in regulations will have an economic impact of \$100 million. An additional key finding from this report shows that the Obama administration imposed \$6.8 billion in annualized costs through regulations in 2016, while the Trump administration has imposed no annualized costs through regulation so far in 2017.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Museum of the Bible: Sneak Peak at the Billion Dollar Venture Devoted to the World's Most Impactful Book](#)

[Who's the Science Denier Now?](#)

[5 Good Reasons Why Transgender Accommodations Aren’t Compatible with Military Readiness](#)

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