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*“Freedom can exist only in the society of knowledge. Without learning, men are incapable of knowing their rights, and where learning is confined to a few people, liberty can be neither equal nor universal.”*  
**Benjamin Rush**

**Poll Shows Growing Support for Tax Credit Scholarship Programs**

Results from a poll recently conducted by *Education Week* show [growing support](#) among the general population for a tax credit scholarship program that offers school choice opportunities to low income families. The public opinion poll is conducted annually by the journal *Education Next*, a publication of Stanford University’s Hoover Institute. This year’s poll included questions to gauge public support for school choice, charter schools, common core, government spending, and pre-K and higher education programs. The survey also included questions to measure the “Trump effect” on the level of support for certain policies. Interestingly, support for charter schools dropped by 12 points over the last year; but when the question noted that President Trump supported charter schools, the level of support rose from 39% to 45%. In the area of school choice, the findings showed that a tax credit scholarship program is the most popular, with 69% showing support. This is an increase of 4 points from last year (numbers do not include neutral respondents); when noting President Trump’s support for a tax credit choice program, the number remained the same. Charter school programs and tax credits are the top two school choice opportunities for which President Trump has been the most vocal in showing support. Voucher programs received 45% support, and education savings accounts (ESAs) received only 37% support. ESAs offer funds to parents to use for a variety of educational expenses, including private school tuition. Although a relatively new form of school choice, the ESA programs established on the state level are receiving rave reviews from families. Neal McCluskey of the CATO Institute [noted](#) that the lower support for ESAs in the poll could be an indication of people’s lack of knowledge about the benefits of ESAs. When asked about common core standards, only 41% supported imposing the standards, and that dropped to 37% when including the fact that President Trump opposes the common core. Questions for publicly funded pre-K focused on whether or not the children should be tested in reading and math (51% supported testing for accountability purposes) and whether or not preschool teachers’ salaries should be increased (the majority said yes). Higher education questions focused on affirmative action policies in hiring practices, and the results show overwhelming support for considering a professor’s qualifications over race, gender, and political opinions. While policy analysts continue to analyze the results of the poll, school choice supporters are hailing the rising support for tax credit scholarship programs, considering the intense public debate that is ensuing over the establishment of a national school choice program. One such supporter, CATO’s Neal McCluskey, concluded “As with many polls there is good news and bad news aplenty in this one, and lots to debate about question wording, order, and the *why* of the results. But the news is not bad for the best form of choice—private school choice—and some other important matters, so I’ll take it.”

**Wyoming Judge Petitions Supreme Court for Free Speech and Religious Liberty**

Wyoming Judge Ruth Neely recently [petitioned](#) for a review of her case by the U.S. Supreme Court in hopes of overturning a public censure against her by the Wyoming State Supreme Court for her beliefs on marriage.

Judge Neely had served as a municipal judge and a part-time circuit court magistrate which gave her the authority to perform marriages. The Wyoming Commission on Judicial Conduct and Ethics began investigating Judge Neely after she told a reporter in 2014 that she would not preside over same-sex marriages. In the 3-2 decision against Neely, Justice Kate Fox [wrote](#) that “Judge Neely shall either perform no marriage ceremonies or she shall perform marriage ceremonies regardless of the couple’s sexual orientation.” The dissenting justices, however, argued that Neely did not violate any judicial conduct code. “Wyoming law does not require any judge or magistrate to perform any particular marriage, and couples seeking to be married have no right to insist on a particular official as the officiant of their wedding,” wrote Justice Keith Kautz. Neely’s petition will give the U.S. Supreme Court the opportunity to address the issue of free speech in the public sphere should they choose to accept the case.

### **Pro-Life Discussion Causes Division in Democratic Party**

Planned Parenthood CEO Cecile Richards recently asserted during a [talk with Politico](#) that the Democratic Party should support only politicians and candidates who will vote to support abortion. The subject of pro-life Democrats was brought to the forefront a few weeks ago when Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chair Ben Ray Lujan stated that he and his committee would not exclude pro-lifers from the Democratic Party. Surprisingly, several other party leaders such as Nancy Pelosi and Bernie Sanders who are personally pro-abortion agreed with Chairman Lujan, noting that pro-life Democrats typically represent the views of rural voters. Democratic strategists also suggest that the party gains more seats in elections when they have pro-life candidates on tickets. Democrats for Life recently estimated that over 23 million of its party’s voters are pro-life. Richards claims that the party is misreading the demographic; and that while most voters are personally pro-life, most do not want laws against it. Polls, however, prove otherwise. A recent [Gallup poll](#) including Republicans and Democrats found that 54 percent of Americans want laws banning or partially banning abortions.

### **In Case You Missed It:**

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

[Attention Millennials: True Religious Freedom May Make You Feel Uncomfortable](#)

[Christian Wins the Right to Refuse to Photograph Homosexual “Weddings”](#)

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