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“The future and success of America is not in this Constitution, but in the laws of God upon which this Constitution is founded.”

James Madison

AACS Participates in Private School Leadership Conference

This week, the AACS Legislative Office staff participated in the annual National Private School Leadership Conference held at the US Department of Education (DOE). Organized by the department’s Office of Non-Public Education (ONPE), the conference focused on issues that pertain uniquely to private schools and ways that the department can help the work of these schools. The day-long conference opened with sessions designed to aid private school leaders and officials in their efforts to work with state ombudsmen and participate in some federal programs. The conference also included a special session devoted to explaining the resources available to private schools affected by disasters such as the recent hurricanes. AACS Legislative Director Jamison Coppola and policy analyst Maureen Van Den Berg had the opportunity to participate in a breakout meeting with department officials which focused on efforts to assist those schools and children that have been affected by the hurricanes. The department representatives included Bob Eitel, Senior Counselor to the Secretary, who conveyed the Secretary’s desire to help all children and students, regardless of the type of school they attend. Of particular interest during the conference was the robust discussion of the recent Supreme Court decision in *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Pauley*. The panelists included Phil Rosenfelt from the DOE’s Office of General Counsel and David Cortman with Alliance Defending Freedom who argued the case before the high court. Mr. Cortman eloquently explained the important ramifications this court victory will have for the religious liberty of faith-based schools and organizations. Special recognition was given to Joe McTighe, who is retiring as executive director for the Council for American Private Education after serving the private school community for several years. He shared a thought-provoking speech on the issues facing the liberty of private schools and the important work of private schools to serve the public good. The highlight of the conference was the address by Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos in which she praised the work of private schools and emphasized the administration’s focus on empowering parents to make the best educational choices for their children. She also described her recent “Rethink School Tour” which took her to all types of schools and reaffirmed to her and the administration that the department’s focus needs to be less on schools and more on the students they serve. During a question-and-answer conversation, she was presented with questions regarding the possibility of a national school choice program. Her response stressed the important work that states are doing in establishing choice opportunities. She also explained that the administration’s goal is to establish a national program that complements what states are already doing rather than one that takes on a life of its own and dictates new rules and regulations to states and schools. This is the 13th year ONPE has hosted this conference, with the goal of connecting with private school leadership and offering ways the DOE can serve the private school community.

DOE Rewrites and Seeks Guidance on Sexual Assault Policy

The Department of Education under the leadership of Secretary Betsy DeVos announced last Friday that it would be rescinding the controversial directive issued by the Obama administration on school sexual assault. The annulment of the directive is immediate; however, the department will be conducting a formal review of the policy moving forward, and has provided a question-and-answer [document](#) to assist schools in dealing with the issue until the new rule-making is complete. The document differs greatly from the Obama-era guidelines. One of the most notable changes is allowing schools to use a higher standard of proof in cases related to sexual violence allegations. The new policy allows schools to require that “clear and convincing evidence” be provided in order to take disciplinary action against the alleged offender. While this standard is still lower than the legal standard used in criminal cases of “beyond a reasonable doubt,” it is certainly higher than the standard directed by the Obama guidance of “preponderance of evidence” or “more likely than not,” which arguably undermined the constitutional rights of the accused.

Surveys Show Millennials Support School Choice

Recent surveys have found that a large majority of millennials support school choice. Specifically, two independently conducted surveys found that across the board more than 75 percent of millennials support some form of school choice. Results from a [GenForward](#) survey, conducted by the University of Chicago, found strong support across ethnic and racial lines for school vouchers for low-income households, with 79 percent of African-Americans, 76 percent of Asian-Americans, 77 percent of Latinos, and 66 percent of whites supporting the idea. The poll also showed over 60 percent of those surveyed support charter schools. Beck Research also conducted a poll for the American Federation for Children and found similar results. As more research begins to show that school choice works, the movement continues to [gain momentum](#). North Carolina, Florida, Nevada, Louisiana, and Illinois are among several states that have enacted or expanded school choice programs in the past year. Furthermore, legislative and administrative efforts for a [national school choice](#) tax credit program have grown dramatically under the leadership of President Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Impacts of Regulations on Performance of School Choice Programs](#)

[The Presidential Prayer Team](#)

[Report Shows Attacks on Religious Freedom in US Have Nearly Doubled Since 2011](#)

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