



The Washington Flyer
February 9, 2018

*"It is easier to build strong children than repair broken men."
Frederick Douglass*

New Poll Shows Strong Support for School Choice

[A poll](#) of 1,100 likely voters in 2018 found that 63% support school choice. The fourth annual National School Choice poll, conducted by the American Federation for Children and Beck Research, shows a growing support for giving children and parents more choices in education, including federal tax credit scholarships, education savings accounts (ESAs), vouchers, and public charter schools. According to the president of the American Federation for Children, John Schilling, "The concept of school choice is favorable across the nation's ideological, geographic, and racial and ethnic backgrounds like no other issue in 2018." That rare unity among voters includes 77% of Latinos, 67% of whites, and 56% of black voters, in addition to 75% of Republicans, 62% of Independents, and 54% of Democrats. A new question addressing the military found that 77% of those polled support increased school choice for military families. This idea is being promoted by many school choice advocates seeking to advance school choice from the federal level while also limiting the federal footprint in education. Lindsey Burke of the Heritage Foundation has often [stressed](#) that providing resources for educational options for military children will strengthen military families by providing opportunity for higher satisfaction regarding the children's education and thus produce greater longevity of service by military members, having a direct and positive effect on our national security. In the AFC poll, private school choice polled with 86% support, and a proposed federal K-12 tax credit received 67% support. While it appears unlikely that a federal tax credit program will actually be established, two states are considering either expanding or creating such a program this year (Rhode Island and Kentucky). The poll also showed that support for ESAs has risen from 69% last year to 75% this year, the highest it has been in three years. To date, only six states have established an ESA program, but the flexibility and opportunities that ESAs offer to parents is making this type of school choice the most popular choice program to advance at the state level. This year, six states are considering legislation to create or advance an ESA program (Mississippi, New Hampshire, West Virginia, Missouri, Georgia, and Iowa). The polling results confirm not only how unifying the issue of school choice is but also how important finding the right education option for each child, regardless of politics, is for most parents.

Research Shows Christianity in U.S. Growing Stronger

Recent research published by Harvard scholars shows that Christianity is growing stronger in America, not weaker. Much of the media and secularists profess that Christianity is a dying breed that will eventually disappear with further scientific and technological discoveries. However, [research](#) conducted by Landon Schnabel of Indiana University and Sean Bock of Harvard University shows that instead of becoming more

archaic, Christianity in America is becoming more intense and exceptional. The growing trend is for moderate believers to depart from the faith while those who typically held strong faith grow stronger and more resolute in their belief. While weak religion has secularized other nations, average religiosity in America could “be declining despite, or maybe even because of, persistently intense religion.” More people are abandoning affiliated religion and adopting nondenominational churches, [showing that people](#) “are not leaving Christianity. They are simply going elsewhere.” Although moderates and unbelievers have shifted away from fervent faith practices, those who attend church multiple times a week, believe the Bible is the literal Word of God, and identify as evangelical have held steady over the past 25 years. Compared to other similar Christian nations, Americans are up to three times more likely to pray multiple times daily, attend church, and believe in a literal Bible. This research indicates that despite popular narratives, “American religion remains persistently and exceptionally intense.”

Illinois Battle to Advance School Choice

The Illinois General Assembly voted last week [to override](#) an amendatory veto by Governor Bruce Rauner that would have allowed more private schools to participate in the newly established school choice program. Last summer, the Illinois legislature passed an education funding bill which also established the Invest in Kids Scholarship Tax Credit Program, a significant school choice victory in a state where the teachers’ unions have great influence. Governor Rauner signed the bill into law in August; however, upon further review, the governor recognized an area that he believed needed a fix. The law requires participating schools to be “recognized” by the state board of education, a classification that is not required and considered unnecessary by many in the private school community. Despite the action of the General Assembly to override the amendatory veto, the school choice community is [hopeful](#) that a fix can still be applied to the law through an additional bill or amendment. The school choice program offers donors a 75% tax credit for contributions made to a scholarship granting organization, which will in turn provide scholarships to families with incomes up to 300% of the federal poverty line. The program is seeing [tremendous support](#), with over half of the necessary funds being donated by individuals and businesses within 48 hours of the initial opening of the program. Scholarships will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis, and nearly 30,000 families applied the first day applications were available.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Can We Stop Fighting Over Schools?](#)

[Strengthen Educational Opportunity for Military Families](#)

[Trump Didn't Mention School Choice in His State of the Union - Thankfully](#)

Jamison Coppola: Legislative Director
Maureen Van Den Berg: Policy Analyst
Hannah Dashiell: Legislative Assistant
Legislative Office, 119 C Street SE, Washington, DC 20003
Phone: 202.547.2991 Fax: 202.547.2992