



**The Washington Flyer
May 18, 2018**

“God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the Gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever.”

Thomas Jefferson

States Consider School Safety Legislation

Since the February 14 school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, state legislatures have been working to increase school safety measures in their states. [Reports](#) indicate that approximately 200 bills have been introduced in 39 states to address the issue, with approximately half of these bills being introduced since the Parkland tragedy in February. The National Conference of School Legislatures (NCSL) is [tracking the work](#) of the states to strengthen school safety and has provided several reports of the nature of the [various bills](#) being considered in the states. The bills address the arming of school personnel (20 states, 44 bills), improving school infrastructure (17 states, 32 bills), training and retaining school resource officers (19 states, 34 bills), conducting emergency drills (16 states, 32 bills), and improving mental health assessment (18 states, 28 bills). A total of 37 bills are being considered in 17 states which specifically address the possession of firearms in schools. Shortly after the Parkland shooting, the Florida state legislature introduced a bill, which has now been signed into law, that established a \$67 million program to arm and train school personnel to respond to an active shooter, provided approximately \$100 million for districts to hire law enforcement for schools, and also provided \$70 million for mental health assistance. On the federal level, the White House [released a proposal](#) in March for strengthening school safety nationwide which addresses areas of training for school personnel, strengthening background checks, mental health reform, and investigation to determine further action. The plan indicates that the Administration desires to partner with states to provide voluntary training for school personnel, and that the Department of Justice will help state and local law enforcement partner together to provide proper training for school staff. While Congress has not moved to enact portions of the Administration’s plan, President Trump did establish a Federal Commission on School Safety which is comprised of Education Secretary DeVos, Attorney General Sessions, Secretary of Health and Human Services Azar, and Secretary of Homeland Security Nielsen.

Georgia Expands School Choice

Georgia has become the latest state to expand school choice options for students. The legislature recently [approved two bills](#) that increase funding for the state’s tax credit scholarship and charter schools. The increase for tax credit scholarships is especially significant, raising the funding cap from \$58 million per year to \$100 million over the next ten years. Kevin P. Chavous of the [Federation for Children](#) praised the bills, stating that

“demand for scholarships as well as charitable giving for the scholarship program has remained high and this legislation takes steps to get closer to meeting this demand.” The tax credit scholarship already serves over 13,000 students, many of whom are minority students from low-income families. Georgia is a Republican stronghold, and surveys of its citizens found that 75% of Georgians [would vote](#) in favor of school choice. Despite the widespread support for school choice, the state has met some difficulty in passing legislation, in part due to opposition from former Senate Education Chairman Lindsey Tippins, who recently resigned from his position. This year, Georgia’s 180 House seats and 56 of its Senate seats are [up for reelection](#), making future predictions for school choice in the state uncertain. Whatever the election results, the recent school choice expansion will be an immediate help to needy students across the state.

Administration Looking to Revise Regulations for Religious Colleges

The Department of Education may be looking to revise certain regulations which currently place unnecessary burdens on religious colleges. A recent [report](#) from *Politico* noted that the DOE’s agenda includes proposals to review and amend regulations pertaining to how federal funds are received and then used by faith-based educational institutions. Two areas that will likely be amended include the eligibility requirements for [federal student aid](#) and for [obtaining grants](#). For both of these issues, the Administration’s published agenda notes a concern that certain provisions in the current regulations could “unnecessarily restrict participation by religious entities.” Additionally, DOE press secretary Liz Hill pointed out that “various provisions of the department’s regulations regarding eligibility of faith-based entities and activities do not reflect the latest case law regarding religion, or unnecessarily restrict religion. The department plans to review and to amend such regulations in order to be more inclusive.” The announcement comes after Attorney General Jeff Sessions released guidance earlier this year regarding the responsibility of federal agencies to protect religious liberty, and also after the Supreme Court ruled in *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia vs. Comer* that the government cannot discriminate against religious institutions when offering secular services.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Analyzing the Embassy Move to Jerusalem, Palestinian Protests](#)

[Sponsors of California's AB 2943 Claim It Wouldn't Ban the Bible. Maybe. But What About These Books?](#)

[One Year Later: The Impact of President Trump's Executive Order Protecting Religious Liberty](#)

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