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“Their sacrifice was great, but not in vain. All Americans and every free nation on earth can trace their liberty to the white markers of places like Arlington National Cemetery. And may God keep us ever grateful.”
President George W. Bush

Betsy DeVos Explains Education Priorities to Congress

On Tuesday, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos appeared before the House Education and Workforce Committee to [discuss the priorities and policies](#) of the Department of Education under her leadership. Her opening statement indicated that her focus this year is on school safety, the reauthorization of the higher education act, restructuring and reorganizing the Department to ensure efficiency in carrying out responsibilities, regulatory relief to states and local districts, and implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act. Regarding school safety, she explained that the [School Safety Commission](#) has conducted meetings with the goal of “raising up ideas and practices, ideas that have been implemented in communities across the country but may not be broadly known, with the goal of ensuring that schools and communities are knowledgeable of the resources available and have the tools to be able to make the right decisions for them to protect their own buildings and their own communities.” The Commission is currently meeting with parents, teachers, law enforcement, and school leadership from across the country and expects to publish the report of best practices by the end of the year. On the subject of school choice, the Secretary reiterated support for offering education savings accounts to military families, but she opposed using Impact Aid funds for this purpose. She did, however, indicate a commitment to working towards ensuring military families have school choice: “We need to be sensitive to military families’ needs, and . . . support the fact that we have invested much into these individuals to help them become highly trained and capable in whatever role they have within the military; and to lose individuals prematurely because they are not able to make education choices for their children that work for their children is just a travesty, and I think it’s something we have to address.” Rep. Jared Polis (CO) challenged her regarding the revocation of the guidance regarding transgender students and whether she would provide protection for LGBT groups. She responded, “I am not going to make up law from the Department of Education.” Other questions posed [covered the topics](#) of immigration, civil rights, discipline guidance, and the reauthorization of the Perkins Act which provides funding for career and technical education grants.

Trump Administration Proposes New Rule to Defund Planned Parenthood

The Department of Health and Human Services has [proposed a new rule](#) which will effectively cut federal funding from any health care clinic which performs abortions as part of a combined operation. The “Protect Life Rule” will essentially reinstate regulations from the Reagan administration which ensured that Title X funds did not go to any organization or institution that performed abortions. Established in 1970 to provide general health

care to low-income women and men, the language for Title X clearly states, “None of the funds appropriated under this subchapter shall be used in programs where abortion is a method of family planning.” The regulations issued by President Reagan were rescinded by President Clinton, and no President since has reinstated them. Planned Parenthood has been the recipient of millions of dollars through Title X, receiving approximately \$60 million annually. To ensure Title X funds are distributed as intended by the law, the [proposed rule](#) specifies that “a Title X project may not perform, promote, refer for, or support abortion as a method of family planning, nor take any other affirmative action to assist a patient to secure such an abortion.” Additionally, the rule explicitly states that “a Title X project must be organized so that it is physically and financially separate” from abortion clinics, and it lays out specific guidelines to ensure victims are protected.

California Judge Rules in Favor of Christian Baker

A California judge has ruled that a Christian baker cannot be forced to bake a wedding cake for a same-sex couple. The couple, Mireya and Eileen Rodriguez-Del Rio, accused baker Cathy Miller of violating California’s Unruh Civil Rights Act when she refused to bake their wedding cake. However, Kern County Superior Judge David Lampe [found](#) that the state’s request to force Miller to bake a cake for a ceremony her religion condemns “would do violence to the essentials of Free Speech guaranteed under the First Amendment.” Judge Lampe drew a distinction between unique commissioned works and those that might be selected from ones on display. In the latter case, he ruled that it would be illegal to discriminate against a same-sex couple. Judge Lampe [stated](#) that “the right to free speech under the First Amendment outweighs the state’s interest in ensuring a freely accessible marketplace.” [Cathy Miller](#) credited the judge’s ruling to God, claiming that while she would gladly serve any baked good from her cases to any customer, she “cannot be a part of a celebration that goes against my Lord and Savior.” The ruling only prevents a preliminary injunction that would stop Miller from selling cakes or force her to sell to all customers. The couple, who claim their “fight against bigotry and discrimination is only beginning,” [will challenge](#) the ruling when the case goes to trial in June. Miller’s attorney plans to seek immediate dismissal.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Why Christian Higher Education Still Matters](#)

[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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