



A Publication of the American Association of Christian Schools

**The Washington Flyer
September 7, 2018**

“The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the divinity itself; and can never be erased.”

Alexander Hamilton

California’s Anti-Religious AB 2943 Withdrawn at the Last Minute

A controversial bill which threatened the religious freedom in California was [withdrawn](#) from receiving a final vote last week, just before the close of the state’s legislative session. The bill, [Assembly Bill 2943](#) (AB 2943) was introduced as an amendment to a current California law which is intended to protect consumers against fraudulent business practices. However, the “business practice” banned by AB 2943 is anything which encourages “sexual orientation change efforts.” As [defined by the bill](#), this “includes efforts to change behaviors or gender expressions, or to eliminate or reduce sexual or romantic attractions or feelings toward individuals of the same sex.” The language in the bill is broad enough to offer [no specific indication](#) of what might happen to the myriad of religious books, counseling, and other consumer services that follow and share a biblical view of sexuality and marriage. Furthermore, the bill offered no religious exemption for pastors, churches, colleges, or schools. Despite a great outcry from conservative leaders and constitutionalists that the bill would cause a chilling and stifling effect on free speech and religious liberty, the bill passed the Assembly last spring, and then passed the state Senate in August. The bill needed one final vote in the Assembly to approve an amendment that had been added by the Senate. However, on August 31, the final day of the state’s legislative session, Assemblyman Evan Low, the bill’s sponsor, [stated](#), “With a hopeful eye toward the future, I share with you that, despite the support the bill received in the Assembly and Senate, I will not be sending AB 2943 to the Governor this year.” Low indicated that his decision was reached after traveling across the state and meeting with faith leaders to hear their concerns regarding the bill. His statement also indicated that he will continue to work towards advancing the issue: “I am committed to continuing to work towards creating a policy that best protects and celebrates the identities of LGBT Californians and a model for the nation to look towards.” Jonathan Keller, president of the California Family Council which strongly opposed the bill, offered [public thanks](#) to Low for his efforts to hear the concerns of faith leaders over the last several months. He also stated, “People of faith across California and around the nation care deeply about our family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers who identify as LGBTQ. AB 2943 would have tragically limited our ability to offer compassionate support related to sexual orientation and gender identity, and even to preach Jesus’ message of unconditional love and life transformation.”

Senate Hearings for Supreme Court Nominee Brett Kavanaugh

This week the Senate Judiciary Committee began confirmation hearings for Brett Kavanaugh, the nominee for the Supreme Court. The hearing began contentiously as Democrat Senators repeatedly interrupted Chairman Grassley’s opening remarks, asking for a delay so they could review certain documents, and protesters from the

audience shouted their support for reproductive rights and disparaging remarks about Kavanaugh. The questions posed by Democrats have pushed for an answer to his opinion on life, [Roe v. Wade](#), immigration, presidential power, and other politically charged issues; however, Kavanaugh's responses repeatedly pointed back to precedent and rule of law, steering clear of stating his opinion on policy issues. Republican Senators have focused mostly on questions which point to Kavanaugh's regard for the Constitution and for Supreme Court precedent. The Kavanaugh nomination received [much support](#) from most conservatives who believe he will uphold the U.S. Constitution. Some conservatives, however, have offered only [cautious support](#), noting that, while his rulings have come down on the side of protecting life and religious liberty, his arguments and explanations have left questions as to how he would decide certain issues, such as the abortion issue, as a Supreme Court Justice. Senator Grassley has indicated the hearings may continue throughout the weekend and into next week, and a Senate vote is expected by the end of the month.

Hawaii Attorney General Oversteps Bounds with Guidance to Churches and Private Schools

Hawaii Attorney General Russell Suzuki recently received criticism from Christian groups when he [issued guidance](#) on political activity by churches, private schools, and other tax exempt organizations. To prepare Hawaiians for election season, Attorney General Suzuki issued a reminder that tax-exempt groups "do not share the same legal rights to participate in political activity as individuals and other corporations," warning churches and schools that their tax-exempt status might be revoked if they do not follow strict political campaign rules. The guidance went on to emphasize the ways in which it is unlawful for churches and schools to participate in elections, including direct or indirect advocacy, publishing or distributing statements about candidates, and contributing to campaigns. In response, [Alliance Defending Freedom](#) sent Attorney General Suzuki a [letter](#) reproving Suzuki's biased and overstated view of the law and enumerating the ways in which churches and charitable organizations can be involved in an election year. The following are some ways churches can get involved: discussing important policy issues, discussing candidates' positions on policy issues, hosting candidate forums, distributing non-partisan voter guides, urging congregants to vote, and renting church facilities to candidates just as they would to any other public group. To find more ways churches can get involved, please see links [here](#) and [here](#).

AACS National Legislative Conference Next Week

The AACS will be hosting our annual National Legislative Conference next week in Washington, D.C. Due to the conference, we will not be sending out The Washington Flyer but will resume the following week. We appreciate your prayers for the conference details, the attendees, and our contacts with elected and government officials.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Research and Commentary: Growing Support for Universal School Choice and Charter Schools](#)

[Trump Administration Moves to Cut Planned Parenthood Funding Sooner](#)

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