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“I predict future happiness for Americans, if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under the pretense of taking care of them.”

Thomas Jefferson

Hurricane Relief Effort for AACCS Schools and Families

AACCS is working to raise funds to help schools and families that suffered extensive damage from hurricane Florence. According to reports from our state associations in North and South Carolina, several school buildings have been damaged by winds or floodwaters, and many homes of school families have also either suffered severe damage or been lost completely. If you would like to contribute to the effort to help these ministries, please send funds to the AACCS office (6170 Shallowford Road, Suite 103, Chattanooga, TN, 37421). Your donation through AACCS will go 100% to these Christian ministries that are providing for the physical and spiritual needs of the communities affected by the storm.

Department of Education Hosts Conference for Private School Leaders

Last Thursday, the AACCS legislative staff participated in the Office of Non-Public Education’s annual National Private School Leadership Conference. This year marked the 40th anniversary of the [Office of Non-Public Education](#) (ONPE), a liaison office within the Department of Education that “fosters maximum participation of non-public school students and teachers in federal education programs and initiatives,” while also working to protect private schools from excessive government interference. The conference was an all-day event, where leaders in private education from across the country presented their efforts to expand and strengthen non-public education in America. School choice was a major theme of the conference, with presentations from Megan Blank and Jennifer Schlaudt from the Home School Legal Defense Association Online Academy and Rebecca Bautista from the Archdiocese of Miami Virtual Catholic School. Other speakers included a student testimony by Theresa Carr, senior at the all-girls Madeira School in McLean, Virginia, and a special presentation by Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. Secretary DeVos expressed her gratitude for non-public educators, mentioned some goals of the ONPE, and took questions from the audience. The afternoon sessions featured more presentations, including one from Rabbi David Zwiebel, who spoke about the Jewish organization Agudath Israel of America and the growth of Jewish schools over the past several decades. Participants also heard from the president and principal of St. Madeleine Sophie Catholic School in Washington State, a school that serves children in an inclusive school setting. Using innovative practices, St. Madeleine School offers one inclusive classroom in which students of various needs and capabilities thrive together. Participants also heard from ONPE representatives, including an overview of the Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives by Acting Executive Director Andrea Ramirez. Throughout the day, AACCS staff were able to glean best practices and learn from the experiences of other non-public educators. To close the event, the ONPE hosted a reception, where a chamber choir and string duet from AACCS member school Fairfax Baptist Temple Academy in Fairfax Station, Virginia, performed. The skill and precision shown by the choir and string duet gave a clear testimony

of the glory of God, and many participants expressed their delight in the students' performance. Through events like the National Private School Leadership Conference, the ONPE continues to build relationships with religious and private schools, ensuring that their interests and concerns are not forgotten within the Department of Education.

The IRS Issues Proposed Rule to Address SALT Deductions and Charitable Giving

On August 27, 2018, the IRS issued a [proposed rule](#) titled "Contributions in Exchange for State or Local Tax Credits" to address a change in tax law that limits state and local taxes (SALT) deductions to \$10,000. Before the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, these deductions were unlimited. In response, some high-tax states, including New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, [passed laws](#) that allowed residents to count some of their state and local taxes as charitable contributions to the government. By using this workaround, these states ensured that their residents retained a tax benefit from the federal government without having to reexamine their high state taxes. To prevent state workarounds, the IRS has proposed to limit the charitable deduction. Unfortunately, limiting the charitable deduction could [reduce](#) the amount of funding that charities such as scholarship granting organizations (SGOs) currently receive. Taxpayers who itemize their taxes might be disinclined to donate to charitable organizations if their charitable deduction is reduced. Some [school choice groups](#) have urged the IRS to ensure that charitable organizations are not harmed by the new rule, pointing out that charities are a vital part of civil life that offer a buffer between individual citizens and their government. Specifically, regarding school choice, removing incentives to give could discourage the contributions made to SGOs and thus limit the educational options available for parents.

Study Shows Voucher Regulations Hinder Benefits

A recent [study](#) conducted by Corey DeAngelis of the CATO Institute showed that excessive regulations for voucher programs tended to decrease private school participation, thus diminishing the number of available options in these types of school choice program. The study specifically looked at the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) and the Ohio Education Choice Scholarship Program (EdChoice), noting that these are two of the most regulated voucher programs in the country. Regulations for these programs include the use of state standardized assessments for the voucher students (EdChoice) and certain requirements for teacher qualifications, enrollment policies, and the allowance for voucher students to opt out of religious activities (MPCP). The findings also showed that "lower-quality" private schools were more likely to accept more rigorous regulations in an effort to gain more students, while "high-quality" private schools were more likely to decline participation so that they could maintain greater autonomy and avoid government control. The determination of the quality of schools was based on customer reviews, tuition, and enrollment. The authors noted that excessive regulations were likely an effort to ensure that low-income families had options of high-quality schools. However, based on the results, DeAngelis [concluded](#) that "policymakers should realize that their well-intentioned regulations of voucher programs likely do more harm than good."

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Poll: Most Americans Support School Choice](#)

[New GAO Report Breaks Down Data of Tax Credit Scholarship Programs](#)

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