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*“If to please the people, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterward defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair; the event is in the Hand of God.”*

*George Washington*

**National School Choice Week is Just around the Corner**

Next week, January 20–26, is [National School Choice Week](#) (NSCW) when families and schools across the country will celebrate the positive impact that school choice has had in the lives of thousands of students. More than [40,000 events](#) are currently planned by coalitions, schools, organizations, and individuals seeking to highlight the benefits of school choice. The week is intended to celebrate all forms of school choice and educational options, and private schools are encouraged to highlight the benefits and successes of the school choice programs in their areas. To learn more or register your participation, click [here](#).

**Pro-Life Legislative Work Leads up to the March for Life**

As thousands of Americans gathered for [pro-life events](#) this week and prepared for Friday’s [March for Life](#), pro-life Members of Congress worked to advance pro-life measures on the federal level. Pro-life Senators introduced two bills that would effectively stop abortion funding by the federal government and save the lives of babies who survive an attempted abortion. Senators Lankford (OK), Wicker (MS), and Roberts (KS) [introduced](#) the No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion and Abortion Full Disclosure Act (S. 109), which would permanently prohibit federal dollars from funding abortions. A similar law, the 1976 Hyde Amendment, also prohibits such funding but needs yearly renewal and does not apply to Obamacare. S. 109 would ensure the prohibition is permanent and would close [loopholes in Obamacare](#) which allow some abortion funding through the complexities of some insurance plans. A second bill, the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, [introduced](#) by Senator Ben Sasse (NE), would require medical professionals to give the appropriate care and hospital admission to a newborn who has survived an abortion. Also this week, members of the both the [House](#) and the [Senate](#) sent letters to the President asking for his commitment to veto any legislation that would weaken existing pro-life policy at the federal level. Both letters recognized the strong support that the President has shown thus far for the pro-life cause through his policies and agenda. The [March for Life](#) on Friday begins with a rally scheduled at noon in which AACCS staff will participate. The rally can be watched [here](#).

**Judge Rules against Trump Administration Conscience Protections in Contraceptive Mandate**

Last Sunday, a California federal judge blocked a forthcoming Trump administration regulation on conscience and religious liberty protections in the controversial contraceptive mandate. In November, [the AACCS wrote](#) of the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and Treasury final rules that broadened the exemptions in the Obama-era contraceptive mandate to preclude individuals and entities of religious faith or moral objection from providing sterilizing or abortifacient drugs to their employees. Now, religious groups such as the [Little Sisters of the Poor](#), who have endured legal battles over the contraceptive mandate since 2013, are once

again having their religious freedoms threatened. California judge and Obama-appointee Haywood Gilliam, Jr., [ruled](#) the day before the Trump religious exemption was slated to go into effect that 13 states plus the District of Columbia would “face substantial costs stemming from a higher rate of unintended pregnancies that are likely to occur if women lose access” to contraceptives through their employers. However, [one analysis shows](#) that the exemption would affect only 31,700–120,000 women nationwide, or 0.0004–0.0016% of women in the U.S. workforce. While the religious freedom of individuals and employers in 37 states will be protected by the exemption, in 13 states a host of people with religious and moral objections, including the Little Sisters of the Poor, will face the tough decision of violating their conscience or enduring long, toilsome legal battles just to exercise their fundamental religious rights.

### **Common Core Exams Show Increase in Failure Rate in New York**

A new [report](#) is showing that the math and English scores for New York students have dramatically fallen since the state’s adoption of the Common Core Standards (CCS) in 2013. Over the last five years, the state revised the standards slightly, calling them the Next Generation Learning Standards, and implemented a series of Common Core exams, called Regents, which the students must pass in order to graduate. After the initial implementation of the CCS, there was the expected decrease in scores as a new method was introduced, followed by a rise in the scores for the 2014–2015 school year. However, the 2017–2018 scores are showing a 30% failure rate in math (up from 25% the previous year), and a 21% failure rate for English (up from 16%). This translates to over 13,000 more students failing the algebra Regents exam than did the previous year, and over 12,000 more students failing the English Language Arts (reading) exam than the previous year. Additionally, 61% of students with disabilities and 60% of English Language Learners failed the algebra Regent exam; these groups also saw a rise in the number of failing students on the English exam. The author of the report, David Rubel, suggests that a possible reason for the decreased scores could be the significant portion of students who are English Language Learners. However, Morgan Polikoff, a professor at the University of Southern California, [suggests](#) that CCS are not helpful for “low achievers.” She explains, “Common Core is more conceptual with math. If you don’t have the basics down, and the teacher is teaching in ways that seem more confusing, you could be worse off.”

### **In Case You Missed It:**

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

[Presidential Proclamation on Religious Freedom Day, 2019](#)

[FFRF Threatens Public Schools Over Visits to the Ark Encounter and Creation Museum](#)

[Pastor Loses Job After Church Sign Stating “Homosexuality is Still a Sin” Causes Uproar](#)

[Trump Attorney General Nominee Bill Barr Won’t Commit to Defending Roe v. Wade](#)