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*“Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves;  
and, under a just God, cannot long retain it.”*  
**Abraham Lincoln**

**Religious Liberty Victory for Christian School in Vermont**

In a victory for religious freedom and women’s sports, the U.S. 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals has [ruled](#) in favor of a Christian school in Vermont that took a stand against males playing in female sports. The case, *Mid Vermont Christian School v. Saunders*, dates back to 2023 when Mid Vermont Christian School forfeited a girls’ basketball game because the opposing team had a male identifying as a female on their team. The Vermont Principals Association (VPA), which oversees athletics for the state, responded by barring Mid Vermont Christian from all VPA-sponsored events, including debate tournaments and science fairs in addition to athletic competitions. The school filed suit with the charge that the state was excluding them based on their religious beliefs. “The government cannot punish religious schools—and the families they serve—by permanently kicking them out of state-sponsored sports simply because the state disagrees with their religious beliefs,” [stated](#) David Cortman, senior counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom, who is representing the school. In 2024, a district court ruled that the VPA did not discriminate against religion in its decision against the school. However, earlier this month the 2nd Circuit lifted the injunction against the school, stating that the school was “likely to succeed in establishing that [state officials] acted with hostility toward Mid Vermont’s religious beliefs.” This allows Mid Vermont to participate in VPA events while the case makes its way through the courts. The court opinion explained that the VPA executive director “publicly castigated Mid Vermont—and religious schools generally—while the VPA rushed to judgment on whether and how to discipline the school.” The ruling further noted that the VPA went so far as to “challeng[e] the legitimacy of the school’s religious beliefs,” and that the “punishment imposed was unprecedented, overbroad, and procedurally irregular.” David Cortman praised the decision, [stating](#), “The 2nd Circuit was right to uphold constitutional protections by guaranteeing the school can fully participate while still adhering to its religious beliefs.”

**The Nation’s Report Card Reports Dismal Scores for Grades 8 and 12**

The latest scores from the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), often referred to as the Nation’s Report Card, show a [decline in student scores](#) for 12th-grade math and reading and 8th-grade science. The scores show that only 22% of 12th graders are proficient in math, down two points from 2019, and just 35% are proficient in reading, also a two-point decline from 2019. Eighth-grade science scores saw a four-point decline. The scores also revealed that 45% of 12th graders are below basic level in math, 32% are below basic level in reading, and 38% of 8th graders are below basic level in science. Education analysts [differ](#) in their opinions on the cause of the declining scores, with some [pointing to pandemic closures](#), while others point to a [rise in cell phone use](#) among students. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon [reacted](#) to the news by noting that “despite spending billions annually on numerous K-12 programs, the achievement gap is widening.” She further stated that the answer is not more money, but rather “who controls the money and where that money is invested.” She then emphasized the administration’s goal of “returning control of education to the states so they can innovate and meet each school and students’ unique needs.”

## **Religious Liberty Commission Focuses on Religious Liberty in Public Schools in Second Meeting**

AACS staff attended the second hearing of the [Religious Liberty Commission](#), which was created by the president to examine the foundations of religious liberty, develop strategies to preserve them, and raise national awareness through a presidential report. The second hearing, hosted at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., focused on religious liberty for students in public schools. The Commission heard from many students whose First Amendment rights had been violated. One [student](#) shared how her public school prohibited her from wearing a “Jesus Loves Me” mask during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another [student](#) was forced to read a pro-LGBT book to his kindergarten buddy. The Commission also heard testimony from legal experts such as Jeremy Dys of First Liberty. Dys stated that students do not lose their First Amendment rights when they walk in the door of the public school. Attendees were also privileged to hear from President Trump, who spoke for an hour. Trump addressed a variety of education-related topics, from school choice to higher education reform and the tragic shooting at Annunciation Catholic School. He announced that the Education Department will soon issue [new guidance](#) on prayer in public schools. “When faith gets weak, our country seems to get weaker,” [said](#) Trump. “When faith gets stronger, as it is right now . . . good things happen for our country. It’s amazing the way it seems to work that way.”

## **Department of Education Launches America 250 Civics Coalition**

The Education Department has [announced](#) a new civics initiative to restore a patriotic education to America during its 250th anniversary. The [America 250 Civics Coalition](#) will host events in all 50 states and provide resources to educators on the nation’s history. The coalition is led by Education Secretary Linda McMahon and over 40 conservative organizations such as the America First Policy Institute, Turning Point USA, and Hillsdale College. “A country cannot survive if its values are forgotten by its people,” [said](#) McMahon. “More than ever, we need to restore the vitality of the American spirit, and this coalition will take bold steps to educate, inspire, and mobilize youth toward active and informed citizenship.” To restore this patriotism, the coalition will launch the Trail to Independence Tour. This K-12 tour will discuss each state’s unique road to admission in the Union and its patriotic contributions. Another tour will focus on college campuses and the fundamental liberties of America. The coalition will also host summits and provide resources to K-12 educators. McMahon has made a [patriotic education](#) a priority of the Department. Critics such as David Blight, a history and Black studies professor at Yale University, have [decried](#) the move as “pure politics.” However, the Education Department views the [emphasis](#) on patriotic education as not divisive but unifying “in a way that is accurate, honest, and inspiring.”

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

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

[Practical Legal Help for Christian Schools: ADF Ministry Alliance](#)

[Trump Officials Preach the Gospel, Praise God at Charlie Kirk’s Memorial Service](#)

[A Tale of Two Conservatives at Charlie Kirk’s Memorial Service](#)

[6th Circuit Dismisses Lawsuit Against Hillsdale College](#)

[Knight Serves Internship with AACS in Washington, D.C.](#)

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