



The Washington Flyer
October 3, 2025

"It is an object of vast magnitude that systems of education should be adopted and pursued which may not only diffuse a knowledge of the sciences but may implant in the minds of the American youth the principles of virtue and of liberty and inspire them with just an liberal ideas of government and with an inviolable attachment to their own country."
~ Noah Webster

Religious Liberty Victory for Hillsdale College

The U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals [recently dismissed](#) a lawsuit against Hillsdale College. The lawsuit was brought in 2023 by former students Grace Chen and Danielle Villarreal, who alleged that they were sexually assaulted by other Hillsdale students. Chen and Villarreal argued that Hillsdale had violated several state and federal laws in its handling of the alleged assaults. The case was initially dismissed at the federal district court level, where the plaintiffs argued that Hillsdale had violated Title IX. Although Hillsdale does not accept any form of federal financial assistance, the former students argued that because Hillsdale was tax exempt, it was indeed receiving federal financial aid (FFA) and, therefore, subject to Title IX. The novel argument raised concerns for religious ministries, colleges, and schools that would see the power of the federal government drastically expanded under this novel legal reinterpretation of tax exempt status serving as federal financial aid. However, the district court [rejected](#) the plaintiff's Title IX argument. Quoting the 4th Circuit Court's decision in [Buettner-Hartsoe v. Baltimore Lutheran High School Association](#), the court noted that "since Title IX's inception over fifty years ago, it has never been applied to organizations based solely on their tax-exempt status, [a]nd for good reason."

Importantly, the plaintiffs dropped the Title IX argument in their appeal to the 6th Circuit. The plaintiffs only argued that Hillsdale had violated Michigan state laws regarding "(1) negligence; (2) intentional infliction of emotional distress; and (3) discrimination under a Michigan civil rights statute." The 6th Circuit rejected these claims, noting that a college does not have a special duty "to protect its students from third-party crimes." The court also refused to find "that the college, as opposed to the men, should be liable for these assaults" as the plaintiffs had charged. The plaintiffs also claimed that Hillsdale's "religious view that 'morally responsible sexual acts' occur within a marital relationship, 'renders the rest of' its policy in this area 'moot' and 'chill[s]' student reporting of sexual misconduct." The court rejected the argument that a religious belief about sexual ethics presented a special danger to female students as "the epitome of a conclusory and unsupported allegation at best and runs the risk of disparaging people of faith at worst." The 6th Circuit's decision, and the failure of the novel tax-exempt status argument, is an important win for the religious liberty and institutional autonomy of Christian colleges and ministries.

Religious Liberty Commission Hosts Third Meeting

The Religious Liberty Commission held its third hearing this week at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C. Previous hearings have focused on the foundations of religious liberty in America and religious freedom for parents and students. In this week's hearing attended by AACCS DC Office Staff, the Commission discussed religious liberty for teachers and faith-based schools. The meeting opened with a tribute to Charlie Kirk where

former colleagues and friends discussed Kirk's vision for education and the need to encourage faith in the public square. The Commission also heard from a panel of teachers and coaches who have stood up for their faith. Among the witnesses was Joe Kennedy, a football coach who was fired for offering a prayer on the football field. Kennedy recounted the trials of the case, which ultimately resulted in a [6-3 victory](#) at the Supreme Court. The afternoon sessions focused on religious liberty for faith-based schools. Carroll Conley, the principal of Bangor Christian School, discussed the challenges his ministry has faced fighting against discrimination in Maine's town tuition program. The school won a victory in the 6-3 Supreme Court decision [Carson v. Makin](#) but [remains barred](#) from the program because of the state's "nondiscrimination" law. Witness Jason Bedrick of the Heritage Foundation reminded the Commission of the importance of private school autonomy for the success of school choice. "To defend a country, you need an army, but to defend a civilization, you need schools," [said](#) Bedrick. "You need education as the conversation between generations. We need to teach our children, and they theirs, what we aspire to, and the ideals we were bequeathed by those who came before us."

Secretary of Education Introduces New Priority for Meaningful Learning

Education Secretary Linda McMahon has released a new supplemental priority to help students achieve meaningful learning. The meaningful learning priority is the sixth of seven priorities that McMahon has released. These priorities guide the Department as it considers grant applications. In a [press release](#), McMahon contrasted the Biden administration's "divisive ideology and racial preferencing" to the priorities the Trump administration will consider when awarding discretionary grants. This [proposed priority](#) will focus on providing "all students with access to rigorous, relevant, and engaging learning experiences." One of the ways McMahon proposed to promote meaningful learning is to strengthen core instruction in mathematics. For instance, the Department may be more likely to consider grant applicants who identify and support students struggling with foundational mathematics concepts. Other meaningful learning suggestions included providing high-quality instructional materials in subjects like social studies and encouraging high-impact tutoring. McMahon noted that meaningful learning is critical at a time when test scores are [falling nationwide](#). "Amid declining academic outcomes, the Department is committed to revitalizing American education to prepare every student for success in school, work, and life," [said](#) McMahon. McMahon's other [priorities](#) include evidence-based literacy, expanding education choice, returning education to the states, [advancing artificial intelligence](#), prioritizing [patriotic education](#), and career and workforce readiness.

In Case You Missed It:

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

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

[Knight Serves Internship with AACCS In Washington, D.C.](#)

[Federal Tax Credit Could Blunt Challenges to School Choice, Law Professor Says](#)

[What Would It Really Take to Overturn Obergefell?](#)

[Parental Rights at the Supreme Court: Protecting Children from Government Orthodoxy](#)

["Sometimes the Results of Our Ministry Appear Many Years Later"](#)