



A Publication of the American Association of Christian Schools

**The Washington Flyer**  
**March 6, 2026**

*“The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: it connected in one indissoluble bond the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity.”*  
**John Quincy Adams**

**America’s 250th Birthday Generates Opportunities for Students and Educators**

In celebration of America’s 250th birthday, several agencies and organizations have launched contests and opportunities for students to highlight the rich history of our country and inspire patriotism in youth. The [American Heroes Student Art Contest](#), sponsored by Freedom 250 and the National Endowment for the Humanities, is open to students in grades 3-12 with the goal of inspiring historical reflection and creativity. Students can create an original 2D artwork inspired by the 250 historic figures that will be honored in the upcoming National Garden of American Heroes. The organizers of the contest have prepared a brief description of all 250 heroes, along with a description of the American art movements, to inspire those interested in entering the contest. This information about the heroes and art could also be used in classroom activities and lessons. There will be 168 first-place winners (covering all 56 states and territories) who will be awarded a travel allowance to visit Washington, D.C., for an award ceremony during the Great American State Fair, which will be held on the National Mall this summer. The deadline for submission of entries is May 1, 2026. For more information about the contest, guidelines, the Heroes list, and art movements, please [visit here](#).

A [Bookmark Design Challenge](#), sponsored by the Office of the Second Lady and the National Endowment for the Arts, is open to K-8th grade students nationwide. Students wishing to participate can submit a hand-drawn bookmark illustrating what America means to them. The bookmarks could describe “history or heritage, important moments or people, cultural traditions, hopes for the future, symbols of unity and democracy, ideas of community, creativity and innovation.” Three winners will be selected by the Second Lady Usha Vance from grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. Winners will have their bookmarks printed and also distributed at the Great American State Fair this summer, and they will be invited to attend along with a parent or guardian. The deadline for submission of entries is March 31, 2026. For more information, please visit the [Bookmark Design Challenge: Celebrating America’s 250th](#).

The White House and Hillsdale College have partnered to create [“The Story of America,”](#) a series of brief videos highlighting important aspects of the founding of the United States. Each video focuses on a specific part of the beginning of America, including the Declaration of Independence, political and military leaders, the faith of our fathers, important battles, the Culpeper spy ring, and often unsung heroes of the American Revolution. These videos could provide an important resource and supplement to educational lessons.

**AACS Submits Public Comments on RISE Proposed Rule**

This week, the AACCS submitted public comments on the Reimagining and Improving Student Education (RISE) proposed rule. The proposed rule would implement aspects of the Working Families Tax Cut Act, also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill, that made significant changes to the federal student loan system. The law focused on promoting financial responsibility, transparency, and reduced debt burdens for college graduates.

The law sunsets most student loan repayment plans, such as Pay As You Earn and Income-Contingent Repayment, instead offering borrowers a standard plan or an income-based plan. It also created new annual and aggregate borrowing limits, eliminated some loan programs, allowed for a second opportunity for borrowers to rehabilitate loans in default, and ended the use of economic hardship as a reason to defer federal student loan payments. The higher education provisions of the law will go into effect on July 1, 2026. The AACCS public comments commend the proposed rule's goals and offer recommendations for a smooth transition to minimize disruptions for students and colleges. The comments urge the Department to provide guidance documents to prevent disruptions like those experienced by many colleges and students with the 2024-25 FAFSA rollout.

The comments also recommend a phase-in period for borrowers who are less than full-time students, like the proposed rule's phase-in for full-time students. Additionally, the law set a higher borrowing limit of \$50,000 per year or \$200,000 in aggregate for professional degree programs, but the law did not state which programs would be considered professional. The RISE proposed rule lists several degree programs that would qualify, including theology degrees. The AACCS public comments support the inclusion of theology programs but urges the Department to expand the list to include other programs such as nursing, secondary and religious education, and ministry degrees. The AACCS concludes its public comments by encouraging the Department to protect a holistic view of the purpose of higher education. "While promoting economic mobility is valuable, higher education serves broader goals," the comments state. "We urge the Department to ensure regulations do not inadvertently discourage enrollment in these mission-driven programs or reinforce the notion that higher education exists solely to produce employees rather than well-formed citizens." The Department must address arguments laid out in public comments as it finalizes its rule on federal student loans.

### **Religious Freedom Index Gives Insight into Public Opinion of Religious Liberty**

The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty has released its seventh annual [religious liberty index](#) that provides timely insight into how Americans view topics such as religious pluralism and policies. The index found the highest ever composite score of support for religious liberty at 71 out of 100 points, an increase of one percentage point from 2024 and an increase of 5 percentage points from 2020. The index had [three major findings](#). First, Americans increasingly support faith in the public square. Second, Americans unify around religious liberty. Third, Americans support parents' right to religiously educate their children. Specifically, 77% of respondents agreed that families who choose religious schools should have access to public funding. In addition, 75% of respondents agreed that parents should be able to use tax credits and vouchers to put their children in private or religious schools. The index also found that 62% of Americans support the Supreme Court's decision in [Mahmoud v. Taylor](#) in which the Supreme Court ruled that parents may opt their children out of content, such as LGBT books, that contradicts the family's religious beliefs. "Year after year, the Index has made clear that religious liberty remains one of our most cherished values," [said](#) Mark Rienzi, president and CEO of Becket. "Even amid deep divisions, our nation still believes that our first freedom belongs at the heart of our culture; not as a source of conflict, but as a foundation for overcoming it." The report is available [here](#).

### **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](#)

[Education Resource: The Heritage Guide to Historic Sites](#)

[Is Universal Choice Bankrupting States?](#)

[‘Watershed Moment:’ Supreme Court Rules on Gender Secrecy Policies](#)