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*“The only means of establishing and perpetuating our republican forms of government is the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity by means of the Bible.”*  
**Benjamin Rush**

**AACS Hosts National Bible, Fine Arts, and Academic Competition Next Week**

Next week, approximately 1,900 students from 186 schools in 33 states will compete in the 48th annual AACS National Competition. Contestants will compete in 80 categories, submitting 1,171 entries in the five basic areas of Bible, music, speech, art, and academics. We are looking forward to an exciting week with these students as they compete. There will be no *Washington Flyer* next week while our staff supports the competition. We invite you to follow our [AACCS Facebook page](#) for updates from the AACS National Competition.

**National Center for Educational Statistics Conducts Private School Survey**

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) is conducting the biennial [Private School Survey](#) (PSS) in an effort to generate data on the contributions of private schools to the educational landscape in America. Administered by the U.S. Census Bureau, the survey is a brief, non-intrusive questionnaire which collects general information such as the size of the school, number of teachers, length of school year, number of graduates, and religious affiliation. Participation is not mandatory; however, the information gleaned from the survey is beneficial in providing helpful data regarding the accomplishments of the private school community. Additionally, participation ensures that a school’s NCES-ID is active and also keeps schools on the [NCES private school search tool](#) that is designed to help parents. Information has been emailed to each school regarding the survey, and census officials will be calling or visiting schools between March 20 and May 22 to recruit participation and answer any questions.

**Judge Rejects Settlement to Lift Johnson Amendment**

This week, a federal district judge [declined](#) to approve a consent decree that would have lifted the Johnson Amendment in certain circumstances. The Johnson Amendment is a federal law that prohibits 501(c)(3) organizations from participating in or intervening in political campaigns. As a result, many pastors have been wary about preaching or teaching on topics that may be perceived as political lest their churches lose their tax-exempt status. In 2024, a group of religious organizations and churches sued the IRS, arguing that the Johnson Amendment violates the First Amendment. In July 2025, the religious organizations and the IRS reached a [consent decree](#). Under the decree, the IRS would no longer penalize churches that spoke on electoral politics through the lens of faith in their customary channels of communication. Last week, Texas U.S. District Judge J. Campbell Barker [dismissed the lawsuit](#), overturning the consent decree. Barker argued that he had no authority to rule on the case because the IRS had never penalized the particular plaintiffs suing. However, Mike Farris, general counsel for the plaintiff National Religious Broadcasters group, showed how misguided that ruling was. Under that logic, the plaintiffs must first violate the law and be punished before they could sue. “No person should be forced to place themselves in legal jeopardy to protect their constitutional rights,” Farris [said](#). The

plaintiffs plan to appeal to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. If the 5th Circuit sides with the religious organizations, the ruling could be more advantageous to free speech protection than the consent decree.

### **Report Shows Strong Link Between Faith and Academic Advantages**

A new [report](#) revealed that religious students often have higher academic outcomes than their secular peers. The report examined studies in three main areas. First, the report examined the religious faith of students and families in educational outcomes. One study found that students who regularly participated in religious activities had an average GPA 0.144 higher than their secular peers. The study contrasted that increase to the only 0.03 increase in students' GPA if their parent has an additional year of education. Second, the report examined the educational programs of faith organizations. One study found that some educational programs offered by faith organizations can strengthen parent-teacher partnerships. Third, the report examined the religious faith of educators. Teachers who feel "called" to their vocation often experience greater work satisfaction. The report specifically examined studies of religious students in public schools. However, the findings are also relevant for private Christian school students. For instance, the report found that students benefit from moral codes of conduct, learned competencies (such as literacy from Scripture reading and memorization), and social ties. The authors of the report recommended that faith leaders and public school systems develop partnerships to meet students' needs. David Closson, director of Family Research Council's Center for Biblical Worldview, offered the following [thoughts](#) on the report: "Even a secular culture is rediscovering that formation matters, and the church is uniquely positioned to offer not just social support, but a comprehensive vision of human flourishing rooted in the gospel."

### **Federal Court Upholds Law which Protects Minors from Gender Ideology**

The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals [issued two rulings](#) earlier this week that allow an Iowa law that curbs classroom instruction and school library books on LGBT issues to remain in effect. The law, passed in 2023, bans any library books in K-12 schools with explicit sexual content, and also [prohibits](#) "any program, curriculum, test, survey, questionnaire, promotion, or instruction relating to gender identity or sexual orientation." The law was immediately challenged by LGBT educational groups over the restriction of classroom instruction regarding gender identity and sexual orientation issues, charging this violated First Amendment free speech rights. A second lawsuit filed by publishing companies including Penguin Random House, HarperCollins Publishers, and Macmillan Publishing Group, challenged the portion of the law that affected library books. Last year, a lower court issued an injunction against the portion of the law regarding library books while the case is being considered. A second lower court blocked enforcement of the portion of the law that restricted any program or promotion of LGBT issues, while allowing the rest of the restrictions to remain in place. The rulings by the 8th Circuit earlier this week lifted both injunctions, allowing full enforcement of the law while the cases are litigated. Iowa's Attorney General Brenna Bird [praised](#) the ruling as a "huge win" for parents. "Parents should always know that school is a safe place for their children to learn, not be concerned they are being indoctrinated with inappropriate sexual materials and philosophies."

### **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](#)

[American Heroes Student Art Contest—Deadline May 1](#)

[Federal Court Halts Religious Textbooks in State-Sponsored Homeschooling](#)