



A Publication of the American Association of Christian Schools

The Washington Flyer
January 25, 2019

“Almighty God hath created the mind free; all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments of burdens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in His almighty power to do.”

Thomas Jefferson, Acts for Establishing Religious Freedom in Virginia, 1785

Trump Administration and Congress Recognize National School Choice Week

This week marked the 9th annual celebration of National School Choice Week. As [thousands of events](#) across the country highlighted the benefits and successes that come from school choice, the Trump administration and Congress also added their support. In a [Presidential Proclamation](#), President Trump stated, “We reaffirm our commitment to enable all students to pursue the education that will best equip them for success in work and life.” He emphasized that “every child deserves the chance to flourish in an educational environment that best leverages their unique learning style, cultivates their talent, and develops the skills needed to succeed in an ever-changing world.” He further urged all Americans to do their part to enhance school choice opportunities by encouraging “families to explore new educational opportunities; . . . educators to develop imaginative and innovative pathways to learning; . . . students to passionately pursue their goals and dreams with discipline, integrity, and unyielding determination.” He also called on state and federal lawmakers to do their part to advance school choice which “will strengthen our students, families, educators, communities, and ultimately, our great Nation.” School choice advocates including AACCS legislative staff attended a [Heritage Foundation event](#) celebrating school choice, and in particular, the 15th anniversary of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program (DCOSP), where Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos spoke of the need to expand school choice. Since its creation as the only federally funded choice program, the DCOSP has awarded over 8,400 scholarships to students to attend the school of their choice. In her comments about the program, Secretary DeVos recognized the bipartisan support that the program had when it was first passed, and then called for more bipartisan support today for expansion of the successful program. Noting a recent survey which showed 67% of the people in this country support school choice, she stated, “Education should not be—is not—a partisan issue.” She later emphasized, “Our future is reliant on what we do for kids today.” Joining in the discussion were education experts Katherine Haley and Dr. Patrick Wolf who spoke of the history and success of the program, and Virginia Walden Ford who testified of the benefits of the DCOSP to her as a parent. In Congress, Sen. Tim Scott (SC) and Rep. Paul Mitchell (MI) introduced a [Congressional resolution](#) recognizing this week as National School Choice Week. The resolution begins with the strong statement that “providing a diversity of choices in K-12 education empowers parents to select education environments that meet the individual needs and strengths of their children.”

Vice President Defends Christian Faith, Christian Schools, Religious Freedom

Vice President Mike Pence last week boldly stated his support for religious freedom and Christian education and called for attacks on religion to cease. His remarks were in response to a series of articles and media comments which criticized his wife's decision to teach elementary art at Immanuel Christian School. Mrs. Pence had taught at this same school while her husband served in the House of Representatives; yet when she decided to return this year to teach part time, the Huffington Post immediately cried that she was teaching at a school that "[Bans L.G.B.T. Employees and Kids.](#)" Similar headlines were shared by the [NYTimes](#), [USAToday](#), [CNN](#), [NBC](#), and other mainstream media outlets. Conservative leaders and pundits were quick to issue strong responses to the attacks, pointing out the concerns this [anti-Christian philosophy presents](#) not just to Christian schools but also to [religious freedom as a whole](#) (see "In Case You Missed It" below). In an [interview](#) with Family Research Council's Tony Perkins, the Vice President emphatically stated, "Karen and I have been in and around public life for almost two decades, and so to be honest with you, we're used to the criticism. But, the attacks on Christian education by the mainstream media have got to stop. If we cherish the freedom of religion in this country—this Administration stands foursquare for the freedom of religion of people of all faiths. And to see the mainstream media criticize my wife because she's choosing to return to the classroom of an elementary Christian school is wrong. Again, the attacks on Christian education must end."

March for Life 2019

Last Friday, AACS staff joined [hundreds of thousands](#) of men, women, and children celebrating life at the 46th annual March for Life. The theme for this year's March, "[Unique From Day One](#)" used a fingerprint to symbolize the special uniqueness and value of each human life. From school groups to war veterans, attendees at the March for Life were filled with [love, joy, and respect](#) for human life, no matter how small. Before the crowds marched down Constitution Avenue to the Supreme Court, they braved the cold to stand on the National Mall for a rally featuring testimonials from pro-life leaders and elected officials. At the rally, popular conservative commentator Ben Shapiro emphasized the undeniable truth that life begins at conception, while prominent politicians Sen. Steve Daines (MT), Rep. Chris Smith (NJ), Rep. Dan Lipinski (IL), and state representative Katrina Jackson (LA) shared how their passion for life helped them reach across the political aisle to fight for fundamental freedoms for the unborn. The rally's finale featured a surprise appearance from Vice President Mike Pence and his wife Karen, along with a video message from President Donald Trump, who pledged to veto any legislation that lacks pro-life protections. Although the occasion is a somber one, the March for Life is an inexplicably joyful event that, [as President Trump stated](#), is "founded on love and grounded in the nobility and dignity of every human life."

In Case You Missed It:

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

[The Coming Crisis for Christian Colleges](#)

[Karen Pence, Are You Now, or Have You Ever Been, Part of a Christian Ministry?](#)

[Left Opens War on All Religious Schools by Targeting Where Karen Pence Works](#)

[Regarding the Controversy Surrounding Mrs. Pence's New Christian School Employer](#)

[Yikes! Karen Pence Teaching at Christian School](#)

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