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“Numerous have been the manifestations of God’s providence in sustaining us. In the gloomy period of adversity, we have had ‘our cloud by day and pillar of fire by night.’ We have been reduced to distress, and the arm of Omnipotence has raised us up.”
Samuel Adams

New Study Finds Weaknesses in Social-Emotional Learning

The Pioneer Institute has recently released an in-depth report which examines the history and current practices of social-emotional learning (SEL), a popular educational philosophy which focuses on teaching values and behavior over academics. The [study](#) finds that, despite the push for increasing SEL in public education, evidence is lacking to prove that including SEL is actually improving students’ education. To the contrary, the report finds that SEL can be detrimental to a student’s privacy, health, achievement, and even personal freedom. Authored by pediatrician and researcher Dr. Karen Effrem and attorney and researcher Jane Robbins, the [research](#) shows that SEL is often interwoven with Common Core Standards and competency-based education, and the SEL emphasis is minimizing the academic work taking place in many schools. Despite the obvious fact that assessment of SEL is difficult and subjective at best, software companies are eager to claim that certain technology will offer a measure of evaluation for SEL. However, Dr. Effrem disagrees: “This technology, when coupled with SEL, will further spread the recent wave of amateur, unqualified psychoanalysis in schools. Given the uncertainty around diagnosis and treatment of mental or emotional problems, even by highly trained physicians, the SEL movement runs the risk of further increasing the trend toward dangerous over-diagnosis and over-medication of American schoolchildren.” An additional problem presented by the report is the “erosion of student data privacy” that will inevitably occur as the social-emotional information is collected for student records, often without the knowledge or consent of students and parents. Perhaps the biggest concern is the level of involvement of the government in pushing for SEL to be included in schools, despite the clear lack of evidence regarding its success in improving academic achievement and reducing school violence and teen suicide. According to the Pioneer Institute, close to \$30 billion was spent last year by federal, state, and local governments to implement SEL. The report concludes by noting eight key problems with SEL, not the least of which is the “possibility of indoctrination and erosion of freedom of conscience via government-established SEL norms for the attitudes, values, and beliefs of freeborn American citizens.” As [explained](#) by Effrem and Robbins, “For one thing, it transfers the locus of instruction from family, civil, and religious institutions to the school (effectively, to government).” In the forward to the report, Dr. Kevin Ryan, founder of the Center for Character and Social Responsibility at Boston University, addressed the root problem with SEL: “At its core, the skills of social-emotional learning aim to shift the center of moral decision-making from traditional wisdom and an awareness that we are children of God to the newly enlightened self.”

Federal Court Upholds Ohio Law to Defund Planned Parenthood

The 6th Circuit Court of Appeals [recently ruled](#) that an Ohio law that bans funding for Planned Parenthood is constitutional. Enacted in 2016, the law requires that none of the funds flowing from federal women's health programs be used to contract with groups that perform or refer for "nontherapeutic abortions." Last year, a three-judge panel from the 6th Circuit Court repealed the law, but the recent ruling from the full Circuit came down 11-6 in the law's favor. The ruling ensures that Planned Parenthood will not receive government money for any of the services it provides. [Judge Jeffrey Sutton](#), who wrote the majority opinion on the case, explained that "private organizations do not have a constitutional right to obtain governmental funding to support their activities," going on to say that "the state also may choose not to subsidize constitutionally protect activities. Just as it has no obligation to provide a platform for an individual's free speech . . . it has no obligation to pay for a woman's abortion." This decision came the same day that the Ohio Senate [passed](#) its version of the heartbeat bill, a bill to ban abortion once a fetal heartbeat has been detected. With the 6th Circuit ruling and a favorable governor and state House considering the heartbeat bill, the future for babies in Ohio could soon be much brighter.

The Equality Act Is Introduced in the House

Last Wednesday, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi introduced the [Equality Act](#) which, if passed, will expand the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by [adding](#) sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of protected classes of people in federal law. Conservatives have long spoken out against expanding civil rights law in this way, primarily because doing so endangers parental rights and fundamental freedoms of religion and speech. If passed, the bill would codify a scientifically and philosophically unsubstantiated view of human sexuality and would penalize individuals who do not affirm that view of human sexuality. There have already been [cases](#) when state governments have elevated sexual orientation and gender identity to the detriment of religious and free speech rights. Such laws are affecting people who work in wedding industries, people whose consciences prevent them from affirming transgender ideology (nurses, doctors, and therapists), and people working in non-profits such as those providing shelter or adoption services. Even some [feminists](#) are worried that the Equality Act would erase women from the law, mandating that men be allowed in women's restrooms, locker rooms, and sports teams. Most concerning to Christians and those who believe in the First Amendment, however, is that the Equality Act does not contain any religious exemptions, effectively giving Christians an ultimatum: affirm an unbiblical sexual ideology or break federal law.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Opinion: Thanks to Donald Trump and Betsy DeVos, America's Schools Have Regained Religious Freedom](#)

[Low-Income Mothers Ask Supreme Court to Stop Montana from Limiting School Choice](#)

[May 4—Alive From New York—4D Ultrasound in Time Square](#)

[Arkansas Governor Signs Bill to Ban Abortions on Unborn Babies After 18 Weeks](#)