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*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”*

***I Peter 1:3-4***

**AACS Sends Letter to Congress Addressing Concerns in the Equality Act**

The AACS recently sent a letter to Representatives Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) and James Corner (R-KY), the respective Chairwoman and Ranking Member of the Civil Rights and Human Services Subcommittee, outlining grave concerns with the Equality Act. The subcommittee, which is part of the House Education and Labor Committee, held a [hearing](#) on April 9 to consider the bill 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. While the witnesses who presented testimony at the hearing claimed the bill is necessary to ensure equal rights for all individuals, particularly those in the LGBT community, the AACS letter expressed grave concern that the Equality Act “would enforce one government-sanctioned ideology and punish those who do not conform to it.” Referencing the many other organizations that have argued that the Equality Act would actually harm “medical and creative professionals, women, charitable civic organizations, churches, employers, and individuals” as well as “undermine the rights of women and girls in athletics, education, and business,” the AACS emphasized particular concern that the bill would cause irreparable harm to the teachers and students in Christian schools. Of primary concern is the fact that the bill contains no religious exemptions, meaning that houses of worship, Christian schools, and faith-based organizations would be required to conform to the philosophy and ideology regarding human sexuality that is put forth in the bill. While Christian schools may be permitted to continue teaching the biblical ethics of human sexuality, they would be prohibited from practicing that belief in their hiring and admissions policies and would likely be required to adjust other policies such as their health plans and use of bathrooms and locker rooms in order to comply with the philosophy put forth in the bill. As the letter states, “Christian schools would effectively lose the freedom to operate according to the teachings of their faith.” The letter also points out that the bill would repeal the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), a law signed by President Bill Clinton in 1993 which provides a path for religious institutions to assert that certain government requirements place a substantial burden on their religious exercise. The letter concludes with a grave explanation of what is at stake: “While America has always welcomed diverse thoughts and beliefs, and peaceful discourse concerning them, the Equality Act would enforce one government-sanctioned ideology and punish those who do not conform to it. Coercing Christian schools and countless other citizens of good will to affirm same-sex marriage and transgender ideology does not make for a more pluralistic, tolerant society; instead, it fosters contempt and mistrust between the government and those practicing the constitutional right to exercise one’s religion. Forcing the American people to choose between their religious beliefs and government retaliation is unconstitutional and denigrates our Republic to the rule of powerful perceived majorities.”

## **Alive from New York--Event to Celebrate Life**

In response to recent state efforts to pass radical pro-abortion legislation, Focus on the Family is hosting Alive from New York to celebrate the sanctity of pre-born life. The event will feature a live 4D ultrasound of a third trimester baby in the womb. Come celebrate the wonder of life at Alive from New York [on Saturday, May 4](#) in Times Square, New York City. For more information and to register, please visit the event's website [here](#).

## **AACS Signs Amicus Brief in School Choice Case**

The AACS has signed onto an [amicus brief](#) in support of three Montana families who have petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to hear a case in which the families were denied access to the state's tax credit scholarship program simply because they chose religious schools for their children. Montana passed a tax credit scholarship program in 2015, but the Montana Department of Revenue decided that allowing any of the scholarship funds to go toward religious schooling would violate the state's Blaine Amendment. [Blaine amendments](#), which exist in dozens of states, were created in the mid-1800s to curb government funding of Catholic schools, but they are often used today to shutter school choice programs. The Montana law also directly violates the Supreme Court decision in [Trinity Lutheran v. Comer](#), in which the Supreme Court ruled that denying a religious group participation in a generally available public program violates the First Amendment of the Constitution. After three families sued the state, the Montana Supreme Court ruled that the whole tax credit program was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court will decide whether it will take the case in May or June 2019. The AACS supports these families [as they argue](#) that Montana denied them their First Amendment rights by excluding them from a generally available school choice program.

## **Pro-Life Members of Congress Stand for Life**

Last week, pro-life members of Congress were busy advocating for the lives of unborn babies. In the Senate, Judiciary Chairman Lindsey Graham (SC) held a hearing on the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, a bill that would end abortions beyond the fifth month of pregnancy. Pro-life advocates argued that late-term abortions inflict intense pain and suffering on unborn babies, with [abortion survivor Melissa Ohden testifying](#) on the saline abortion that should have ended her life but miraculously led to her live birth. The Senate also heard testimony last Wednesday on pro-life censorship from tech giants Twitter, Facebook, and Google. [Senator Ted Cruz \(TX\) pressed a witness](#) affiliated with Twitter to defend examples of speech that Twitter had banned, including a quotation from Mother Teresa emphasizing the harm abortion causes to women. Pro-life members of the House of Representatives were also actively advocating for life. Congressman [Steve Scalise's \(LA\) discharge petition](#) on the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act now has 199 signers, including three Democrats. House Republicans plan to increase pressure on other Democrats from more pro-life districts to add their names to the petition, which needs 218 total signatures to move it to a vote on the House floor. These measures in the House and Senate are just the latest wave of pro-life advocacy that has surged following recent state efforts to expand radical pro-abortion legislation.

## **In Case You Missed It:**

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

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

[EdChoice Releases Two New Resources to Help Advance School Choice](#)

["Frontal Assault on Religious Liberty": Why Religious Liberty Advocates Are So Alarmed by the Equality Act](#)