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“Liberty may be endangered by the abuses of liberty as well as the abuses of power.”
James Madison

Florida and Tennessee Create New School Choice Programs

Both Florida and Tennessee have successfully taken steps to approve [new school choice programs](#) during their legislative sessions. The Florida state legislature voted to establish a [new school choice program](#) intended to provide low- and middle-income families with the opportunity to choose the schools that best meet the needs of their children. The Family Empowerment Program is a voucher program which will provide up to 18,000 publicly funded scholarships in the first year to families with incomes up to 300 percent of the poverty line. The program had bipartisan support and becomes the fifth school choice program in Florida. An interesting aspect of this program is that it will include children from some middle-income families, where often the scope of a choice program is limited to only low-income families. Advocates for the program noted that there was little opposition to this expansion, which indicates that there is growing support for expanding school choice options for all students and families. The program was created largely to meet the needs of the 13,000 students who are on the waiting list for the state’s tax credit scholarship program which already serves over [100,000 students](#). In [Tennessee](#), lawmakers voted to establish a new education savings account program to serve students in low-performing schools in Memphis and Nashville. The program will be able to serve up to 5,000 students the first year and will be capped at 15,000 in the years following. Qualifying families will receive \$7,300 each year to use on a variety of educational expenses for their children, including private school tuition, tutoring, and therapy. This is the [second ESA program](#) established in the state, the first one helping students with special needs. On the federal level, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and Senator Ted Cruz continue to [champion](#) their Education Freedom Scholarship (EFS) proposal in an effort to garner more support for the proposed tax credit scholarship program. While there seems to be enough opposition to keep the bill from moving forward, they remain [hopeful](#) that their efforts will attract new supporters as school choice continues to gain momentum across the country.

Equality Act Alert

The U.S. House of Representatives is scheduled to vote on the Equality Act early next week. This bill presents serious [threats to the religious liberty](#) as it would mandate a universal sexual ethic and eradicate the right of people to speak freely and without fear on issues core to one’s conception of truth—like a biblical view of sexuality. It contains no exemptions for religious organizations or houses of worship, and it partially repeals the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Insofar as Christian schools could be considered places of “public accommodation” under this bill, there would be no protections for Christian schools that desire to teach a biblical ethic of human sexuality and expect teachers and students to practice those beliefs. We have written recent *Washington Flyer* [articles](#) about the nature of this bill and the threat that it poses to religious freedom. AACCS members, parents, and church members concerned about maintaining religious liberty should call their

Representatives and urge them to stand for religious liberty by voting “No” on the Equality Act. Contact information for your Representative can be found [here](#).

Georgia Bans Abortion Once a Baby’s Heartbeat is Detected

On Tuesday, Georgia’s Governor Brian Kemp [signed into law](#) the “heartbeat bill” which prohibits abortion once a heartbeat is detected, around 6–8 weeks after conception. Titled the Living Infants Fairness and Equality (LIFE) Act, the bill will go into effect January 1, 2020. Georgia already had a law in place which prohibits abortions after 20 weeks gestation; this new law not only expands the protection for the unborn baby to the point when the heartbeat is first detected, but it also includes language which establishes the personhood of the preborn baby. As state representative Ginny Ehrhart [notes](#), this inclusion is significant as it ensures “the 14th amendment rights of protection for that person go into effect.” The bill received much opposition from celebrities and Democrat lawmakers who claim this will hurt women, and likely opponents will challenge the law in court. Georgia becomes the sixth state to pass a heartbeat bill, joining Ohio, Mississippi, Kentucky, Iowa, and North Dakota. In two of these states the laws have been blocked from taking effect by the courts, and the other laws are facing court challenges. The governor of Georgia has indicated that he expects the Georgia law will be challenged as well, but he has [vowed to stand](#) behind the bill: “But our job is to do what is right, not what is easy. We will not back down. We will always continue to fight for life.”

Alive from New York a Success

On Saturday, May 4, Focus on the Family held a successful [Alive from New York](#) event, reaching thousands of people in New York City’s Times Square with the undeniable humanity of the unborn. Times Square was packed with pro-life supporters; and while there were some vocal protestors, there was no muting the message of love and value for every human life. Although Focus on the Family was denied access to Time Square’s many jumbotron screens, they were able to set up a portable screen so that crowds could watch the main event—a live, 4-D ultrasound of a pre-born baby who, even in the third trimester, could be [legally aborted](#) under New York law. The ultrasound was done on Abby Johnson, a woman who worked in Planned Parenthood for years before leaving the brutal industry. She also inspired the recent inspirational movie “Unplanned,” which tells her own story of leaving the abortion industry. Perhaps one of the most surreal moments of the event was during the 4-D ultrasound, when amid the protests and traffic, Times Square miraculously [grew silent](#) in awe of the moving, living baby portrayed onscreen. Alive from New York was the largest pro-life event ever to take place in New York City, and it signals an undying determination to protect and defend the unborn, no matter how radical a state’s abortion laws become.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[School Choice Coalition Looks to Rebrand](#)

[HHS Announces Final Conscience Rules Protecting Health Care Entities and Individuals](#)

[National Day of Prayer: Presidential Proclamation](#) and [President Trump Speech](#)