



A Publication of the American Association of Christian Schools

The Washington Flyer
May 31, 2019

“Men who see not God in our history have surely lost sight of the fact that, from the landing of the Mayflower to this hour, the great men whose names are indissolubly associated with the colonization, rise, and progress of the Republic have borne testimony to the vital truths of Christianity.”

Andrew Johnson

School Choice Advancements on the State Level

The governors of Florida and Tennessee have signed into law school choice programs that will increase educational options for families in their states. In [Florida](#), Governor Ron DeSantis signed the Family Empowerment Scholarship program, 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 becomes the fifth school choice program in the state and has been created largely to meet the needs of the 13,000 students on the waiting list for the tax credit scholarship program. 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. Additionally, the Florida state legislature [approved \\$23 million](#) in the appropriations bill to expand the Gardiner Scholarship Program, an education savings account program created in 2014 to help students with severe special needs. In [Tennessee](#), Governor Bill Lee signed into law an education savings account program that will provide school choice for up to 5,000 students in Memphis and Nashville during the first year (2021) and cap at 15,000 students by 2024. 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. School choice programs are also being considered in two other state legislatures. In [North Carolina](#), the state senate approved legislation (SB 609) which would expand several of the state’s school choice programs to allow greater participation. The measure increases the income eligibility for the Opportunity Scholarship Program, a voucher program with over 9,000 participating students, and also removes the cap for kindergartners and first graders enrolled in the program. Additionally, the bill would allow gifted four-year-olds to enter kindergarten early through any of the state’s [three school choice programs](#). The bill also adjusts requirements for the Children with Disabilities Grant, the state’s choice program for special needs students, so that more qualifying students are able to participate, including those in private schools. In [Pennsylvania](#), the House passed legislation (HB 800) that would expand the current tax credit scholarship program by increasing the income eligibility for participating families and almost doubling the allowable cap for the program. While each of these school choice advancements faced opposition from those charging that school choice defunds public education, they also received widespread support from bipartisan legislators and, most importantly, families.

New Adversity Score in the SAT

The College Board recently announced that students’ SAT results will soon include an “[adversity score](#)” that indicates the supposed level of hardship a student has had to overcome. The system, officially called the

Environmental Context Dashboard, assigns each student a score of one to 100 based on 15 different factors related to the social and economic background of that student. The system has been tested in about 50 colleges, and the recent announcement indicates that by 2020 it will be open to all colleges and universities to use as a tool in their admissions process. David Coleman, president of the College Board, [claims](#) that the score “shines a light on students who have demonstrated remarkable resourcefulness to overcome challenges and achieve more with less.” However, the system is receiving [criticism](#) from several quarters, ranging from those who say this now disadvantages hard-working students from wealthy families, to those who say that wealthy families will find a way to hijack the system (i.e., changing their address to reflect a “disadvantaged” environment). Mary Clare Amselem of the Heritage Foundation called it the “next step down the [slippery slope of identity politics](#)” and recommended school choice as the best way to improve educational opportunities for the disadvantaged.

Missouri Passes Pro-Life Law Banning Most Abortions

On the heels of Alabama’s new pro-life law that bans abortions nearly completely, [Missouri Governor Mike Parson signed a bill](#) into law last Friday that would ban abortions after 8 weeks gestation. [HB 126](#), the Missouri Stands for the Unborn Act, classifies abortions performed after 8 weeks as a Class B felony, which can result in 5–15 years in prison. The law’s only exceptions are for medical emergencies that would endanger the life of the mother, thereby protecting babies conceived by rape or incest. The bill also specifically prohibits selective abortions based on race, sex, or a prenatal disorder, an issue that the [Supreme Court recently refused](#) to address in an Indiana abortion case decided this week. While supporters of the Alabama bill and other state bills hope that their strict abortion laws will result in a review of *Roe v. Wade* by the Supreme Court, sponsors of the Missouri bill state a different tactic. Instead of seeking to challenge *Roe v. Wade*, Missouri Rep. Nick Schroer stated, “We just want to save as many lives as we can while withstanding judicial challenges. . . . We want to get as close to the line as possible on what previous judges have thrown out.” As states pass stricter abortion laws, eyes will pivot to the courts and the cases that could challenge and potentially topple *Roe v. Wade*.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Supreme Court Upholds Pro-Life Law Requiring Proper Burial or Cremation for Babies Killed in Abortion](#)

[Supreme Court Rejects High School Restroom Case](#)

[Louisiana Legislature Passes ‘Heartbeat Bill,’ Democratic Governor Says He’ll Sign](#)