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“The purpose of a devout and united people was set forth in the pages of the Bible . . . (1) to live in freedom, (2) to work in a prosperous land . . . and (3) to obey the commandments of God. . . . This Biblical story of the Promised land inspired the founders of America. It continues to inspire us.”

President Dwight D. Eisenhower

What Parents Look for When Choosing a School

A recent study conducted by Ed Choice shows that parents who participate in school choice programs place a high value on the academics and religious and moral instruction offered at their chosen school. The [study](#), titled “Families’ Experiences on the New Frontier of Educational Choice,” surveyed 3,577 parents in Arizona whose children are in a variety of K-12 schools, including charter, private, and public schools. For private school parents, the study also differentiated between those families who participate in a school choice program and those who do not. The state’s school choice programs include a robust charter school program with 556 charter schools serving 16% of the state’s students, and five additional school choice programs, including one education savings account program (ESA) and four different tax credit scholarship programs, which serve over [80,000 students](#) meeting eligibility requirements such as special needs, foster care, or a low-income family. The study focused on factors that influenced parental decisions in choosing a school, the level of involvement of parents in their child’s education, and the level of parental satisfaction with their schools of choice. Not surprisingly, the top factor that parents considered when choosing a school for their children was the academics; but parents of children in private schools, both program participants and non-participants, showed other important factors were values training and moral and religious instruction. (These factors ranked very low for parents of children in charter and traditional public schools.) Parents of students benefiting from the ESA and tax credit scholarship programs were more likely to be involved in their child’s education at home and also involved in community service. When asked about school climate, private school parents were more satisfied than public school parents with the staff, discipline policies, and safety of their school. Authors Andrew D. Catt and Albert Cheng note that because Arizona offers a variety of school choice programs, their report shows that “school choice policies initiated in Arizona serve a wide range of parent preferences and student needs.” They further point out that “any one metric for evaluating schools in a diverse educational system like the one in Arizona is likely to provide an incomplete assessment of what school does for families.” While most studies on school choice programs evaluate the academic success and achievements of the participating students, the authors emphasize that research is needed on the parents’ experience and perception of the choice programs as they are a key component to the success of the educational programs. The findings of this report could be used to inform policy makers as they consider policies to advance and expand educational options in their states.

Washington Supreme Court Rules Against Religious Liberty in Arlene’s Flowers Case

The Washington Supreme Court has [upheld its previous ruling](#) against Barronelle Stutzman for declining to create floral arrangements for a same-sex marriage ceremony. After a lengthy legal battle, the Washington State Supreme Court in 2017 upheld a district court’s ruling against Stutzman and her arguments that the Washington

Law Against Discrimination (WLAD) violated her rights to free exercise of religion, free speech, and free assembly. After the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of Jack Phillips in *Masterpiece Cakeshop*, the Supreme Court vacated and remanded the Washington court's ruling. In revisiting the case, the Washington court [has affirmed](#) its earlier opinion, stating that Stutzman was indeed guilty of discriminating against Ingersoll and Freed, and that her appeal to her Christian faith was not justification to refuse service for a same-sex wedding. The court heavily relied on the "narrow" application of the *Masterpiece* decision, stating that the apparent animus exhibited by state officials against Jack's religious beliefs was not present in Stutzman's case. But Stutzman and her defense, [Alliance Defending Freedom](#), argue that the state of Washington was "openly hostile toward Barronelle's religious beliefs about marriage." They will appeal her case to the Supreme Court, in hopes that the highest court of the land will address the heart of this case and other discrimination cases: whether one's First Amendment freedoms are fundamentally violated by a state's sexual orientation and gender identity nondiscrimination laws.

Trump Administration Cancels Contract for Research Using Aborted Fetal Body Parts

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has allowed its contract involving research using human fetal tissue with the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) to expire. Researchers using human fetal tissue rely heavily on elective abortions, and claim that the research is necessary to find answers for Alzheimer's, autism, Zika virus, and [other diseases](#). Recognizing the value of researching these diseases, the Trump administration announced a commitment to funding alternative models for such research, of which there are many, including adult stem cells extracted from bone marrow, amniotic fluid, umbilical cords, and circulating blood. Those protesting the cancelation of fetal tissue research have also claimed that it is needed for continued studies involving "humanized mice" used in immunology; however, there are other options for this research, including tissue from neonatal surgeries. In most cases, the alternatives to fetal tissue are better resources for the research being conducted. HHS released a [statement](#) saying, "Promoting the dignity of human life from conception to natural death is one of the very top priorities of President Trump's administration." The immediate results are a cessation of all intramural fetal tissue research (conducted by government entities). Extramural research (conducted by non-government researchers through a grant) will be allowed to continue to the end of their grants. Once their grants have expired, private researchers will need to go before an ethics review [board](#), which will include a theologian, to receive continued funding.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Department of Justice Files Statement of Interest in Maine First Amendment Case](#)

[Colorado Christian Baker Sued a Third Time for Discrimination](#)

[Texas Governor Signs Controversial "Save Chik-fil-a" Bill Into Law](#)