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*“General diffusion of Christian knowledge hath a natural tendency to correct the morals of men, restrain their vices, and preserve the peace of society.”*

*Patrick Henry*

**AACS Hosts the Youth Legislative Training Conference in Washington, D.C.**

Last week, AACS hosted its annual Youth Legislative Training Conference (YLTC), giving 41 high school students from 18 different states the opportunity to experience the political workings of Washington, D.C., from a biblical perspective. The YLTC is a week-long conference where the attendees participate in a mock senate, spend a day on Capitol Hill meeting with members of Congress, hear from conservative leaders, and tour several historical sites in our nation’s capital. In the mock senate, each of the participants roleplayed a current senator, engaging in caucus meetings and committee meetings where participants drafted legislation on domestic and foreign policy issues. At the end of the week, the students debated and voted on the bills they created. The mock senate provided the students with some first-hand experience of the senate’s legislative process. The conference also gave the teens the opportunity to hear from a range of wonderful speakers, including several [Leadership Institute](#) (LI) speakers, such as Hannah-Catherine Smith, who serves as LI’s Communications Training and Studios Coordinator, Ben Woodard, who is LI’s Deputy Director of Career Programs, and Autumn Campbell, who works as LI’s International Program Coordinator. Other speakers included Timothy Goeglein, the Vice President for External Relations at Focus on the Family, and Representative Russ Fulcher (ID), who encouraged the students to consider serving the Lord through public service. During the “Day on the Hill,” the teens attended a congressional briefing, where they heard from Representative Mark Walker (NC), Representative Virginia Foxx (NC), Senator Mike Lee (UT), and Jim Neill, the Policy Advisor for Senate Republican Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. That day also allowed the teens to meet with several of their senators and representatives individually. A highlight of the week was a panel of [Hill staffers](#) who were either YLTC alumni or AACS interns who pointed to the YLTC as the event the Lord used to direct them into their current career in the political world. Throughout the week, the students enjoyed a tour of the National Archives, a sunset monuments tour, and an after-hours tour of the Capitol led by Representative Barry Loudermilk (GA). The week culminated with a visit to Arlington National Cemetery where four of the students who excelled throughout the week represented AACS in laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The amazing week held many unique experiences, designed to give the students a greater understanding of our government and an appreciation of the freedoms we enjoy. We pray that God will use the lessons from this week to influence and guide their lives. The AACS is grateful to the many people who contributed to the program, providing financial support for student scholarships. We also extend our appreciation to our corporate sponsor, [WORLD News Group](#), a news organization seeking to produce daily coverage of current events from a biblical worldview. For pictures of the week, please visit our [facebook page](#).

## **U.S. Supreme Court Agrees to Review Tax Credit Case**

The U.S. Supreme Court has [agreed to review](#) the case, *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, which involves the constitutionality of a tax credit scholarship program in Montana. After the Montana program was created in 2015, the state's Department of Revenue excluded religious schools as educational options for parents, claiming that religious schools are not "qualified education providers." Parents challenged the rule, and District Judge Heidi Ulbricht ruled that religious schools could indeed participate in the tax credit program since no public funds are actually given to the schools. However, after an appeal, the state Supreme Court ruled that the program violated the state constitution's Blaine Amendment, an outdated law originally established to curb public funding of Catholic schools. The Montana families appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing that Montana denied them their First Amendment rights by excluding religious schools as an option. Last spring, the [AACS joined an amicus brief](#) petitioning the Supreme Court to hear the case, pointing out that the state's decision also directly violates the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Trinity Lutheran v. Comer*, which ruled that denying a religious group participation in a generally available public program violates the First Amendment. School choice advocates believe that a favorable ruling in this case could open the doors to school choice.

## **Research Shows Differing Views of Religious Freedom**

A [new study](#) by the Barna Group called "Faith Leadership in a Divided Culture" shows how Americans' views of religious liberty and the role it should play in public life are changing in today's culture. Eighty-two percent of Christian and non-Christian clergy agreed with a definition of religious liberty as "freedom to practice religion without interference from government." Past that, opinions shifted as the general population and clergy both saw a declining belief in the purpose of religious liberty. From 2012 to 2017, the percentage of Americans who strongly believed that religious liberty is freedom of conscience to practice one's faith fell from 69% to 55%, and among Christians that belief fell from 78% to 62%. The downward trend continued when considering the state of religious liberty in America, with 43% of people believing religious liberty is worse today than it was 10 years ago, compared to 33% who believed that in 2012. Despite these changes, Protestant pastors are surprisingly less concerned today about the future of religious liberty (34%) than they were in 2014 (55%). According to Roxanne Stone, Barna editor-in-chief, the study shows that while "religion is not a shared value in America the way it once was," this offers insights for people of faith. Stone exhorts, "If we can make the case for religious liberty as a positive social value for all people, then we are on the right track."

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

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

[Trump Admin Puts into Action New Rule Cutting \\$60 Million from Planned Parenthood](#)

[Ryan Anderson: 4 Years On, 'Marriage Equality' Slogan Still Doesn't Add Up](#)

[New Research Shows Strong Support from Military for School Choice](#)