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*“While we are zealously performing the duties of good Citizens and soldiers we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of Religion—To the distinguished Character of Patriot, it should be our highest Glory to add the more distinguished Character of Christian.”*

***George Washington***

**Efforts on the Federal Level to Address School Safety**

In response to the recent shootings in El Paso, TX, and Dayton, OH, Senator Lamar Alexander (TN) has sent [a letter](#) to members of the Senate HELP Committee, asking them for their input on ways Congress can help strengthen school safety and also help individuals with mental health problems. While the shootings did not occur in a school, reports indicate that the Dayton shooter showed [concerning signs](#) while in high school, prompting Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY) to ask Senator Alexander, Chairman of the HELP Committee, for proposals to address school safety and mental health issues. In his letter to the committee, Senator Alexander [noted](#) that he has asked “committee staff to evaluate existing mental health and school safety programs, including current appropriated funding levels for these programs, and to examine bills that have been introduced within the Committee’s jurisdiction so we may begin to look for bipartisan proposals to provide possible solutions to this crisis.” In a [statement](#) following the shootings, Senator Alexander noted the work in the last few years that Congress has done to address the crisis of mass shootings, including laws which address background checks and mental health care. Referencing the legislation he has sponsored, which would provide more funding to schools to address violence and to provide intervention for mental health issues, he stated, “I am ready to do more, especially on background checks, to identify those who shouldn’t have guns.” The Democrat Ranking Member of the HELP Committee, Senator Patty Murray (WA), [has asserted](#) that the problem lies not in mental health issues but in the firearms themselves and has called on Senator Mitch McConnell to bring to the Senate floor HR 8, a bill that passed the House of Representatives last year and would drastically increase the scope of background checks on gun purchases. The U.S. Department of Education is also working to address school safety with an [announcement](#) in June regarding three different grant opportunities for schools and colleges aimed at providing support and resources to strengthen school safety, prevent violence, and assist with mental health issues. These grants follow the recommendation offered in the [final report](#) released by the Federal Commission on School Safety (FCSS) last year. The FCSS was appointed by President Trump after the 2018 school shooting in Parkland, FL, and their final report offers a [host of recommendations for ensuring safe schools](#) based on input from law enforcement, school safety personnel, educational experts, counselors, and concerned citizens.

**Kentucky Bans Abortions After Heartbeat Is Detected**

Despite opposition, Kentucky continues to pursue a culture of life by recently [passing a bill that would outlaw abortions](#) once a baby’s heartbeat has been detected. Governor Matt Bevin signed a total of four pro-life bills into law, two of which have already been halted by [lawsuits](#) from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

The two bills, SB 9 and HB 5, would ban abortions after a baby’s heartbeat has been detected at about 6 weeks gestation and would prohibit abortions based on a baby’s sex, race, or disability. The other two bills which have not yet been challenged are SB 50, which require abortionists to disclose to their patients that the effects of abortion pills are reversible, and HB 148, which would automatically give pre-born babies full rights if *Roe v. Wade* is ever overruled. At the ceremonial signing, Governor Bevin asserted, “Government doesn’t give (life) to us, and government doesn’t have the right to take it away.” He further stated, “The issue, frankly, isn’t about faith. It’s about science, medicine, morality. It’s about who among us can justify taking an innocent life?” The immediate pushback from the ACLU upon passage of the bills is heightened by the impending governor’s race in Kentucky between Governor Bevin and state attorney general Andy Beshear, a pro-choice Democrat. [Beshear previously refused to defend](#) Kentucky’s Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, stating that he believed the law was “clearly unconstitutional.”

### **Majority of Americans Support Religious Study in Schools**

This year’s Phi Delta Kappa poll, measuring Americans’ attitudes toward public schools, shows that a [majority of Americans support](#) elective religious study and civics education in public schools. According to the [poll](#), 64% of adults thought that Bible studies should be offered as an elective for children grades 9 and above. Support differed among racial, ideological, and religious groups. Overwhelmingly supportive of offering Bible classes were evangelical Christians at 82%, Republicans at 78%, and conservatives at 76%. Also supportive were black Democrats and moderates, both at 67%, and independents at 59%. The least supportive groups were white Democrats at 45%, and urban Americans were less supportive generally than rural Americans. Even more Americans support a broader comparative religion class, with 76% of parents and 87% of teachers supporting. However, 38% of people were concerned that offering Bible courses even as an elective could improperly promote Judeo-Christian beliefs in the classroom. While Evangelicals were among the least concerned about improperly promoting beliefs, they were most concerned about the potential that comparative religious courses had to change students’ beliefs. Although Phi Delta Kappa has gauged American opinion on public education since 1969, this was the first year the survey asked about religious classes. The Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation has published a [sample Bible Literacy Act](#) in its 2018–19 report on religious freedom legislation in the states.

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

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

[Abortion Is the Dismembering of a Living Child, Supreme Court Justice Says](#)

[Students Brushed Aside as Christian School Cut from Voucher Program](#)

[New Report: School Choice and Crime: Evidence from Milwaukee](#)