



A Publication of the American Association of Christian Schools

The Washington Flyer
August 23, 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

Reports Show Common Core State Standards Yield Dismal Results

Almost a decade after the Common Core Standards were adopted by all states except four, reports are emerging which show that they may not be yielding the promised results of improving academics and the quality of education. The controversial standards were first established and quickly adopted by 46 states in 2010 after the Obama administration included a requirement in the Race to the Top competition that states have college-and-career-ready standards. The adoption of the standards then necessitated that participating states join one of two testing consortium that created Common Core aligned assessments. While supporters of the standards claimed they were rigorous and necessary in order to improve K-12 education, many educational experts and conservative organizations voiced concerns over the establishment of a national standard. Recent reports show that not only have the standards not provided the anticipated improvement but, in some cases, have actually had a negative impact on student achievement. One [report](#), conducted by a federally funded research organization, showed that 4th grade reading and 8th grade math scores had declined in states that had adopted the standards. One researcher, Mengli Song at the American Institutes for Research, noted that the “magnitude of the negative effects tend to increase over time,” adding, “that’s a little troubling.” Another [article](#) looks specifically at California’s education system, noting that California had made significant improvement in its educational rankings prior to adoption of the Common Core, but this was reversed once the state implemented the new standards. According to Bill Evers, a former commissioner of the California State Academic Standards Commission, “Over 15 years, we brought up California to getting two-thirds of the kids to be in Algebra 1 in the 8th grade.” He then explained that the “Common Core, instead of having Algebra 1 in 8th grade, has it in 9th grade, so they washed out all these gains. This is something that became obvious in the early years after Common Core.” Perhaps the most telling marker of the problems with the Common Core is the number of [states which have withdrawn](#) from the standards and corresponding assessments. Approximately one-fourth of the states which originally adopted the standards have introduced legislation to repeal the standards, and [almost half have made changes](#) to the standards. The number of states in one assessment consortia—Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career—is down from 20 participating states to less than four. Several reasons have been offered for the dissatisfaction with the Common Core, including the class time needed to teach and administer the test, the slow return of the scores, and the funding needed to administer the tests. Sandra Stotsky, an education expert who was appointed to the Common Core’s Validation Committee but did not give her approval, has offered [further concerns](#) with the standards themselves, citing flaws in the content and also pointing out that the nation’s top accrediting agency for education professionals now requires training for Common Core.

She charges this creates a problem not only because of the “deficiencies of Common Core” but also because one national standard will limit the training and opportunities for teachers.

Department of Labor Makes Rule in Favor of Religious Liberty

Last Thursday, the Department of Labor (DOL) published a [proposed rule](#) to strengthen the religious liberty rights of federal contractors. The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) is an agency within the DOL that enforces federal law and executive orders on federal contractors, prohibiting them from discriminating on the basis of civil rights, including race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, or veteran status. After hearing feedback from religious organizations voicing their concern that contracting with the federal government would tie those organizations’ hands in employment decisions, the OFCCP developed this rule to [clarify the civil rights of religious contractors](#). Supported by recent executive orders and Supreme Court decisions in *Masterpiece Cakeshop*, *Trinity Lutheran*, and *Hobby Lobby*, the rule reiterates that religious organizations are within their rights to hire or fire employees consistent with sincerely held religious beliefs of the organizations. The rule also emphasizes that religious contractors must still follow civil rights law as it applies to other protected classes of people. According to Acting Secretary of Labor Patrick Pizzella, “As people of faith with deeply held religious beliefs are making decisions on whether to participate in federal contracting, they deserve clear understanding of their obligations and protections under the law.” The DOL has already received [backlash](#) from groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union, that argue that the rule discriminates against LGBTQ individuals. A public comments period is open until September 16.

Planned Parenthood Officially Withdraws from Title X Program

In response to the Trump administration’s tightening of abortion rights, [Planned Parenthood recently announced](#) it would no longer participate in the Title X family planning program. What [Planned Parenthood Acting President and CEO Alexis McGill Johnson](#) called “an unethical and dangerous gag rule” are the new regulations finalized this past spring that declare that no Title X funds “shall be used in programs where abortion is a method of family planning.” The rule also eliminated a requirement that Title X participants must refer for abortions and mandated that participants in Title X programs completely separate their Title X activities from other abortion-related activities. The rule would have forced Planned Parenthood to operate all its Title X-funded activities in a different physical location from all other activities, thereby imposing a burden on the country’s single largest abortion provider. After the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals [ruled](#) last week to allow the referral rule to go into effect, Planned Parenthood decided it would rather give up \$60 million per year in taxpayer-funded Title X money in order to keep referring for and performing abortions without new government restrictions. Although the \$60 million in taxpayer money accounts only for 10% of the money Planned Parenthood raises on a yearly basis, that money can now be distributed to the many women’s health centers that exist to provide resources and care to women and their babies.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[America Moved on from Its Gay Rights Moment, and Left a Legal Mess Behind](#)

[Judge Can't Favor LGBT Student Groups with Funds](#)

['Bible Tax' No More: Trump Exempts Religious Items from China Tariff Tax](#)