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*“Not only does the Bible inculcate, with sanctions of the highest import, a system of the purest morality, but in the person and character of our Blessed Saviour it exhibits a tangible illustration of that system.”*  
**Benjamin Franklin Butler, U.S. Attorney General, 1833–1838**

**AACS Hosts National Legislative Conference**

Last week, the AACCS hosted the annual National Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Over one hundred pastors, school administrators, state leaders, students, and teachers whose ministries are a part of AACCS came together for a time of spiritual encouragement, legislative updates, and congressional visits. During the services, Dr. David McCoy offered messages which challenged and encouraged the attendees in their pastoral and administrative ministries. The conference included an informative legislative briefing where attendees were updated on current important legislative issues relative to AACCS ministries by members of our D.C. legislative office staff—Jamison Coppola and Maureen Van Den Berg. This year, the briefing highlighted the school choice proposal being advanced by the Trump administration, the [Education Freedom Scholarships and Opportunities Act](#), which would establish a [school choice program](#) by offering a federal tax credit for donations made to state-approved scholarship granting organizations. The briefing also informed attendees of the [dangers](#) that the Equality Act would present to the freedoms that allow religious organizations and individuals to exercise their sincerely held religious beliefs. Conference attendees then had the opportunity to meet with their Representatives and Senators and discuss the importance of these issues to their Christian schools and ministries. A special White House briefing, designed just for the AACCS conference, featured senior administration officials who spoke about the work that the Trump administration is doing on behalf of religious liberty and educational freedom. Each speaker reiterated the commitment of the administration to advance educational freedom while protecting the autonomy of faith-based schools and organizations. Conference attendees also had the opportunity to attend a Congressional briefing, also organized specifically for the AACCS, and hear from Senators Ted Cruz (TX) and Josh Hawley (MO) and Representatives Vicky Hartzler (MO) and Barry Loudermilk (GA). A highlight of the conference was the banquet that featured Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos as the keynote speaker. During her remarks, she emphasized her commitment to advance school choice as the means to improve educational options for all students across America. She also expressed her gratitude and admiration for the work of Christian schools and her support of the religious freedom that allows them to meet the needs of so many children. The AACCS was pleased to present her the American Freedom Award for her work to advance educational freedom and protect the freedoms of private and faith-based schools. Following the banquet, attendees had the opportunity to take an after-hours tour of the U.S. Capitol, led by Hill staffer Luke Ball, who credits his attendance at the AACCS Youth Legislative Training Conference as the event the Lord used to direct him to a career in the political world. We are grateful for the Lord’s blessing on a [great conference](#), and we pray that the information gained and contacts made will protect and advance religious liberty and Christian education.



### **AACS Submits Public Comments Regarding Religious Liberty Rule**

This week, the AACS submitted public comments regarding a [proposed regulation](#) published by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) that would clarify and strengthen the religious liberty rights of federal contractors. Under the Obama administration, changes were implemented to the requirements for federal contractors that prohibited discrimination against sexual orientation and gender identity in employment decisions, thus restricting the freedoms of religious contractors to staff their organizations according to their religious beliefs. Supported by recent executive orders and Supreme Court decisions in *Masterpiece Cakeshop*, *Trinity Lutheran*, and *Hobby Lobby*, the proposed rule reiterates that religious organizations are within their rights to hire or fire employees consistent with sincerely held religious beliefs of the organizations. In the submitted public comments, the AACS supported the proposed rule, recognizing that “this strong protection of religious staffing sets an important positive precedent for how the federal government should protect religious staffing in all forms of federal funding.” The AACS also noted that this clarification “will not only strengthen the legal freedoms of religious organizations and institutions but also will serve to enable the expansion of the critical services they provide to help those in need, and thus strengthen American society.”

### **NCES Releases Report with Characteristics of Public and Private Schools**

In August, the National Center for Education Statistics ([NCES](#)) released a “first look” of the findings in its [2017–2018 National Teacher and Principal Survey](#) (NTPS) of public and private K-12 schools across the country. The NCES survey is used to better understand the conditions of private and public education in the United States. Over 10,000 traditional public and charter schools and 4,000 religious and nonreligious private schools were sampled. According to the first look, 96% of public schools participated in the federal free or reduced-price lunch program, compared to only 19% of private schools. Outside of normal school hours, private schools were less likely to offer academic assistance (37%) or enrichment (31%) than public schools (57% and 39%, respectively), but charter schools offered these services at higher rates than either (65% and 50%). Slightly higher percentages of public schools identified as “regular schools” (88%) or alternative types of schools (6%), compared to private schools (79% and 1%), while an equal percentage of public and private schools reported having a “special program emphasis” (4%). Interestingly, a higher percentage of private schools (7%) identified as special education schools, compared to 1% of public schools. The report also examined the time allotment per subject and the start and end times for a school day in public and private schools. The study and its findings are important to education observers and researchers; however, in many years, not enough conservative evangelical schools participate in the survey for analysts to make statistically significant determinations about this aspect of our country’s educational system.

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

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

[Court: First Amendment Trumps Anti-Discrimination Ordinance](#)

[Students at This College Decide to Join Reagan’s Informed Patriots](#)

[Dem Debate: No Mention of Religious Liberty, Abortion](#)