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*“In consideration of the many undeserved Blessings conferred upon us by GOD, the Father of all Mercies; it becomes us not only in our private and usual devotion, to express our obligations to Him, as well as our dependence upon Him; but also specially to set a part a Day to be employed for this great and important Purpose.”*

*John Hancock, Thanksgiving Proclamation, October 5, 1791*

**AACS Legislative Staff Participates in Radio Interview Discussing Political Trends, Religious Liberty**

AACS Legislative Director Jamison Coppola and AACS Policy Analyst Maureen Van Den Berg recently participated in a radio [interview](#) in which they discussed current political trends and issues facing Christian education. The radio program, [Stand in the Gap](#), is a ministry of the American Pastors Network (APN), a national organization which seeks to provide resources to equip and support pastors as they minister in today’s culture. Hosted by Dr. Keith Wiebe, APN vice president for state chapters and previous AACS president, and the Honorable Sam Rohrer, APN’s founder and president, the interview began with a discussion of how a biblical worldview should shape the philosophy and position of Christians regarding current political issues. Mrs. Van Den Berg offered a definition of a biblical worldview as simply “viewing the world and our culture through the lens of Scripture,” and Mr. Coppola emphasized the importance of Christian education in equipping students to internalize a biblical worldview that allows them to be a witness in the world. The interview then turned to the specific issues that are monitored by the AACS Legislative Office, and both participants noted the current attacks on religious liberty. Mr. Coppola explained that religious liberty is important because “it prevents the government from forcing people that often hold minority opinions or minority practices from being dominated by the majority.” Dr. Wiebe also noted that in standing up for religious liberty, people of faith are not “calling for some kind of a special pleading; religious liberty is liberty of conscience [and] applies to everyone.” One question specifically addressed the case currently before the Supreme Court in which the Court will determine whether the word *sex* in federal civil rights law should be redefined to include gender identity and sexual orientation, and Mr. Coppola offered an analysis of the ramifications that ruling will have for religious liberty. Mr. Coppola also pointed out that the Court seems to be shifting from an “establishment mode” which is focused on preventing a government-established religion, to a “free exercise mode” which recognizes that the government cannot prohibit the free exercise of religion. Both Mr. Coppola and Mrs. Van Den Berg praised the leadership in the Trump administration for their stand to protect religious liberty, noting specific actions by the White House and several federal agencies to ensure that the federal government is honoring the religious liberty protections enshrined in the Constitution and federal law. Mr. Coppola also had the opportunity to discuss the impeachment process that, even if not successful in removing the president from office, might just be designed to harm the him. Additionally, Mrs. Van Den Berg discussed the positive movement of school choice programs, while also mentioning the importance of protecting participating schools’ autonomy in order not only to protect the religious liberty of faith-based schools but also to provide the most options to parents. The entire interview can be heard [here](#).

## **New Poll Finds Most Americans See Religion as Force for Good**

A [new survey](#) conducted by the Pew Research Center shows that although most Americans have a positive view of religion, younger generations are [less likely](#) to hold that view. The survey asked over 6,000 adults several questions pertaining to the strength and pervasiveness of religion in modern American life, showing that a slim majority of Americans thinks that religion does more good than harm (55%) and strengthens morality in society (53%). A larger majority of Americans believe that religion is losing its influence in American life (78%). Results differ according to religious belief when determining whether the loss of influence is a bad, good, or neutral thing. Most Evangelical Christians say the loss of influence is a bad thing (68%), compared to Catholic (52%), Jewish (35%), and Agnostic Americans (14%). Older Americans age 50 and above are also more likely to see the loss of influence as a bad thing (52%) compared to younger Americans (34%). The survey found that most Americans prefer that houses of worship keep out of political matters, but a majority of Evangelicals stated that churches should express their views on day-to-day social and political questions (55%). Comparing political parties, only 54% of Republicans prefer that churches keep out of politics compared to 70% of Democrats. The survey found no consensus on religion's current level of influence on politics, with a nearly even split of Americans saying religion has too much (37%), not enough (28%), or the right amount (34%) of influence.

## **EdChoice Releases 2019 Schooling in America Survey**

The new 2019 Schooling in America Survey by EdChoice offers valuable insight into public opinion on a host of education issues. This is the seventh annual survey covering a range of K–12 issues, from educational choice options and parent satisfaction to teacher experiences. In the realm of parent experiences, the survey found that parents of private school children have the highest level of satisfaction (79%) in their school. Parents also indicated that their preference for education does not always match reality; although 80% of students attend public schools, 42% of current school parents said they would choose a private school if they could. Expanding on educational preferences, the survey also asked what people thought of educational choice options. Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) saw the highest level of support, with support increasing 31% to 77% when people were given descriptions of how ESAs work. A majority of those polled (74%) preferred that ESAs be universally available as opposed to availability only to low-income families. Given descriptions of how each option works, a majority of those polled also supported school vouchers (63%), tax-credit scholarships (68%), and public charter schools (64%). Interestingly, tax-credit scholarships enjoyed an almost equal level of favorability from current public school teachers (67%), and saw its highest level of favorability ever from current school parents (75%). To learn more about these helpful findings on education choice, parent satisfaction, and much more, view the 2019 Schooling in America survey [here](#).

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

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

[The Truth About the Foster Care Crisis and Faith-Based Agencies](#)

[Undercover Pro-life Activists Punished for Exposing Planned Parenthood](#)

[Survey: Gen Z Divided on First Amendment and Free Expression](#)

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