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“Liberty must at all hazards be supported. We have a right to it, derived from our Maker. But if we had not, our fathers have earned and bought it for us, at the expense of their ease, their estates, their pleasure, and their blood.”

John Adams

AACS Resource Page for Schools on Coronavirus

The news of the spread of the Coronavirus continues to dominate the headlines in our country and around the world. During situations like this, it is of utmost importance to get information from reliable sources to prevent the spread of misinformation in the school community. It is also important that we continue to develop our response plans in the event that the virus spreads to our local communities. With that in mind, the AACS National Office has developed a [resource page](#) for member schools to use as a reference while thinking through their response to the Coronavirus. The links provided on the resource page will provide a good starting point for school leaders seeking to be prepared and respond in an appropriate and healthy manner. Our trust is in the Lord, and we ought not live in fear, but we must exercise wisdom as we seek to lead our school families through the constant barrage of headlines related to the Coronavirus. To access the resource page, click [here](#).

“Lemon is Dead”: Court Ruling Deemed a Victory for Religious Liberty

The 11th Circuit Court decided in favor of religious liberty when ruling that the [Bayview cross](#), a monument erected before World War II in Pensacola, FL, [does not violate the Constitution](#) and, therefore, does not need to be taken down. The court’s decision comes after reconsideration of its previous ruling against the cross, a decision which the three-judge panel indicated was based on precedent. Notably, two of the three judges wrote that they believed the precedent was “wrong” and needed to be “reversed.” The case, *Kondrat’yev, et al v. City of Pensacola*, was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which then sent the case back to the lower court for reconsideration after its 2019 decision regarding a cross monument in [Bladensburg, MD](#). In that case, the Supreme Court ruled that “destroying or defacing the [Bladensburg] Cross . . . would not further the ideals of respect and tolerance embodied in the First Amendment.” Following this new precedent, the 11th Circuit issued a new ruling and declared “Lemon is dead,” referring to the “[Lemon test](#)” often used in deciding cases related to the establishment clause in the First Amendment. The Lemon test dates back to the 1971 U.S. Supreme Court case *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, which involved government aid to religious schools. In the *Lemon* ruling, the High Court essentially established a test to determine whether a program violated the establishment clause in the First Amendment. Luke Goodrich, religious liberty attorney for the Becket Fund, [recently described](#) the Lemon test as “extremely subjective” because it gave courts “license to reach almost any result they pleased in establishment clause cases and often took on a very anti-religion cast.” The end of the Lemon test signals a shift in court precedent from a focus on whether a case “establishes” a government religion, to whether it inhibits the free exercise of religion. Many conservative pundits believe this is a more accurate interpretation of the Constitution and provides for a more free society as intended by the Founding Fathers.

American Federation for Children Releases New School Choice Polling

The [American Federation for Children](#) (AFC) recently released its [2020 polling results](#), which show interesting developments in school choice in America. Among the top findings, AFC and Beck Research found that 69% of likely 2020 general election voters support school choice. That number encapsulates Americans across the ideological and demographic spectrum, with 82% of Republicans, 48% of Democrats, 68% of African Americans, 82% of Latinos, and 71% of Millennials supporting the concept of school choice. The poll also found that 78% of likely voters support [Education Freedom Scholarships](#) (EFS), the proposed federal tax credit scholarship program, which has increased 9% in voter support since 2019. Among those supporting the proposed EFS, 83% of African American and Latinos and strong margins of Republicans, Democrats, Millennials, rural, and suburban voters show the universal appeal of education freedom. The survey also examined which schools parents prefer and found that although 82% of children currently attend public schools, only 47% of parents said they would choose to put their child in a public school; 50% of parents would rather choose a non-public option, with 41% of them favoring private school. Important for the upcoming election, 58% of likely voters, including a majority of Democrats, are less likely to support a presidential candidate who does not support charter school funding. The 2020 polling results show that after six years of testing Americans' attitudes toward school choice, education freedom continues to be a unifying issue for voters.

Secretary of Education DeVos Addresses School Choice and Religious Liberty

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos last week spoke about school choice and religious liberty when she spoke to the crowd at CPAC and also when testifying before a House appropriations subcommittee. While speaking at CPAC, the Secretary [championed the benefits](#) of school choice and noted that 78% of Americans support the idea of a tax credit scholarship program as put forth in the Education Freedom Scholarship (EFS) proposal. Additionally, she discussed the efforts of the President and Department of Education to ensure that religious liberty is protected so that “students have the opportunity to express their faith as protected under the First Amendment.” When [speaking](#) to the House appropriations subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, Secretary DeVos emphasized the importance of local control over education when discussing the proposed education budget for 2021. Of particular note were questions from Democrat Representatives Katherine Clark (MA) and Lois Frankel (FL) regarding whether the proposed “voucher program” required participating private schools to have a “non-discrimination” policy. The Secretary explained that the proposed EFS program is not a voucher program, but rather a tax credit scholarship program which is not funded by government dollars, and, therefore, does not dictate the policies of participating schools. Rep. Andy Harris (MD) further responded to the issue by pointing out that “the idea of having some tax preference for someone who has a religious bent is not a new concept.”

In Case You Missed It:

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

[AACCS Legislative Staff in Radio Interview Discussing Religious Liberty](#)

[Christian Ministries Vital to Indianapolis Resurgence](#)

[Trump Administration's Accomplishments on Life, Family, and Religious Liberty](#)