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“Our contest is not only whether we ourselves shall be free, but whether there shall be left to mankind an asylum on earth for civil and religious liberty.”

Samuel Adams

Department of Education Announces Emergency Educational Funding for Governors

The Department of Education has announced that close to \$3 billion will soon be available to governors through the Governors Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, one of the programs appropriated by the CARES Act to aid in the educational costs incurred in the adjustments that have been made to combat the coronavirus. As described by the Department of Education, the GEER Fund “is an extraordinarily flexible ‘emergency block grant’ designed to enable governors to decide how best to meet the needs of students, schools (including charter schools and non-public schools), postsecondary institutions, and other education-related organizations.” Secretary DeVos has emphasized the flexibility that governors have in using the discretionary funds for the specific educational needs in their states: “Governors have the opportunity to truly rethink and transform the approach to education during this national emergency and ensure learning continues. At a time when so many school boards and superintendents have shut down learning for the balance of the school year, I want to encourage each and every governor to focus on continuity of education for all students.” Notably, the language of the CARES Act specifies that private schools are eligible to receive equitable services through the provisions, with assurance that the autonomy of private schools would remain protected just as it is when participating in equitable services under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Private schools currently serve approximately [5.7 million students](#) nationwide, and many of these schools have [adapted quickly](#) to continue providing education through distance learning. AACCS legislative director Jamison Coppola and legislative assistant Hannah DeBruler recently [noted in an article](#) that “Christian schools have responded with tenacity, flexibility, and a great amount of faith” in transitioning to distance learning. Yet, all private and faith-based schools rely on private funding, and the economic crisis puts them at risk for closure. This would not only hurt the educational options which are helping so many students and families, but it would also put a great strain on public schools as they would absorb these students. A calculation which multiplies the [number of private school students in a state](#) by the [cost per pupil for public school students](#) in that state reveals the significant fiscal impact that would be placed on public schools in a state if private schools were forced to close.* Private school advocates are suggesting, that in their efforts to stabilize education in their states, governors should not only support private schools and equitable services but should also provide aid to scholarship granting organizations or any non-profit organization which then delivers assistance to students attending private schools. This could help absolve any concerns that private schools are recipients of federal funds while also providing assistance that helps all students. The AACCS has provided a [summary](#) of the educational services for private schools available through the CARES Act.

* For specific information on these numbers in a specific state, contact the AACCS Legislative Office at info@aaccs.org.

Virginia Governor Signs Equality Bill Into Law That Targets Religious Freedom

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam has [signed into law](#) the Virginia Values Act ([S. 868](#)), a bill which provides a private cause of action for sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination in public accommodations and employment. The new law defines “public accommodation” in such a way that [includes](#) Christian schools, churches, nonprofit organizations, and small businesses, inevitably opening the door for an abundance of [litigation](#). Dan Zacharias, executive director of the Old Dominion Association of Church Schools, expressed grave concern, stating, “This radical bill creates an urgent threat to the religious freedoms of Virginia’s citizens, churches, and church ministries. By making churches places of public accommodation, it dismantles their Free Exercise rights in such matters as church membership, church discipline, hiring, firing, facility use, and school enrollment. Furthermore, the civil actions provisions of the bill, which allow for unlimited compensatory damages, make it possible for a plaintiff to bankrupt a ministry or business in the course of a single lawsuit.” The Family Foundation [pointed out](#) that, despite numerous communications regarding the far-reaching effects of the bill, some [lawmakers indicated](#) that, indeed, the intent of the bill was to ensure that religious groups were forced to comply. However, referencing [Genesis 50:20](#), the Family Foundation also recognized that with the “inevitable storm these laws have set into motion, . . . it is in times like these that our God does some of His most incredible work in our midst.”

Congressmen Sign Letter Supporting Ban on Fetal Tissue Research

The urgent need to develop a COVID-19 vaccine has caused some groups to criticize the President’s stance against using fetal body parts in medical research. In June 2019, President Trump ended the practice of aborted baby body parts being used in internal federal research. [Opponents](#) of that decision are now arguing that the ban will prevent a coronavirus vaccine from being developed and will result in Americans losing their lives needlessly. Rep. Doug Lamborn (CO) led a [letter](#) signed by over 120 members of Congress that was sent to President Trump last week to bolster his pro-life position and show that fetal tissue obtained from elective abortions is never used to make vaccines. Further, the letter explains that procedures using fetal tissue have had numerous harmful effects on patients. The [Charlotte Lozier Institute](#) has found that fetal tissue transplantation, vaccine development, and basic biology research all have shown harmful effects on human patients and little gains in medical advancements. The unpredictable nature of fetal tissue, along with the ethical question of harvesting baby body parts for science, has led many pro-life supporters and doctors to condemn its use in medical research. As the letter states, “There is no urgent, scientific need for aborted fetal tissue. These attempts to exploit the serious crisis our nation faces [undermine the promising research](#) already underway. . . . Holding the line ethically gives us the ability to put resources toward better, more promising science that is already showing potential against the COVID-19 coronavirus.”

In Case You Missed It:

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

[You Can't Baptize on Zoom](#)

[Proposals to Ban Homeschooling Are an Attack on Pluralism](#)

[AACCS Resource Page to Help Christian Schools Responding to COVID Crisis](#)