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“Numerous have been the manifestations of God’s providence in sustaining us. In the gloomy period of adversity, we have had ‘our cloud by day and pillar of fire by night.’ We have been reduced to distress, and the arm of Omnipotence has raised us up.”

Samuel Adams

Secretary of Education Urges States to Rethink Education with Emergency Funds

U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos is urging states to transform their approach to education as she announced the availability of funds to help states meet educational needs while also making adjustments to combat the coronavirus. The funds were appropriated through the Education Stabilization Fund, the program established by the CARES Act to provide different avenues for educational funding to be distributed to states. The largest funding avenue for K–12 schools, the [Elementary and Secondary School Education Relief Fund](#) (ESSER Fund) provides \$13.2 billion for states to use for costs related to distance learning, students’ health and safety, and planning for school next year. The funds will be distributed to state educational agencies (SEAs) which in turn must use 90% of the funds for schools’ needs, and only 10% for needs of the SEA; any unused funds are to be returned after one year. Secretary DeVos noted the opportunity these funds provide for states to “truly rethink education and to get creative about how we meet each student’s unique needs.” She noted that the funding “has very few bureaucratic strings attached and empowers local education leaders” to find new ways to meet the educational and individual needs of students. The money from the ESSER Fund can be put towards twelve uses, including services and activities for special needs students under IDEA, the purchase of education technology to aid in distance learning, supplies to sanitize and clean facilities, and other activities that are necessary to maintain the continuity of services. Notably, the CARES Act requires the ESSER Fund to provide equitable services to nonpublic schools in the same manner that equitable services are provided under the Every Student Succeeds Act. As such, any private school wishing to participate and receive services will maintain its autonomy. The AACCS has provided a [summary](#) of the educational services for private schools available through the CARES Act.

The Secretary also announced an additional \$300 million, also from the Education Stabilization Fund, that is available to states through [two grant competitions](#), and she again encouraged states to “rethink education to better match the realities of the 21st century.” The Rethink K-12 Education Models Grant program (\$180 million) encourages states to create innovative ways for students to access K–12 education, including microgrants for families to have the necessary access to technology for their educational needs, new ways to provide distance learning for every child, and ensuring virtual access to a wide range of courses and programs. The second grant, the Reimagining Workforce Preparation Grant (\$127.5 million), is “designed to expand short-term postsecondary programs and work-based learning programs” in order to help small businesses open up and provide work for more Americans. In announcing the grant competitions, Secretary DeVos noted, “This is the time for local education leaders to unleash their creativity and ingenuity, and I’m looking forward to seeing what they do to provide education freedom and economic opportunity for America’s students.”

U.S. Attorney General Issues Memo Warning States Not to Violate Constitution

U.S. Attorney General Bill Barr released a [memo](#) this week warning states against “overbearing infringement of constitutional and statutory” rights. The memo comes as many states are accused of enforcing unreasonable restrictions of Americans’ civil liberties. Attorney General Barr specifically stated that “First Amendment and federal statutory law prohibit discrimination against religious institutions and religious believers.” Under the Attorney General’s direction, the Department of Justice will “be on the lookout” for instances when state and local governments have [gone too far](#) in their efforts to control the spread of COVID-19 and have started infringing on Americans’ most fundamental rights, such as the right to work and earn a living or the right to worship and gather together. The DOJ recognizes that many stay-at-home orders and “extraordinary restrictions” were necessary to combat the spread of COVID-19, but that emergency does not give the government license to restrict freedoms indefinitely. The memo announced the appointment of Eric Dreiband, Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, and Matthew Schneider, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan, to oversee the Department’s efforts to monitor state and local policies and take action when fundamental rights are infringed. The memo shows that the First Amendment rights and the right of religious freedom especially are a high priority for the DOJ during the pandemic. As Attorney General Barr concluded in his memo, “But the Constitution is not suspended in times of crisis. We must therefore be vigilant to ensure its protections are preserved, at the same time that the public is protected.”

Harvard Attack on Parental Rights and Education Options

Harvard University is facing backlash over an incendiary article titled [“The Risks of Homeschooling”](#) that was released through the *Harvard Magazine*. The article features the work of Elizabeth Bartholet, law professor at Harvard, who believes that homeschooling is dangerous to children and should be banned. According to Bartholet, homeschooling is not sufficiently regulated, allowing for abuse and poor education. She believes homeschooling deprives children of “meaningful education” and “community values, social values, democratic values, ideas about nondiscrimination and tolerance of other people’s viewpoints.” Although she admits that parents have “very significant rights” to raise and educate their children, Bartholet insists that parents are controlling authoritarians, stating that “it’s always dangerous to put powerful people in charge of the powerless.” Several conservative media sites have pointed out the irony of Bartholet’s position, that banning homeschooling [would force](#) children into the rigid authoritarian regime of public education. Others have highlighted [stories of homeschool students](#) who received a rigorous education at home and now excel in their chosen field, some after graduating from Harvard University. [Secretary of State Mike Pompeo](#), graduate of Harvard Law School, spoke out against the article, stating, “The risk to children is NOT from homeschooling. The risk is from radical leftist scholars seeking to impose THEIR values on OUR children.” Harvard received such backlash after publishing the article that it plans to host an [online event](#) called “The Disinformation Campaign Against Homeschooling” on May 1, open to the public.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Kentucky Governor Vetoes Bill to Stop Infanticide](#)

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

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