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“There is not a single instance in history in which civil liberty was lost, and religious liberty preserved entire. If therefore we yield up our temporal property, we at the same time deliver the conscience into bondage.”

John Witherspoon

Administration Continues Efforts to Advance School Choice

In the past week, the Trump administration has busily promoted school choice as a method of revitalizing the country after the COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented shutdowns and economic damage in many states. At a [roundtable discussion](#) in Dallas, Texas, President Trump unveiled his four-step plan to “restoring, rebuilding, and renewing” American greatness, especially in American cities. Addressing the crime and violent riots currently gripping American cities, President Trump stated that “there is no opportunity without safety” and laid out a plan “to build safety and opportunity and dignity” in America. One prong of that plan is to pass meaningful school choice legislation in Congress, referring to the [Education Freedom Scholarships and Opportunity Act](#), a bill that would create a federal tax credit for private donations to scholarship programs set up by states. Only a few days later, President Trump reiterated his commitment to education choice by issuing an [executive order](#) that includes school choice as a key component to building safer communities. The executive order directs the Department of Justice to focus grants on police departments that take action to promote credentialing and high standards regarding use of police force and de-escalation training for officers. But the order also asserts that a crucial priority in rebuilding American communities and restoring law and order is school choice, which gives children the opportunity to reach their potential in a learning environment that best suits their needs. President Trump called school choice “the civil rights statement of the year . . . because all children have to have access to quality education. . . . All children deserve equal opportunity because we are all made equal by God.”

In addition to President Trump’s roundtable discussion and executive order, Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos took opportunities last week to advocate for educational choice for American families. Vice President Pence and Secretary DeVos led a [roundtable discussion](#) in Waukesha, Wisconsin, a state that was an early leader in school choice and currently serves over 43,000 students in school choice programs. Vice President Pence praised the success Wisconsin has achieved as a pioneer in the school choice movement, noting that one out of every eight Wisconsin students now takes advantage of educational choice to attend the school that best serves him/her. He concluded his remarks by stating that President Trump’s administration seeks “to expand opportunities not because of some political objective or ideological aim. It’s about . . . simply empowering parents so that there are no forgotten children, there are no . . . futures lost.” For the Trump administration, educational choice is key to providing children the best future through building stronger families and creating safer communities.

Senate Effort to Pass Equality Act Fails

After the Supreme Court's [recent decision](#) to redefine "sex" in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, Senate Democrats moved swiftly to advance a vote on H.R. 5, the [Equality Act](#), which would amend federal civil rights laws to include full protection for sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). This piece of legislation would [radically transform society](#), especially affecting religious organizations as the bill offers no exemptions for organizations and businesses that hold to a biblical view of sexuality. Three Senators—Mike Lee (UT), Josh Hawley (MO), and James Lankford (OK)—stood in defiance of the bill and called for the protection of religious liberty. Senator Lee expressed concern over the impact the act would have on women-only athletics and women-only spaces such as restrooms, locker rooms, and safe houses for victims of sexual or domestic abuse. Senator Hawley boldly testified, "It was just over 20 years ago that this chamber . . . passed, almost unanimously, a statute called the [Religious Freedom and Restoration Act](#) (RFRA) . . . signed by President Bill Clinton into law who, upon its signing, referred to religious liberty as 'our first freedom'" and pointed out that the bill would wrongly "gut out key provisions" of RFRA. Finally, Senator Lankford objected on the basis that the act would add a new feature into [Title VII](#) by adding "perception or belief," an "untested expansion" that does not provide for a fair consensus—merely one side imposing its views on the other. The Equality Act [passed the House](#) last year, despite opposition from conservatives (and feminists), highlighting the need for more conservative leaders to take a stand against this legislation that would ultimately limit the ability of religious organizations to fully practice their beliefs. *By Ariana Rubbet, AACS Summer Intern*

ADF Briefing on SCOTUS Decision and Christian Schools

Last week, Alliance Defending Freedom hosted a [webinar](#) specifically for AACS ministries to address the state of religious liberty for ministries in light of the recent Supreme Court [decision](#). The webinar featured a discussion between AACS Legislative Director Jamison Coppola and Greg Baylor, Director of the Center for Religious Schools at Alliance Defending Freedom, who shared from his legal expertise how the ruling will impact Christian schools specifically, and whether it will affect Title IX, PPP loans obtained under the CARES Act, and other federal programs that are available to private school participation. Mr. Baylor offered a thorough explanation of four existing laws that provide for religious liberty in light of the Supreme Court decision: the preexisting [religious exemption in Title VII](#), which protects the freedom of religious employers to prefer people of a particular religion, the [Religious Freedom Restoration Act](#), the [ministerial exception](#), and the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. In his closing remarks, Mr. Baylor encouraged the participants to stand firm in their mission "to make Christ known and to disciple His people. And don't be afraid." He further challenged, "This is a time for boldness, even though we have challenges. I've always said that these sexuality issues are an opportunity for us to share the gospel. . . . They present the whole thing—creation, fall, redemption, restoration." He also encouraged the listeners that though "the world thinks we hate, . . . this is a chance not only to defend our religious liberty but to say the things that we're doing are good. So, I hope that you're encouraged to take this opportunity—when the spotlight is on us, an uncomfortable spotlight, to share the message of the gospel with a world that desperately, desperately needs it."

In Case You Missed It:

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

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

[Ohio Governor DeWine Signs Bill Protecting Religious Liberty in Schools](#)

[Trump's Impact on Court Cemented as 200th Judge Appointed to Federal Bench](#)