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“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”—John 8:32
“We hold these truths to be self-evident . . .”—Declaration of Independence

Federal School Choice Legislation Introduced

Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) and Senate Education Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) introduced the [School Choice Now Act](#) (SCNA) to aid families through educational options during the COVID-19 crisis. The bill would immediately direct 10% of emergency stimulus funding earmarked for education (including leftover funds from the CARES Act) to state-recognized scholarship granting organizations (SGOs). Long term, it would also create a permanent federal tax credit scholarship infrastructure—a goal toward which President Trump’s administration has been working—that would funnel donations to SGOs in participating states. The federal tax credit scholarship program would provide donors with dollar-for-dollar federal tax credits, up to 10% of an individual’s and up to 5% of a corporation’s taxable income. Taxpayers who wish to donate to the federal tax credit scholarship program may do so through the proposed web portal; however, with pre-approval from the Departments of Education and the Treasury, a donor may still receive tax credits for donating directly to an eligible SGO. The proposed legislation would give each participating state the funds donated within its borders and a proportional share of other donations (including those from non-participating states), calculated using a formula strongly weighting the state’s number of students in poverty. The bill defers determination of eligibility requirements for SGOs, education providers, and students to each state. As Sen. Scott’s office stated in a [press release](#), the bill “prohibit[s] federal control of education” within the school choice infrastructure created and/or supported by the bill.

The text of the bill is clear that these funds are awarded to families, not to schools: “A qualifying scholarship awarded to a student from the proceeds of a qualified contribution under this section shall not be considered assistance to the school or other educational provider that enrolls, or provides educational services to, the student or the student’s parents.” Scholarship recipients would not be required to include the amount of the scholarship in their gross income for purposes of eligibility for federal, state, and local benefits or assistance. The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) [applauded](#) Sens. Scott and Alexander for responding to the COVID-19 crisis by proposing school choice legislation, calling the SCNA a “tremendous boost to this goal” of offering parents “choice and flexibility as they work to ensure their children’s needs are met.” According to AACCS Legislative Director Jamison Coppola, “The SCNA is an important step in the right direction for parental choice and a very reasonable response to the unprecedented difficulties encountered by families trying to navigate through this crisis, educate their children, and protect their future.” *By Alison Heape, AACCS Summer Intern*

Equitable Services for Private Schools Interim Final Rule

The AACCS submitted public comments regarding the U.S. Department of Education’s [Interim Final Rule \(IFR\)](#) for the equitable services portion of the CARES Act. Included in the education portion of the CARES Act were

provisions for [equitable services](#) to be provided for non-public schools. The language of the bill stated that these services were to be provided “in the same manner as provided under section 1117 of the ESEA of 1965 to students and teachers in non-public schools.” Many local educational agencies (LEAs) have interpreted this to mean that equitable services should be distributed only to Title I students (as section 1117 is in the Title I portion of ESEA) and have thus either denied or withheld the equitable services from private schools. However, Secretary DeVos and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) have stated repeatedly, through [guidance](#) and a [letter](#) to the Council of Chief State School Officers, that these equitable services were to be available to *all* private schools, as the pandemic has affected *all* students. The IFR establishes again that all private schools are eligible to participate in the equitable services, but it also offers one compromise: If an LEA chooses to use the equitable services for *only* Title I students in public schools then that LEA can limit the equitable services to only the Title I students in the private schools in their district. The AACS public comments recognize the efforts of the Secretary to ensure equity for all students and also pose some questions for clarification regarding the option which limits the distribution of equitable services to only Title I students as this could hinder the help that is available to private schools. One report has noted that over 100 [private schools have closed](#) as a result of the financial strain caused by COVID-19 closures. The equitable services could provide significant relief to many schools which operate on a tight budget while also endeavoring to offer quality educational services with the necessary health and safety adjustments for COVID-19.

Heritage Foundation Conducts National Survey on Civics Education

In response to the spread of the content of the *New York Times*' 1619 Project by Nikole Hannah-Jones, which states that “our democracy’s founding ideals were false when they were written,” the Heritage Foundation hosted a three-part webinar series entitled “Education in America.” The series reported results from a survey of a diverse group of school board members and parents of K-12 students regarding civics education and implementation of the 1619 Project’s ideological framework in schools; it found that 40% of parents and 30% of school board members want to see the 1619 Project used in K-12 education. Heritage [warns](#) that over 4,500 teachers have already adopted the 1619 Project curriculum. Each webinar featured a panel discussion inspired by the survey results and featured education policy analysts, researchers, and historians. While the [first session](#), available online, focused most heavily on the 1619 Project and its historical inaccuracy, the other two addressed the ways that American education has departed from affirming natural law. The [second session](#), also available online, proposed exposing children to the “success sequence” (a timeline of events that has been shown to lift 97% of people out of poverty: finishing high school, getting a job, and getting married before having children) and warned of the dangers of restorative justice, a popular school disciplinary system that uses conflict resolution to mend relationships between students, but eliminates negative consequences for inappropriate behavior. In the final session, the researchers and panelists discussed LGBTQ education’s effects on the mental and physical health of children. Mike Gonzalez, a senior fellow at Heritage and one of the webinar panelists, is optimistic that 2020 will be “the year when the American people finally begin to realize that decades of teaching the children to hate their country has been a colossal mistake.” *By Alison Heape, AACS Summer Intern*

In Case You Missed It:

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

[How to Disprove the Six Most Outrageous Myths of the 1619 Project](#)

[Planned Parenthood's Inescapable History](#)