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Independence Day Special Edition

On July 4, 1776, the bells of an independent nation rang in the hearts of men and women as the Declaration of Independence was signed by 56 delegates, from thirteen colonies, during the Second Continental Congress. This new formation of the thirteen colonies was declared “The United States of America.”

Our second President John Adams, a prominent character during the founding of this nation, whole-heartedly believed that it was imperative that the colonies sever ties with the king of England and become a united and independent nation. At Independence Hall, Adams boldly stated, “And I leave off as I began, that live or die, survive or perish—I am for the Declaration. It is my living sentiment, and by the blessing of God it shall be my dying sentiment. Independence now, and Independence forever.”

In a letter to his wife, he wrote of Independence Day: “I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other from this time forward forever.”

In this same spirit, may we view Independence Day as an opportunity to ascribe glory to God for the life, liberty, and happiness He has afforded us through the United States of America. Let Adams’ declaration, “Independence now, and Independence forever,” call us to protect the freedoms we have enjoyed.

By Alison Heape and Ariana Rubbet, AACCS Summer Interns

#proudtobeAmerican #proudAmerican

Supreme Court Rules in Favor of School Choice and Religious Liberty

School choice advocates and religious liberty supporters are celebrating this week’s Supreme Court decision in the case [Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue](#). The case involved three Montana families who wanted to choose a Christian school for their children’s education by means of the state’s tax credit scholarship program. They were blocked by the Montana Department of Revenue, which prohibited implementation of the scholarship program citing the state’s archaic Blaine Amendment. State Blaine Amendments prohibit any direct or indirect public funds to go to a religious school. [Blaine Amendments](#) were originally adopted in 38 states in the 1800s to prohibit public funding of Catholic schools; they are currently used by those who oppose school choice as the reason for blocking the establishment of any programs that would allow school choice because families then choose religious schools. The Supreme Court this week ruled in a 5-4 decision that the Blaine Amendment was unconstitutional based on the fact that it prohibits a religious school from participating in a

neutral public program—in this case the tax credit scholarship granting program—solely on the basis that the school is religious.

In the [majority opinion](#), Chief Justice John Roberts cited the Supreme Court’s decision in *Trinity Lutheran* which ruled that a religious institution could not be denied participation in a neutral public program simply based on the religious nature of the institution. In the oral arguments for the *Espinoza* case, the state of Montana argued that it was trying to protect religious liberty by maintaining separation of church and state. Justice Roberts disagreed with this analysis, stating, “An infringement of First Amendment rights cannot be justified by a state’s alternative view that the infringement advances religious liberty.” Justice Gorsuch joined the majority opinion, and then wrote an additional concurring opinion to clarify that the First Amendment protects the practice of religion and not just the “religious status” of the school. He states, “The Constitution forbids laws that prohibit the free exercise of religion. That guarantee protects not just the right to *be* a religious person, holding beliefs inwardly and secretly; it also protects the right to *act* on those beliefs outwardly and publicly.”

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos [called](#) the ruling a “historic victory for America’s students and all those who believe in fundamental fairness and freedom,” and called on “all states to seize the extraordinary opportunity to expand education options at all schools.” She further applauded the Court’s “decision to assign a manifestation of the ‘last acceptable prejudice’ to the dustbin of history where it belongs,” and emphasized that the “bigoted Blaine Amendments and other restrictions like them are unconstitutional, dead, and buried.” She continued with a strong support for the value of faith in education: “Too many students have been discriminated against based on their faith and have been forced to stay in schools that don’t match their values. This decision represents a turning point in the sad and static history of American education, and it will spark a new beginning of education that focuses first on students and their needs.” Vice President Pence also praised the decision in a [tweet](#), stating that the ruling “provides the opportunity for more Americans to access the quality education they deserve.” Jamison Coppola, Legislative Director of the American Association of Christian Schools, also noted that the decision shows that the “High Court sees Blaine Amendments for what they are—discrimination against religious people.” He also expressed that AACCS is “encouraged that our First Amendment freedoms have been protected, and happy to see the *Trinity Lutheran* case used for justification.” He noted that “this has the opportunity to bring a variety of school choice programs to the 37 states that have been locked down to school choice due to Blaine Amendments. This is a victory for parents, children, and our First Amendment freedom.”

In Case You Missed It:

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

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

[Federal Judge Blocks Covid-19 Restrictions in NY for Religious Services](#)

[Iowa Governor Signs Pro-Life Bill That Saves Babies from Abortions](#)

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