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“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”
United States Declaration of Independence

White House Hosts Summit on Reopening Schools Safely

On Tuesday, the White House [hosted a summit](#) on the safe reopening of schools, highlighting comments from President Trump, Vice President Pence, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Alex Azar, and other education and health experts. Each contributor emphasized the importance of schools finding safe ways to conduct in-person education in the fall. The summit comes a week after the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) [released their statement](#) that “all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school.” The AAP statement pointed out that the “preponderance of evidence indicates that children and adolescents are less likely to be symptomatic and less likely to have severe disease resulting from SARS-CoV-2 infection.” Adolescents are also “less likely to become infected and to spread infection.” Recognizing the need for schools to take precautions, the AAP statement also noted that “policies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within schools must be balanced with the known harms to children, adolescents, families, and the community by keeping children at home.” The AAP president, Dr. Sara Goza, joined the White House Summit, emphasizing that the “shared goal” of health and education experts should be to conduct school with students physically present.

The negative implications of extended school closures to children’s emotional, social, and mental health, as well as their academic progress, were discussed at length during the summit. Karen Pence, herself an art teacher in a Christian school, and First Lady Melania Trump both weighed in on the value of in-person school to the emotional well-being of children, and several panelists at the White House Summit discussed best practices for schools to ensure the health and safety of their students while also remaining committed to in-person instruction. Secretary DeVos stated that all schools should make their plans for school with the expectation that they would be meeting in-person, a message which she reiterated throughout the week in [meetings](#) and [interviews](#). In a call earlier Tuesday with the governors, DeVos stated, “Ultimately, it’s not a matter of if schools need to open, it’s a matter of how. . . . And how that happens is best left to education and community leaders.” In one [interview](#), DeVos stressed that “there’s nothing in the data that suggests it would not be appropriate to have kids in school. And while there may be spikes in certain areas and certain communities, those are exceptions to the rule. The rule should be that kids need to be back in school.” Dr. Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), referenced the CDC guidance for schools, but also emphasized that these should be viewed as “consideration documents,” and not as a reason for schools to remain closed to in-person classes. The [final discussion](#) of the summit, led by President Trump, highlighted the progress made in combatting the virus and rebuilding the economy, which further emphasized the need for schools to provide in-person instruction in the fall.

Federal Judge Blocks COVID-19 Restrictions on New York Religious Services

While allowing restaurants and businesses to operate at 50% indoor capacity in New York, Governor Andrew Cuomo placed heavier restrictions on houses of worship, allowing only 25% indoor capacity at stages 2 and 3, and 33% indoor capacity at stage 4. To validate the disparity between regulations on businesses and houses of worship, Cuomo pointed to two of the state's first "superspreader" events in February—a bar mitzvah and a funeral service held in a synagogue. [US District Judge Gary Sharpe](#) ruled that Gov. Cuomo and Mayor Bill DeBlasio of New York City were inconsistently regulating activities, showing preference for large crowds at graduation ceremonies and protests. Cuomo and DeBlasio, Sharpe noted, made statements lending permissibility to the protests, "encouraging what they knew was a flagrant disregard of the outdoor limits and social distancing rules." While social distancing measures are still required, houses of worship may now operate under the same terms as businesses and restaurants, opening at 50% indoor capacity; they also will face no attendance limits on outdoor gatherings. The [Thomas More Society](#) represented the plaintiffs' request for injunction (Jewish congregants from Brooklyn and Catholic priests from the Society of Saint Pius X in upstate New York). "[Judge Sharpe's] decision is an important step toward inhibiting the suddenly emerging trend of exercising absolute monarchy on pretext of public health," commented Thomas More Society Special Counsel Christopher Ferrara. "What this kind of regime really meant in practice is freedom for me, but not for thee."

By Alison Heape, AACS Summer Intern

Iowa Governor Signs Pro-Life Bill into Law

Last week was a significant win for life as Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds signed into law a pro-life [bill](#) that was passed by the Iowa state legislature. Governor Reynolds stated, "I am proud to stand up for the sanctity of every human life. . . . Life is precious, life is sacred, and we can never stop fighting for it. I applaud the Iowa lawmakers who had the courage to stand strong and take action to protect the unborn child." The new law requires women to wait a 24-hour period before proceeding with an abortion. [Iowa Supreme Court struck down a similar bill in 2018](#) with the only difference being a 72-hour wait period before proceeding with an abortion. The new law requires that women are given the opportunity to see their unborn child on an ultrasound, listen to his heartbeat, be provided with information regarding the risks of proceeding with an abortion, as well as given other resources for parenting and adoption. Following the 24-hour period, abortion facilities will be required to confirm, in writing, that each woman has received the information. Interestingly, a waiting period is not new to Iowa's laws as waiting periods are required for other major decisions including marriage, divorce, and adoption. Pro-life Iowans have received the news of Gov. Reynolds' continued commitment to life with gratitude. Iowa State College Republicans President Ryan Hurley stated, "College Republicans is glad to hear Governor Reynolds signed this pro-life legislation. . . . Abortion hurts women and families, and that 24 hours can and will save lives." Iowa Representative Sandy Salmon stated, "Iowans want to see unborn lives protected. . . This bill is a big step in that direction." *By Ariana Rubbet, AACS Summer Intern*

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](#)

[Heritage Foundation: School Closures Threaten Kids More Than Covid-19, Pediatricians Say](#)

[Supreme Court Upholds Trump's Order Protecting Little Sisters from Funding Abortions](#)

[Religious Liberty Wins in Two Supreme Court Cases](#)