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*“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization,
it expects what never was and never will be.”*

Thomas Jefferson

Department of Education Religious Liberty Final Rule

The Department of Education recently released its [final rule](#) protecting religious liberty and free speech on college campuses. Called the Religious Liberty and Free Inquiry Final Rule, the rule gives requirements for public and private colleges regarding religious freedom and free speech and addresses both individual students and student groups. In recent years, colleges have prevented religious organizations from accessing meeting space or college funding because of their religious identity. Religious groups have been targeted for limiting their leadership positions to those who live according to Christian doctrine and faith, especially regarding human sexuality and marriage. These actions have led students across the country to file lawsuits against colleges for infringing on their fundamental rights, resulting in some colleges allowing greater religious freedom and free speech and other colleges refusing to change their discriminatory actions.

As a result, the Department of Education has reviewed over 17,000 public comments to publish its final rule to protect the rights of students to exercise their religious faith and speak freely on college campuses. The final rule covers four major points. First, the rule requires public colleges to abide by the First Amendment’s guarantee of religious freedom and free speech and requires private colleges that accept federal funding to abide by their institutional rules regarding religious freedom and free speech. Second, the rule clarifies the provision in Title IX that allows institutions “controlled by a religious organization” to be exempt from Title IX regulations. Previously, the phrase “controlled by a religious organization” was left undefined, leaving some religious institutions concerned about whether and how they could qualify for the religious exemption. The new rule gives a non-exhaustive list of what “controlled by a religious organization” means while ensuring that religious organizations are not substantially burdened according to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Third, the rule protects the right of student organizations to exercise their religious freedom by ensuring that a public college cannot allow secular student groups to meet and access college funds without extending those benefits to religious student groups as well. Thus, this final rule ensures that colleges cannot receive federal funding without providing equal treatment to religious student groups. Fourth, the rule allows for greater flexibility in certain grant programs. Previously, certain grant programs could not be used for secular activities that included teaching about religion generally; but the new rule limits that prohibition to purely religious instruction, worship, or preaching. In the Department’s [announcement](#) about the rule, Secretary DeVos stated, “Students should not be forced to choose between their faith and their education. . . . These regulations hold public institutions accountable for protecting the First Amendment rights of students and student organizations.”

White House Conference on American History

On [Constitution Day](#), the White House hosted a [Conference on American History](#) to highlight not only the greatness of American history but also the need to ensure accurate history is taught in our nation's schools and universities. Hosted in the National Archives, the conference featured inspiring speeches by historians, students, and educators who lauded our nation's founding and the principles of freedom enshrined in our founding documents while also discussing solutions to combat the efforts in many educational institutions to erase or change America's history. Both President Trump and Vice President Pence delivered remarks hailing the greatness of America, signifying the commitment of the administration to ensuring a true presentation of our country's history to future generations. In his [speech](#), President Trump called out the problematic 1619 Project and critical race theory as "toxic propaganda" and "ideological poison," and he announced the establishment of the "1776 Commission" to "promote patriotic education" and begin plans for the celebration of the 250th anniversary of America's founding. He also announced that the National Endowment for the Humanities would be "awarded a grant to support the development of a pro-American curriculum that celebrates the truth about our nation's great history." Vice President Pence [described](#) the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution as the "greatest charters of freedom the world has ever known."

President Trump to Sign Executive Order Protecting Babies Who Survive an Abortion

This week, President Trump announced that he will be [signing an executive order](#) which will ensure that babies born alive after an attempted abortion will receive proper medical care. The announcement comes after Democratic leadership in the House of Representatives refused [over 80 times](#) to bring to a vote the Born Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, a bill which would allow babies who survive an abortion to receive the same medical care that other babies are afforded. Senate Democrats also blocked the bill from advancing in the Senate. [Polling shows](#) that a high percentage of Americans—even those who identify as pro-abortion—support providing medical care to babies born alive and oppose abortions in the third trimester and any attempt to remove medical care for any babies born alive. In fact, after Democrats last year pushed for abortions up to birth and infanticide, polling showed a large [increase in those who identified as pro-life](#), indicating that the majority of Americans do not support the extreme abortion defenses made by liberal politicians. The President's announcement regarding the executive order received much praise from several pro-life leaders. Dr. Donna Harrison, executive director of the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, called this a "major victory for patients and providers." Jeanne Mancini, president of March for Life, also praised the President's action and stated that this would "provide necessary legal protections for some of the most vulnerable in society: survivors of failed abortions." She then called on Senate Democrats to "codify the President's Executive Order and pass Senator Ben Sasse's Born Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act."

In Case You Missed It:

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

[Proclamation on Constitution Day](#)

[VA Governor Concedes His COVID Order Doesn't Apply to Churches with Fewer Than 250 Attendees](#)

[New Legislation Ensures Fairness for Female Athletes by Protecting Goals of Title IX](#)