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“It is impossible for the man of pious reflection not to perceive in it the finger of that Almighty Hand which has been so frequently and signally extended to our relief in the critical states of the Revolution.”
James Madison

U.S. Department of Education Hosts Leadership Conference for Private School Leadership

Last week, the [Office of Non-Public Education](#) (ONPE) in the U.S. Department of Education hosted its annual Private School Leadership Conference. The ONPE serves as a liaison between the private school community and the Department of Education, working to ensure maximum opportunities for private school students and teachers in federal education programs while also working to protect private schools from excessive government interference. This year’s conference was conducted through virtual presentations which covered topics relevant to nonpublic schools, including the impact of a recent Supreme Court decision on school choice, and the reopening of schools in the midst of the pandemic. Meg Kilgannon, director of the DOE Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives hosted a conversation with pediatrician Dr. Jill Simons in which they discussed the reopening of schools, and both ladies recognized the great work of private, religious schools during the COVID pandemic not only in serving their own members and families but also in helping their communities and welcoming new families into their schools. The conference also spotlighted the Texas Private School Association (TPSA) and its work on behalf of private schools in Texas, with a discussion between ONPE Director Maureen Dowling and TPSA Executive Director Laura Colangelo, which focused on the importance of networking between education leaders to aid in advancing educational freedom and providing help and information for private schools.

A main focus of the conference featured the recent [victory for school choice](#) in the U.S. Supreme Court ruling for the case [Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue](#), with two of the panels discussing the background of the case and benefits that the ruling will bring to families nationwide. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos interviewed Kendra Espinoza, the lead plaintiff in the case, about her experience fighting the legal battle to ensure religious liberty is protected so she could send her children to a Christian school through the tax credit scholarship program in Montana. A second panel featured testimony from Jeri Anderson, co-plaintiff in the case, who shared how important the case was for her as she desired a Christian education for her daughter. Both Espinoza and Anderson are single moms who were able to send their children to Stillwater Christian School through the state’s tax credit scholarship program, until the state declared that the scholarships could not be used for religious schools. The Supreme Court decision ruled that the Blaine Amendment, which was used to block the scholarship program in Montana and school choice in 37 other states, was unconstitutional because it excluded religious institutions from participating in a neutral public program. DOE General Counsel Reed Rubinstein, assistant general counsel Phil Rosenfelt, and Institute for Justice attorney Erica Smith all recognized the far-reaching impact this victory could have for creating school choice programs now that Blaine Amendments are deemed unconstitutional.

Trump Nominates Amy Coney Barrett for Supreme Court Justice

President Trump has [nominated](#) Judge Amy Coney Barrett as his third pick for the Supreme Court in four years, hoping to fill the seat recently vacated by the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. President Trump called Judge Barrett “a woman of unparalleled achievement, towering intellect, sterling credentials, and unyielding loyalty to the Constitution.” Judge Barrett currently serves on the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, covering Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana, and is a law professor at the University of Notre Dame. A devout Catholic, Judge Barrett is a conservative favorite noted for her pro-life beliefs and love for the Constitution. In her acceptance speech, [Judge Barrett noted](#) her clerkship to Justice Antonin Scalia, stating that “his judicial philosophy is mine, too. A judge must apply the law as written. Judges are not policymakers.” During her confirmation hearing for the Seventh Circuit, Judge Barrett was attacked for her faith, with Senator Diane Feinstein (CA) declaring that “the dogma lives loudly within you, and that’s of concern.” Many charged that Sen. Feinstein imposed an unconstitutional religious litmus test on Judge Barrett, and the memory of that contentious hearing could heighten the ongoing debate of the role of faith in public service. Conservatives [widely believe](#) that the vacant seat should be filled before the upcoming election, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY) and Senate Judiciary Chairman Lindsey Graham (SC) are committed to voting to confirm Judge Barrett before the next presidential term begins.

Prayer March in Washington, D.C.

On Saturday, September 26, thousands of Christians joined together for the [Washington Prayer March](#) to lift the nation up in prayer before the upcoming election. The Prayer March was organized by evangelist Franklin Graham and drew upwards of 50,000 live attendees and 3.8 million online attendees from across the globe to pray for God’s blessing and guidance for America. Starting at the Lincoln Memorial and ending at the Capitol building, the march featured [seven stops](#) with distinct prayer requests: forgiveness and healing, security and peace for military and law enforcement, salvation of the lost, the President and Vice President, racial reconciliation, religious freedom and boldness, and all elected officials and judges. Vice President Mike Pence made an [unexpected appearance](#) at the march, thanking the crowd for uplifting him and President Trump in prayer and stating that “the sweetest words we ever hear, and we hear them a lot, when people reach out and simply say, ‘I’m praying for you.’” The Vice President also gave examples of how some of the greatest leaders in America’s history, from George Washington to Abraham Lincoln, relied on prayer and God’s providence. In closing, Vice President Pence encouraged the crowd with 2 Chronicles 7:14, which reads, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

In Case You Missed It:

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

[The 2020 Election: A Clear Distinction on Abortion](#)

[John MacArthur Gets a Win: Grace Church Can Stay Open Until 2021](#)

[Church First to Sue DC over COVID Restrictions](#)