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*“There is but one straight course, and that is to seek truth and pursue it steadily.”  
George Washington*

**Promise to America’s Children / Equality Act Update**

A group of non-profit organizations has formed a coalition, [Promise to America’s Children](#), to protect the well-being of children and fight back against harmful educational policies and legislation like the Equality Act. Spearheaded by the Heritage Foundation, Alliance Defending Freedom, and the Family Policy Alliance, the coalition describes itself as a “national movement of parents and lawmakers to oppose legislation that harms children . . . and to create and support laws that will protect children’s health, safety, and families—especially their relationships with their parents, who have the primary responsibility to love, protect, and educate them.” The promise includes [10 principles](#) based on the priorities to nurture, honor, and protect children’s minds, bodies, and relationships with their parents. The principles state the importance of protecting children against the harm caused by pornography, “graphic sexual curriculum or content” in education, and the “politicized ideas about sexual orientation and gender identity.” The principles also recognize the important of affirming children “in their biological sex,” and emphasize the vital role of parents in the lives of children and decisions concerning the well-being of children. John Stonestreet and Shane Morris of the Chuck Colson Center recently published an article emphasizing the need for this movement to protect children, and [stated](#), “At the root of this all-out assault on our children and grandchildren is the dangerously bad idea that adult desires matter more than the well-being of children. Each chapter of the sexual revolution, but especially the most recent ones, have placed ‘us before them,’ repeating the same myth in various forms: ‘the kids will be fine.’ But they won’t be.” The Daily Signal, a news outlet sponsored by the Heritage Foundation, recently conducted an [interview with Katy Faust](#) who has founded an organization, [Them Before Us](#), and also authored a book by the same title, in an effort to ensure that adults’ desires do not bring about the sacrifice of children’s well-being.

The AACCS joined the coalition in a letter to the leadership in the House of Representatives last week, affirming their commitment to protecting children from harmful policies, and specifically opposing the Equality Act because of the harm it presents to young children. The letter states, “We are concerned that our children are increasingly targeted for adults’ sexual messages, images, and themes at younger ages than ever before. They are exposed to content in schools, through both policies and curriculum, that promotes politicized information about sexual orientation and a destructive gender ideology.” The letter concludes by recognizing the Equality Act as a “deeply broken proposal filled with nothing but broken promises to our children.” The Equality Act passed the U.S. House of Representatives last week by a vote of 224-206, and now heads to a Senate still divided on the controversial bill. Although the Equality Act is currently a stand-alone bill, there are indications that if it fails to pass the Senate, Democrats will attempt to scatter SOGI language in otherwise unassuming legislation. If this strategy is implemented, utmost vigilance by lawmakers opposing these efforts will be required. The AACCS issued a [joint statement](#) last week regarding the dangers the Equality Act presents specifically to Christian schools and religious liberty.

## **Supreme Court Reinforces Ruling to Open Churches**

The Supreme Court [ruled](#) last Friday to reinforce its ruling three weeks ago to strike down California Governor Gavin Newsom's ban on indoor church services. Despite the High Court's ruling, officials in Santa Clara County continued to prohibit believers from gathering together in person to worship, making Santa Clara the only county in the state to totally ban in-person services. In the Court's short 6-3 ruling, it stated that Santa Clara County had [not followed](#) the Court's "clearly dictated" ruling in *South Bay Pentecostal Church v. Newsom*. One of the pastors [affected](#) by California's strict COVID-19 restrictions is Steve Meister, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Sacramento. After altering his services for nearly a year, Pastor Meister felt called to take a stand against the forced closure of his church, saying, "Neither Gov. Newsom nor any other state representative has the authority to dictate what is and what is not 'essential' to Christian worship. That prerogative belongs to Christ the Lord." In a January 4 letter addressed to Governor Newsom, Meister wrote that "as the church remains separated, it is not the church at all." With multiple Supreme Court cases ruling against California's tyrannical closure of churches, pastors like Meister and his congregation can begin to reassert their fundamental right to religious free exercise.

## **Update: School Choice Advancing in State Legislatures**

The school closures caused by the COVID pandemic have highlighted the need for more educational options for families, spurring [several state legislatures](#) to consider bills to create or expand school choice programs. In [Iowa](#), two bills which would provide school choice—one through a tax credit scholarship program and the other by expanding charter school opportunities—are advancing through the legislature. Both bills have the strong support of Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds and are part of her education agenda for the state. In Missouri, the [state house passed a school choice measure](#) which would create a tax credit program, but the proposal has been temporarily stalled in the state senate after senators debated portions of the bill. Perhaps the most sweeping piece of legislation is in [West Virginia](#) where the legislature is considering a bill which would grant school choice to nearly all students in the state through an education savings account program. The bill, HB 2013, would grant qualifying families approximately \$4,600 to use towards the educational method that best meets their children's needs. The bill has already passed the state house and has moved to the senate where it is expected to pass. With the strong support of West Virginia Governor Jim Justice, school choice supporters are hopeful that the bill will become law, providing more educational options for students across the state.

## **In Case You Missed It:**

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

[Practical Legal Help for Christian Schools: ADF Ministry Alliance](#)

[Senator James Lankford: Our American Experience—You Can Have Your Faith and Live It, Too](#)

[Protecting Newborns Is Commonsense: Time for Congress to Take Action](#)

[Lindsey Burke: Biden Backtracks on School Reopenings—Here's How Left, Unions Put Ideology Before Students](#)