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“The future of this nation depends on the Christian training of our youth.”
George Washington

AACS Hosts Virtual National Bible, Fine Arts, and Academics Competition

Last week, the American Association of Christian Schools hosted the 44th annual AACCS National Competition through a virtual format, giving students who have captured top honors in their state contests the opportunity to compete on a national level in 72 categories in the areas of Bible, music, speech, art, and academics. Approximately 1,450 students from 28 states participated, representing over 150 Christian high schools and submitting a total of 930 event entries. The competition concluded with a [livestream program](#) which featured a tour of the Bob Jones University campus where the competition is normally held, the awards ceremony, and masterclasses that provided contestants with an opportunity to learn tips and insights from competition judges. The AACCS Cup of Excellence, given to the state which accumulated the highest point total, was won by the Illinois Association of Christian Schools; North Carolina, Kansas, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and Virginia were also among the top states. The AACCS offers our warmest congratulations to all the students who participated. To view the complete list of this year’s winners, click [here](#).

Department of Education Proposes Rule to Advance Critical Race Theory in Schools

On Monday, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) issued a [proposed rule](#) to advance the Biden administration’s version of civics training in K–12 education. The proposed rule details [new priorities](#) for American history and civics education programs to educate “students about the history and principles of the Constitution of the United States, including the Bill of Rights” and to improve “the quality of the teaching of American history, civics, and government” in K–12 schools. The DOE’s version of civics and history, however, is informed by [critical race theory](#), a Marxist approach to society that views America as systemically racist. The proposed rule admits this, stating that “the ongoing national reckoning with systemic racism [has] highlighted the urgency of improving racial equity throughout our society, including in our education system.” The proposed rule also praises the controversial [1619 Project](#) and the teachings of “antiracism” according to Ibram X. Kendi. As a justification for promoting these radical ideologies in education, the DOE points to “misinformation” that is spread through social media and YouTube. However, rather than proposing a recommitment to America’s founding principles of truth, freedom, and equality, the rule points to critical race theory as the definitive perspective of America’s founding. Public comments are due May 19, 2021, and can be submitted at [this link](#).

This move by the department follows President Biden’s [executive order](#) on advancing racial equity in the federal bureaucracy. It also reflects Democrats’ legislative priorities such as the [Civics Secures Democracy Act](#), an effort to push revisionist history, critical race theory, and action civics into K–12 classrooms by enticing states to adopt a national civics curriculum through new federal grants. If states accept the grant money and, in turn, implement the curriculum, there is concern that standardized testing will gradually shift to align with critical race theory through a curriculum that is rife with Marxist ideology under the guise of what is now called anti-racism.

SC Private School Coalition Files Lawsuit over Blaine Amendment

Over 50 religious and independent schools in South Carolina have filed a [federal lawsuit](#) charging that the state's Blaine Amendment violates the equal protection and free exercise clause of the U.S. Constitution. The Blaine Amendment, adopted in South Carolina in 1875 to ensure public funds did not support Catholic education, has been cited as the reason that COVID-relief funds could not be used to help South Carolina students in private schools. South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster [directed \\$32 million](#) of funds received from the CARES Act to create SAFE grants (Safe Access to Flexible Education) that would provide a one-time grant to help subsidize tuition for eligible students to attend private, religious, and independent institutions. The SAFE grant program was challenged in court by some of the state's public school districts, and the SC Supreme Court ruled the program was in violation of the state's Blaine Amendment and, therefore, unconstitutional. A private school coalition, which includes 33 schools in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Charleston and 20 schools in the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, has filed this new lawsuit in a federal court in an effort to determine that the Blaine Amendment is unconstitutional, thus removing the barrier for implementing the SAFE grant program. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last June in a [similar case](#), *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, that the Montana Blaine Amendment was unconstitutional as it unfairly targeted religious groups by excluding religious schools from participation in the state's tax credit scholarship program.

Lawsuit Against Biden Administration Charges Violation of Religious Freedom for Colleges

The Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), representing the College of the Ozarks, has [filed a lawsuit](#) against the Biden administration, charging that a recent directive issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) violates the religious freedom of faith-based institutions that adhere to a biblical view of human sexuality. The [HUD directive](#) states that the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination in housing, now includes sexual orientation and gender identity when it bans discrimination against "sex." Many are concerned that religious schools and institutions which use federal grants or funds will be included in the requirements from this directive. The HUD memorandum states that their new policy follows President Biden's executive order, titled "Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation," in which he cites the Supreme Court *Bostock* decision as basis for ordering federal agencies to ensure that policies which prohibit sex discrimination include sexual orientation and gender identity. Notably, HUD issued this memorandum to reinterpret the Fair Housing Act without following the normal procedures for federal rule making. A [press release](#) by ADF explains that the HUD directive not only violates the First Amendment rights of religious schools, but also "contradicts the historical judicial interpretation of the Fair Housing Act, which confirms that 'sex' means biological sex." ADF senior counsel Julie Marie Blake stated, "Government overreach by the Biden administration continues to victimize women, girls, and people of faith by gutting their legal protections, and it must be stopped."

In Case You Missed It:

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

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

[Federal Court Upholds Ohio Ban on Aborting Babies with Down Syndrome](#)

[Private Schooling After a Year of COVID-19: How the Private Sector Has Fared and How to Keep it Healthy](#)