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“I earnestly pray that the Omnipotent Being, who has not deserted the cause of America in the hour of its extremest hazard, will never yield so fair a heritage of freedom a prey to Anarchy or Despotism.”
George Washington

The Battle to Defeat Critical Race Theory in Education

The U.S. Department of Education has recently [announced new proposed “priorities”](#) for American History and Civics education programs which will be used when determining grant recipients, a plan which sounds much like the Race to the Top grant competitions from the Obama-era which incentivized states to adopt Common Core Standards. The proposed priorities push [critical race theory](#) (CRT), a philosophy rooted in Marxism that teaches that America is systemically racist, and a person’s race determines whether that person belongs to one of two groups—the oppressors (i.e., the privileged) or the oppressed. The proposal specifically praises the 1619 Project and the “antiracist” teaching of Ibram X. Kendi, even though both of these have been proven to be [historically inaccurate](#) and [philosophically suspect](#). Supporters of CRT purport that it promotes equity and diversity, while opponents charge that CRT teaching would only create a divisive and oppressive society that is, in fact, racist and discriminatory. (The DOE is [seeking public comments](#) on its priorities, due by May 19, 2021). CRT has already been infused in 4,500 classrooms across the country, and several states are taking steps to mandate the philosophy in teacher training and curricula. In [Washington](#) state, Governor Inslee signed into law a bill that will incorporate educator training in “equity, cultural competency, and dismantling institutional racism.” New York has changed its admission policy for the gifted and talented program from a competitive entry exam to a lottery system, and county school boards in California and Virginia are spending thousands of dollars to include CRT training for teachers and incorporate the philosophy in K–12 classrooms.

However, several states, organizations, and many families are [pushing back](#) against the inclusion of CRT in education, recognizing the dangers that CRT brings to the freedom in our country. The Virginia State Department of Education is [facing strong criticism](#) from constituents after attempting to include CRT in proposed social-emotional standards. In a [suburb outside Dallas](#), school board candidates who opposed CRT won their seats with 70% of the vote, ousting the current members who supported a “diversity plan.” [Oklahoma](#), [Arkansas](#), and [Idaho](#) have passed laws prohibiting the teaching of CRT, and several more states have similar bills moving through the legislature. Additionally, several [court cases](#) have been filed across the country to challenge the infusion of CRT teaching and the discrimination that has ensued because of this dangerous teaching. Los Angeles attorney David Pivtorak, representing the plaintiffs in one of these cases, called CRT a “Trojan horse,” explaining that “it disguises itself as the gold standard of fairness and justice but, in fact, relies on vilification and the idea of permanent oppressor and oppressed races. Its goal is not ensuring that all people play by the same rules, regardless of race, but equity, which is a euphemism for race-based outcomes.” In a recent discussion regarding the ability of the U.S. government to mandate the teaching, Former Solicitor General Ken Starr [stated](#), “They can recommend, but thank goodness, the United States government cannot control. It can influence, to be sure, through its spending powers because every public school district receives federal funds . . . but to mandate a particular curriculum, I think will be struck down by the Supreme Court.”

School Choice Update in the States

This week, Ohio, Missouri, and Florida have moved to expand school choice. In Ohio, the state House introduced the “[Backpack Bill](#),” which would allow education dollars to follow each student to the school that best fits his individual needs and abilities. The [bill](#) would expand school choice from serving only low-income children to serving every child in the state. Summing up the legislation, Aaron Baer, president of the Center for Christian Virtue, [stated](#), “Ohio lawmakers should be focusing on funding teachers and students, not buildings and bureaucrats.” In Missouri, the legislature recently [approved](#) a bill that would expand Missouri’s existing school choice program by creating an Empowerment Scholarship Accounts program. The bill functions as a tax credit scholarship program, providing private organizations and citizens a 50% tax credit for their contributions towards the scholarship program. The \$50 million allocated in the bill would provide scholarships for over 7,000 public school students. State Senator Andrew Koenig stated that this bill “provides another option for kids who may need that option. . . . The reality is every child is different, and we don’t know what that child needs, but parents do.” Governor Parson is expected to sign the legislation. In Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis [signed a bill](#) to expand school choice to 60,000 more students by raising the income threshold for a family of four from 260% (\$68,900) of the poverty level to 375% (\$99,375) and allowing parents to use the money for tuition, transportation, tutoring, and other educational costs. Homeschool families will also be eligible to participate.

Governors Sign Pro-Life Bills Across the Country

While President Biden and his administration are working to revoke federal pro-life measures, state legislatures and governors across the country are working equally as hard to enact pro-life measures in their states. In fact, over 530 pro-life bills have been introduced in 46 state legislatures this year, prompting the pro-abortion group Guttmacher Institute recently to call this the “[most devastating](#)” year for the abortion industry in decades. The bills include prohibitions on abortion once a heartbeat is detected, on late-term abortions after five months of pregnancy, and on abortions for discriminatory purposes such as a Down syndrome diagnosis. Other pro-life measures protect mothers from unsafe abortion drugs and ensure babies born alive after an attempted abortion receive proper medical care. To date, 61 bills in 13 states have become law. Just last month, the Arizona governor signed a bill prohibiting abortions based on genetic abnormalities; the Montana governor signed a bill to require ultrasounds before an abortion and another bill to ban abortions once an unborn baby can feel pain; the Idaho and Oklahoma governors signed heartbeat bills; and Oklahoma’s governor also signed a bill which requires abortion doctors to be certified in gynecology and obstetrics. Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List, noted, “There could not be a stronger rebuke to the Biden-Harris administration, whose pro-abortion agenda is [deeply unpopular](#) with Americans of all stripes. The states are sending an unmistakable message to pro-abortion Democrats nationwide—and to the Supreme Court—that the pro-life movement will never rest until unborn children and their mothers are protected in the law.”

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](#)

[Louisiana Bill Advances Protecting Religious Liberty During Emergency Situations](#)

[Female Athletes Ask Judge to Allow State Law to Go into Effect Banning Males from Competing in Female Sports](#)