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“If religious books are not widely circulated among the masses in this country, I do not know what is going to become of us as a nation. If truth be not diffused, then error will be. If God and His Word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy. If the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will. If the power of the gospel is not felt throughout the length and breadth of this land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness will reign without mitigation or end.”

~ Daniel Webster

Senate Passes Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill and Partisan Budget Proposal

On Tuesday, the Senate passed the bipartisan infrastructure bill by a vote of 69-30. Nineteen Republicans joined the Democrats in supporting the \$1.2 trillion bill, despite a multitude of provisions that advance progressive policy goals. About half of the bill, \$550 billion, is new spending. Included in the final bill are [Green New Deal](#) provisions, such as funding for electric and low-emissions vehicles and charging stations; a pilot program to [tax drivers per mile](#); and [numerous studies](#) on subjects such as limousines, marijuana use while driving, and promoting women in commercial trucking. Most concerning to social conservatives is a provision that elevates sexual orientation and gender identity to a protected class under federal law. Hidden in the [Digital Equity Act](#), this prohibition is yet another step towards enacting Equality Act language piecemeal in expansive legislation packages like infrastructure. Some Republicans spoke out against these provisions, including Sen. Josh Hawley (MO), who called the bill “radical left woke politics” and [warned](#) of the “gender identity mandates,” “radical equity agenda,” and “Green New Deal” provisions the bill would advance. Indeed, [equity](#) plays an outsized role in a bill that purportedly is meant to build physical roads and bridges, with the word “equity” appearing 64 times throughout the bill. Along with including SOGI language, the Digital Equity Act also includes \$7.5 billion in “equity grants” targeted at minority racial groups. Senate Republicans defended their support of the bill, even after the Congressional Budget Office reported that it would add \$256 billion to the federal deficit. Sen. Lindsey Graham (SC) [stated](#) that the bill “provides American infrastructure with a much-needed facelift,” while Sen. Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY) [praised](#) the bill for “promoting sensible, collaborative legislation” that proves “that the Senate still works as an institution.”

On Wednesday, the Senate narrowly voted (50-49) to proceed to debate on the budget proposal, just hours after releasing the text of the bill to the public. The [\\$3.5 trillion](#) spending bill includes several progressive priorities, including \$726 billion to advance free K-3 and K-4 programs and free two-year community college. The bill also includes Medicare expansion and climate change initiatives. Republicans offered several amendments, claiming victory in preserving the Hyde Amendment (which prohibits federal funds from supporting abortion) and in prohibiting federal funding of Critical Race Theory in schools. However, other amendments failed which would have protected unborn babies against late-term abortions and stopped abortions of Down Syndrome babies. The U.S. House of Representatives will consider the bills for passage after the August recess. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi has indicated the House will consider the bills together in one package, although she is receiving pushback from both Republicans and some moderate Democrats that the bills should be considered separately because of the enormous cost and wide range of issues the bills address.

AACS Washington Office Thanks Our Summer Intern

Each summer, the AACS Washington office welcomes college students or recent college graduates into our office to join our mission in serving Christian education through work in the nation's capital. The internship program is designed specifically to give college students a solid foundation in constitutional freedoms, conservative principles, and biblical leadership. The intern's responsibilities provide an opportunity for in-depth training on how the legislative process works, how to communicate effectively with legislators, and how to inform others on the current issues. This year, we were privileged to host Zach Jewell in our office. Zach was a tremendous asset and willing partner to our team, assisting in writing and research projects, including writing many of our articles in the *Washington Flyer* this summer. He also assisted in attending online and in-person coalition meetings and helping plan and chaperone our annual Youth Legislative Training Conference. Zach graduated from Pensacola Christian College in 2021 with a degree in professional writing and a minor in political science, and he hopes to continue honing his writing skills by working in political journalism. We are grateful for the time Zach spent with us this summer and for his testimony and contribution to the work in our office. We pray that the Lord will open doors for Zach to continue serving Him and our great country.

Florida Approves School Choice for “COVID-19 Harassment”

The Florida State Board of Education [unanimously approved](#) a measure last Friday that allows parents to receive a school choice voucher if they are dissatisfied or feel their children are threatened by a district's rules regarding Covid-19 protocols, particularly in regard to rules for masking, testing, and quarantining after exposure. The board's decision follows an executive order by Governor DeSantis stating that parents must have a role in deciding whether their children wear masks in schools. The governor issued the executive order in response to the announcement by some districts that masks would be required in schools. While the decision by the board does not explicitly prohibit mask mandates, it does require schools with a mask mandate to include an opt-out option. Florida already has a program in place that allows school choice for children who are victims of bullying; the new measure adds “COVID-19 harassment” to the types of discrimination which allow a voucher, [defining such harassment](#) as “any threatening, discriminatory, insulting, or dehumanizing verbal, written or physical conduct” that could be deemed harmful to students as a result of COVID-19 protocols. Gov. DeSantis [praised](#) the new rule, stating, “Giving parents options to make these decisions is not controversial. I'm proud that today we took action to make sure school administrators respect parents' rights to make educational and health care decisions for their families.”

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](#)

[Promise to America's Children](#)

[Further Evidence That Common Core Did Real Harm to U.S. Education](#)

[Let's Celebrate the Best Year in Decades for the Preborn's Right to Life](#)