



**The Washington Flyer
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*“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”
Isaiah 9:6*

School Choice Programs Increase Opportunities and Save Money

The year 2021 has been dubbed the “Year of School Choice” by many school choice proponents who point to the vast expansion of school choice programs across the country throughout the year. During the state legislative sessions of 2021, eighteen states took action either to create new school choice programs or expand existing school choice programs. The new programs—enacted in AR, IN, KY, MO, NY, OH, and WV—include education savings account programs and tax credit scholarship programs and will provide school choice for an estimated [3.6 million students](#). Fourteen states (AR, FL, GA, IA, IN, KS, MD, MT, NV, OH, OK, PA, and SD) expanded twenty-one existing programs—including voucher, tax credit scholarship, and education savings account programs—and these expansions will offer school choice opportunities for approximately [878,300 more students](#). Numerous studies have shown that school choice programs not only increase academic successes of students, but also increase parental satisfaction with school safety and values taught in school. A recent report from [EdChoice](#) reveals an additional benefit of school choice programs—saving money. The [fiscal analysis](#) examined 40 choice programs from their inception through 2018 and found that the programs saved taxpayers between \$3,300 and \$7,500 per student, depending on the type of program and how long it has been in operation. This totaled approximately \$28.3 billion in savings across the country, or, as author Martin Lueken [explains](#), “For every dollar spent on expanding educational opportunities for families via choice programs, taxpayers saved about \$2.80.” Opponents of school choice have long argued that choice programs harm public schools and students because the programs reduce public school funding; however, the report provides data and analysis that contradicts the claim. School choice proponents believe that next year’s legislative session might open up even more school choice opportunities for parents and families. As Lueken points out, “The recent electoral success of choice supporters in Virginia and New Jersey—traditional strongholds for special-interest groups that strongly oppose choice—coupled with school-board elections driven by parents wanting a voice in their kids’ classrooms, is emboldening states to expand educational options.”

National School Choice Week Is Just Around the Corner

[National School Choice Week \(NSCW\) begins January 23, 2022](#), providing families and schools an opportunity to highlight the positive impact that school choice has had in the lives of thousands of students. Beginning in 2011, the NSCW has seen over 150,000 events hosted by coalitions, schools, organizations, and individuals that celebrate the successes and benefits that students experience when parents are empowered to make the best educational decision for their children. The week is intended to celebrate all forms of school choice and educational options, and private schools are encouraged to highlight the benefits and successes of the school choice programs in their areas. For materials and ideas, please [click here](#).

9th Circuit Rules in Favor of Religious Liberty

On Monday, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals [ruled in favor](#) of religious liberty in an important case concerning the freedom of religious institutions to train ministers of the faith in accordance with biblical teachings on human sexuality. In [Maxon v. Fuller Theological Seminary](#), two students sued the seminary after it dismissed them from the theological programs for entering into same-sex marriages. Fuller Theological Seminary holds biblical beliefs about human sexuality and requires students to agree to abide by the seminary's community standards. Both Joanna Maxon and Nathan Brittsan, the two former students that sued Fuller, signed the community agreement yet entered into same-sex marriages while students. Fuller argues in the lawsuit that it has a First Amendment right to train future ministers of the Christian faith and to enforce standards among its student body that align with biblical beliefs. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with Fuller, noting in its memorandum that plaintiffs Maxon and Brittsan were essentially "ask[ing] us to second-guess Fuller's interpretation of its own religious tenets," which the court refused to do. The plaintiffs also argued that Fuller violated Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, an argument that the court also rejected, stating that "the religious exemption applies to shield these religiously motivated decisions" and "Fuller's actions fell squarely within Title IX's religious exemption." The 9th Circuit affirmed the district court's decision to dismiss the case against Fuller and protect its religious liberty.

NYC Extends COVID-19 Vaccine Mandate for Private, Religious Schools

Just one month before his term as mayor ends, Bill de Blasio extended New York City's COVID-19 vaccine mandate to employees at all public, private, and religious schools. The mandate applies to over nine hundred private schools and their fifty-six thousand employees that previously were not required to be vaccinated. Mayor de Blasio [defended](#) his mandate, stating, "Our public schools are among the safest places to be in the city. . . . We are extending our vaccine mandate to ensure all schools are protected from COVID-19." Schools will need to provide proof of at least partial vaccination by December 20. Religious school leaders have spoken out against the mandate, including Catholic and Jewish schools that believe that individuals should be allowed to make their own decisions regarding their health. The Committee of NYC Religious and Independent School Officials, led by Rabbi David Zwiebel, sent a letter to de Blasio, [stating](#) that it sees "COVID vaccination as a matter most appropriately left to individual choice, not government fiat." Zwiebel stressed the negative effects such a mandate would have on religious schools, stating, "The practical impact of the city imposing an immunization mandate could be devastating to our schools and the children they serve." Unlike other vaccine mandates that apply to Christian schools, New York City does not allow for religious exemptions. Incoming Mayor Eric Adams has stated that he would extend the vaccination mandate even further to require that all students be vaccinated to remain in school.

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](#)

[Promise to America's Children](#)

[Court Rules in Favor of Christian Schools in Maryland](#)

[New! The Hillsdale 1776 Curriculum](#)