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“Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom.”
George Washington Carver

“Who’s Afraid of School Choice?”

EdChoice recently released a report, titled [“Who’s Afraid of School Choice.”](#) which examines whether the arguments that opponents have used against school choice programs have proven true, specifically the charges that choice programs would defund public schools and would hurt the academic achievement of students. In some cases, the predictions were quite grim, claiming that choice programs would “destroy public schools” (Ohio Rep. Karen M. Doty in 1995) and would “siphon needed money away from our schools” with “no improved achievement” (Indiana Rep. Matt Pierce in 2011). One of the more extreme charges came from Florida Rep. Debbie Wasserman Shultz in 1999 in which she stated, “This is the day that will go down in the annals of Florida history as the day we abandoned the public schools and the day that we abandoned, more importantly, our children.” The EdChoice report considers data from five states that have had school choice programs for over a decade—Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin—and finds that not only did the predictions not materialize, but in general, funding per student and academic scores increased after the school choice programs were enacted. The authors of the report refer to those predictors of doom as “Chicken Littles,” and note that “despite the predictions of the school choice Chicken Littles, the sky has not fallen.”

Regarding the financial state of public schools where school choice programs have been enacted, the report points to data from an analysis conducted by the Reason Foundation. For the five states considered, the funding per pupil increased between 1.2 percent (Arizona) and 12.7 percent (Ohio) since 2002; furthermore, the report points out that the “amount of funding per student (across all K–12 students) spent on educational choice policies is a tiny fraction of the spending per student at district schools, amounting to only 2.7 percent in Arizona, 3.1 percent in Florida, 1.4 percent in Indiana, 1.5 percent in Ohio, and 2.5 percent in Wisconsin.” Regarding academic achievement, the report considers data from *Education Week’s* Quality County K–12 Achievement Index which ranks states according to scores from standardized assessments such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the advanced placement exam (AP). Each of the five states, with the exception of Ohio, improved their ranking (and in the case of Ohio, the student scores improved but were outperformed by other states and, thus, kept from advancing in rank). The EdChoice report also noted the data from a study by the University of Arkansas, which found a “robust, positive association between education freedom and a state’s overall academic performance.” Additionally, the EdChoice report points to 28 different studies which have examined the academic performance of public school students in areas with school choice programs, and of these studies, 25 evidenced that the academic scores overall improved. The authors of the EdChoice report conclude that “policy makers have no reason to believe the fearmongering of the Chicken Littles, nor should they expect that reducing the scope of their proposals will reduce the intensity of opposition. Instead, they should stay the course, be bold, and ensure that every child gets access to the quality education they deserve.”

Religious Liberty Victory in Indiana

In a move that is being celebrated by religious liberty advocates, the City Council in West Lafayette, IN, decided not to vote on Ordinance 31-21 which would have prohibited conversion therapy, using a definition for conversion therapy that was so broad it would have included any biblical teaching on human sexuality by pastors, teachers, and even parents. Opposition to the ordinance was strong, with a group of area churches and organizations forming the [Lafayette Citizens for Freedom](#) to raise awareness and urge citizens to contact council members and sign a petition opposing the ordinance. However, it was the [threat of legal action](#) that motivated Councilman David Sanders to withdraw the ordinance and call for a vote on a resolution instead. Al Mohler, in his daily podcast “The Briefing,” [noted that there is a lesson](#) that Christians must not only be prepared to stand for truth, but also to use the legal system if necessary to ensure protection of our religious liberties. Pastor Steve Viars, senior pastor of Faith Church in West Lafayette, IN, which hosts a biblical counseling ministry, agreed, [stating](#), “The lesson from West Lafayette is that efforts like this can and must be defeated. The principles of individual freedom, parents’ rights, religious liberty, and the separation of church and state are still worth defending.” In a [social media post](#) celebrating the decision, Faith Biblical Counseling Ministries, a ministry of Faith Church that was heavily involved in fighting the ordinance, stated, “We’re looking forward to pivoting back to positive community ministry, with another 31-21 in mind, ‘Blessed be the Lord, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was in a besieged city’ (Psalm 31:21).”

Pro-Choice Supporters Seek to Glorify Abortion

As the Supreme Court considers an abortion case that could overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that declared abortion as a constitutional right, more pro-abortion activists are [glorifying](#) the act of abortion as a good and necessary thing for society. Some activists are even [recasting](#) abortion rights as a religious liberty issue, painting it as a “social and theological good” as one contributor to a *Washington Post* [article](#) frames it. Since the *Roe v. Wade* decision, the messaging behind abortion rights has gradually shifted from wanting to keep abortion “safe, legal, and rare” to today’s message that encourages women to celebrate their abortions. Ironically, this shift has continued despite the many medical and scientific discoveries about the humanity of unborn babies. One organization, called [Shout Your Abortion](#), was founded in 2015 and exists to celebrate abortion as “a normal part of reproductive life.” The shift is even seen in activists referring to themselves as pro-abortion rather than the more innocuous term pro-choice. Such a shift in narrative is especially troubling when it is driven by religious communities. According to the *Post* article, some mainline Christian denominations and Jewish congregations have begun to view abortion as “holy” and “one of the critical justice movements of our time.” These groups argue that abortion is a constitutionally protected exercise of religious liberty because different faith traditions have differing views about when a human life begins. As more Americans [support](#) limits on abortions, abortion activists are increasingly appealing to abortion as a moral good and an exercise of fundamental religious freedom to justify its protection under 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](#)

[Promise to America’s Children](#)

[ABC’s of School Choice 2022 Edition Released](#)

[Teachers Unions’ Nonsensical Fight Against School Choice Hurts Students, Families](#)