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*“General diffusion of Christian knowledge hath a natural tendency to correct the morals of men, restrain their vices, and preserve the peace of society.”*  
*from “Provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion,”*  
*a Bill in the Virginia Assembly, 1784*

**AACS Hosts National Fine Arts, Academic, and Bible Competition Next Week**

Next week, almost 1800 students and sponsors from 172 schools representing 28 states will compete in the annual AACCS National Competition in 76 different categories in Bible, art, music, speech, and academics. We are especially excited to return to this event in person this year. There will be no *Washington Flyer* next week, but you can follow/like the event [here](#).

**White House Proposed Budget Requests Increased Spending for Education**

The Biden administration’s [proposed budget](#) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 requests a record level of federal spending for education programs, proposing \$12.4 billion more in education spending (a 15.5% increase) over the FY 2022 budget proposal. While Congress must approve any federal spending, the White House budget proposal represents this administration’s priorities to increase subsidies for higher education, to address issues caused by pandemic closures, and to increase programs for early education, low-income families, and children with disabilities. Specifically, the budget [increases](#) the funding for grants through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including \$16.3 billion for IDEA state grants (a 21.8% increase from 2022), and \$502.6 million for IDEA preschool grants (22.7% increase from 2022). The proposal doubles the amount requested for Title I schools (serving low-income families) to \$36.5 billion, an amount which includes \$20.5 billion for discretionary funding and \$16 billion for the mandatory funding. The proposal also reflects a priority to address pandemic issues with a request for \$1 billion for mental health services for students and \$468 million for community schools that provide “wraparound services” to meet health and social needs. The budget also includes \$350 million for recruitment, retention, and professional support for teachers in an effort to address the teacher shortage. The budget proposal for the Health and Human Services Department (HHS) includes increased funding for early childhood education programs, including \$7.6 billion for the Child Care Development Block Grant program (an increase of \$1.7 billion from 2021 spending), \$12.2 billion for Head Start (an increase of \$1.5 billion from 2021), and \$450 million for Preschool Development Grants (\$175 million increase from 2021). The HHS budget also calls \$400 million for the Title X Family program (which provides grants to Planned Parenthood), a spending level which would be almost a 40% increase from 2021 funding. In a press release regarding the proposal for education spending, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona [stated](#), “Federal budgets are an expression of values. This proposal reflects the Biden-Harris Administration’s deep belief in the importance of education and the success and wellbeing of our nation’s students.” However, an [analysis](#) by Heritage Foundation experts states that the budget proposal calls for “an unprecedented level of federal funding and control [to] be bestowed on the education establishment.” The president’s budget is largely seen as aspirational and reveals the administration’s priorities but is unlikely to gain traction in Congress.

## **Michigan Voters Get a Chance to Enact School Choice Programs**

Voters in Michigan have an opportunity to override the governor's veto of two school choice bills. Last November Governor Gretchen Whitmer [vetoed the two bills](#) which would have established a tax credit scholarship program for low-income families to choose the best educational option for their children. However, a provision in Michigan's constitution allows [proposals](#) to be placed on the ballot for a vote if they garner 340,000 signatures; if the voters then approve the measure, they can override the governor's veto. The [Let MI Kids Learn](#) and [Great Lakes Education Project](#) have started two petitions to establish the school choice program. One petition would create the Student Opportunity Scholarship program, a tax credit scholarship program which would provide scholarships to low-income families to use on educational expenses, such as private school tuition, or home school or online educational materials. The second petition would provide a tax credit for donations made to the organization which distributes the scholarships. To date, over 70,000 signatures have been collected. The deadline for signatures is June 1. Beth DeShone, executive director for the Great Lakes Education Project, [stated](#), "The Let MI Kids Learn proposal would put parents back in charge. It [would] create new Student Opportunity Scholarships so kids can get the extra tutoring, transportation, Internet access and other resources they need to succeed inside and outside the classroom."

## **Supreme Court Declines Religious Liberty Case with Hint of Future Consideration**

The Supreme Court recently [declined](#) to take up an important religious liberty case called *Seattle's Union Gospel Mission v. Woods* in its next term. Seattle's Union Gospel Mission (SUGM) has served the homeless and downtrodden in Seattle for nearly 100 years, providing for the physical and spiritual needs of those it helps. In 2016, the mission declined to hire lawyer Matthew Woods for its legal aid clinic because he did not share the Christian beliefs of the ministry, lived in a homosexual relationship, did not express a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and was not an active member of a church. Woods then sued SUGM, arguing that the mission violated a state antidiscrimination law and should be forced to hire him. The case went to the Washington Supreme Court, which ruled in Woods's favor. The mission then appealed to the Supreme Court, which declined to consider the case. Justice Samuel Alito denied the case because it can still move through the lower courts, [stating](#) in a joint concurrence with Justice Clarence Thomas that that "Washington Supreme Court's decision may warrant our review in the future." While the Supreme Court has [repeatedly protected](#) the [ministerial exception](#), the right for religious organizations to decide who can teach and lead the faith, it has not definitely stated who qualifies as a minister, leaving open the question of how far the Constitution goes to protect the religious liberty of ministries. The AACS joined an amicus brief in this case, arguing that Christian ministries have a fundamental right to make hiring decisions that align with their biblical beliefs, and the Washington Office will continue following the case as it develops.

## **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](#)

[Critical Race Theory, Public Schools, and Parental Rights](#)

[Time for the School Choice Movement to Embrace the Culture War](#)