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“The future of this nation depends on the Christian training of our youth.”
George Washington

AACS Hosts Youth Legislative Training Conference

The AACCS hosted its annual Youth Legislative Training Conference (YLTC) last week from July 11 to 15. This year, 33 high school students from 20 states gathered in Washington, D.C., to learn about politics from a biblical perspective, sharpen their leadership skills, and forge lifelong friendships. Conference highlights included the mock senate, constituent meetings with senators and representatives, insights from top conservative leaders, and tours of the Capitol's historic sites. At the end of the week, students returned home with a renewed respect for our system of government and a deeper understanding of what it takes to be a leader in the conservative movement. Every student role-played a current senator and was assigned to one of four committees. Under the instruction of Gail Nicholas, a 5-Diamond coach in the National Speech and Debate Association, the students crafted legislation, led committee meetings, debated bills, and voted on the legislation their peers proposed. Because of this hands-on experience, students gained confidence, understood Senate procedure, and were prepared to educate their friends and classmates at home.

The week included a “Day on the Hill” where students were privileged to attend a Congressional Briefing in the U.S. Capitol, organized for the YLTC students, and hear from Representative Bob Good (VA); Senators Ted Cruz (TX), James Lankford (OK), and Rick Scott (FL); and conservative media specialist Rachel Semmel. A common theme throughout many of the presentations was viewing God’s calling into politics as a ministry and service opportunity. At the close of each presentation, a student from each member’s state prayed a personal prayer and blessing. The students also received virtual remarks from Representatives Virginia Foxx (NC) and Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA), along with presentations from the Leadership Institute personnel, including the Director of Communications Training, Ryan Brann; the Christian Leader Program Manager, Amanda Spiers; and the Director of Political and Fundraising Training, Kirsten Holmberg. Hill staffers Luke Ball (YLTC Alumnus), Nicole White (previous AACCS intern), and Peter Holland (YLTC Alumnus) returned to participate in a panel discussion that challenged students to examine their true motives for political involvement. They advocated standing up for biblical principles and ended by answering student questions about internship opportunities and making a difference as young Christians in politics. Other highlights of the week included a tour of the Holocaust Museum and a monument tour of national landmarks including the Lincoln, Jefferson, Vietnam War, Korean War, and WWII memorials, and the Washington Monument. The week culminated with a visit to Arlington National Cemetery where four exemplary YLTC students represented the group by laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We are grateful for an incredible week of YLTC and pray for God’s blessing and guidance for the students who participated. The AACCS is grateful to everyone who made the week possible, whether volunteering time or donating money for student scholarships. We are especially grateful for the group of dedicated chaperones who helped make this year’s YLTC a success. For pictures of the week, please visit our [Facebook page](#) (@AACSeducares) or our [YLTC Instagram account](#) (@yltc_aacs). By AACCS summer intern Olivia Summers.

Arizona Passes Universal School Choice Program

Recently Arizona [became](#) the first state in the nation to enact a universal school choice program, giving every student in the state the opportunity to participate in the school choice program and, thus, pursue the education that best suits his or her individual needs. The bill [expanded](#) the state's existing education savings account program (the Empowerment Scholarship Accounts) to be available to all children, regardless of their income level or other criteria that usually limits participation in school choice programs. The bill will provide parents with 90% of the funds that Arizona allocates per child for education, amounting to about \$7,000 per student, and allows the funds to be used for public or private school, homeschooling, tutors, or other educational materials and programs. Corey DeAngelis, senior fellow at the American Federation for Children, lauded the state as "the gold standard for school choice." Arizona advanced this bill as school choice has become an increasingly important issue to many Americans, even deciding tight elections such as Virginia's gubernatorial race in 2021 and Florida's gubernatorial race in 2018. Other states, such as West Virginia and New Hampshire, are also capitalizing on the rise in school choice popularity and are pursuing similar bills to expand their school choice programs to apply to more students. As widespread online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic [showed](#) the extent to which progressive policies have taken over public education and resulted in high levels of [learning loss](#), school choice remains a central issue to elections nationwide and is expected to remain a key legislative goal for many states moving forward.

Maine Creates New Barrier for Religious Schools after Supreme Court Ruling

Immediately following the Supreme Court's decision in *Carson v. Makin* that declared religious schools could not be excluded from Maine's school choice program, the state's attorney general Aaron Frey issued a [statement](#) expressing his intention to ensure Christian schools could not participate in the program. The *Carson* case concerned the state's town tuitioning program that allows rural Maine families who live in school districts without a public high school to use state funds to attend the public or private school of the parents' choice. However, the state of Maine prohibited the use of funds at "sectarian" schools, effectively excluding religious schools from participation. The Supreme Court ruled that exclusion of religious schools from an otherwise generally available public program violated the First Amendment. Despite the strong 6-3 Supreme Court decision, which upheld precedent set in similar court cases, Mr. Frey declared he would "explore" legislative paths to "address the Court's decision and ensure public money is not used to promote discrimination, intolerance, and bigotry." Pointing to the Maine Human Rights Act, Mr. Frey stated that any religious schools that participate in the state's program would have to "eliminate their current discriminatory practices," referring to policies which uphold a biblical view of human sexuality. Michael Bindas, an attorney with the Institute for Justice, [pointed out](#) that the victory in the *Carson* case centered solely on religious participation; thus, the "interaction between school choice and anti-discrimination statutes" could likely end up in court.

In Case You Missed It:

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACSI Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[Practical Legal Help for Christian Schools: ADF Ministry Alliance](#)

[Promise to America's Children](#)

[House-Passed 'Respect for Marriage Act' Isn't About Marriage. It's about Complying with Woke Ideology](#)

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