



**The Washington Flyer  
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*“Almighty God hath created man’s mind free.”  
Thomas Jefferson, Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom*

**AACS Celebrates 50 Years at National Legislative Conference**

Last week, AACS state leaders, school administrators, and pastors from across the country gathered in Washington, D.C., for the annual AACS National Legislative Conference, designed to provide a time of spiritual encouragement, legislative updates, and congressional visits. During two services, Keith Wiebe, Jr., brought messages from Psalm 71:15–19 and Psalm 91, encouraging the attendees to stand firm and look to the Lord in their ministry in Christian education. The conference included a briefing at the Heritage Foundation in which Jack Fitzhenry discussed the issues with the Biden administration’s efforts to forgive student loans, and Dr. Lindsey Burke introduced the 2022 Education Freedom Report Card which ranks states according to the level of educational freedom for families and students. A congressional briefing in the U.S. Capitol featured comments from Senators Marsha Blackburn (TN), Josh Hawley (MO), and Ted Cruz (TX), and Representatives Virginia Foxx (NC), Jim Banks (IN), Louie Gohmert (TX), and Greg Steube (FL), all of whom spoke of their efforts and commitment to protect religious liberty and family values. A special part of the congressional briefing was the opportunity to pray for each of these leaders as we are instructed in 1 Timothy 2:1–4. Several attendees had the opportunity to enjoy an after-hours tour of the U.S. Capitol hosted by Rep. Barry Loudermilk (GA). A highlight of the conference was the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the AACS during the banquet on the final evening. Founded in 1972, the AACS includes 38 state and regional associations with almost 700 schools and 7 colleges, together serving 117,000 students total. Last year, the enrollment in AACS schools increased 17% with an additional increase expected for the current year. The AACS serves its member schools through educational materials, professional development opportunities, student assessment options, administrative and leadership support, student competition, and legislative representation.

An essential part of the conference was the legislative briefing provided by AACS Washington staff discussing legislative issues important to Christian education. This year, the briefing focused on the [dangers that the Respect for Marriage Act \(RFMA\) poses](#) to the religious liberty of all religious institutions as well as to parental rights, child welfare, and school choice. The bill, introduced to codify the legality of same-sex marriage into federal law, passed the House of Representatives with every Democrat and 47 Republicans voting for its passage and is currently being considered by the Senate. The conference schedule included time for attendees to meet with their senators to express their deep concerns with this dangerous bill. News reports leading up to the conference indicated that a vote on the bill was imminent in the Senate; however, at week’s end news broke that the Senate would not vote on the bill until after the midterm election. This temporary reprieve is a strong indication the bill lost some momentum, likely due to the advocacy of many conservatives, including the AACS members, who believe marriage ought to be protected. However, proponents are still expressing confidence that the bill will pass and have made it clear they intend to push ahead for a vote in the lame duck session after the midterm elections knowing that senators will no longer have the pressure of immediate electoral consequences.

attached to their vote on the bill. Democrat Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer will need the support of 10 Republicans to pass the bill. **We encourage those who are concerned about the passage of this bill to [contact your senators](#) and urge them to oppose this dangerous legislation.**

### **Office of Non-Public Education Hosts Conference for Private School Leaders**

Last week, the [Office of Non-Public Education](#) (ONPE) in the U.S. Department of Education hosted its annual National Private School Leadership Conference. The summit is designed to offer updates to private school leaders on the work that ONPE is doing on behalf of nonpublic schools, as well as provide attendees an opportunity to network and collaborate to advance opportunities for private schools. The sessions during the one-day summit reflected the ONPE mission which is to “foster maximum participation of nonpublic school students and teachers in federal education programs and initiatives.” The seminar topics covered a range of topics including IDEA equitable services for private schools, the recently released scores from NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) and involvement of private schools in the NAEP assessment, updates on the CARES Act and EANS and private school involvement, and a discussion of students’ academic needs and mental health since the pandemic. The conference also included a discussion on *Carson v. Makin*, a case decided last summer by the U.S. Supreme Court in favor of allowing religious schools to participate in a Maine school choice program. Each year, the ONPE includes an “Association Spotlight” to highlight the work of a private school organization recognizing the contributions that different private school groups make to the educational framework in our country. This year, Mr. Jamison Coppola, AACS Government Relations Director, had the opportunity to present the mission and work of the AACS and explain the services that AACS offers for our member schools, teachers, and students.

### **Supreme Court Denies Yeshiva University Case**

Last week, the Supreme Court [denied](#) Yeshiva University’s request to pause enforcement of a New York County Supreme Court ruling forcing the school to formally recognize an LGBT student group called YU Pride Alliance in a case that AACS joined as an amici supporting the religious liberty rights of the university. Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Brett Kavanaugh joined the three liberal justices in deciding the 5-4 case. The decision comes just days after Justice Sonia Sotomayor initially granted Yeshiva’s request to temporarily block the lower court’s ruling while the High Court reviewed the case. Writing for the majority, Justice Sotomayor [stated](#) that the university can still move its case through the lower courts, although in the meantime the university must recognize the LGBT student group. Rather than violate its religious beliefs, however, Yeshiva University [responded](#) to the Court’s denial by suspending all student groups on campus. The college stated that it needed time to plan its next legal steps, declining to offer a timeline of when it might reinstate student groups. Justice Samuel Alito wrote a dissent, joined by Justices Thomas, Gorsuch, and Barrett, stating that the First Amendment forbids the state from interfering with a religious school’s beliefs. He pointed out that the YU Pride Alliance formed to protest the school’s interpretation of its faith and to “make a statement” and “promote ‘cultural changes ’in the institution.” Considering the lower court’s refusal to recognize Yeshiva’s religious liberty, he wrote, “I doubt that Yeshiva’s return to state court will be fruitful, and I see no reason why we should not grant a stay at this time. It is our duty to stand up for the Constitution even when doing so is controversial.”

### **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](#)

[Triaging COVID Learning Loss](#)