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“There is nothing so powerful as truth, and often nothing so strange.”
Daniel Webster

Arkansas Passes Education Reform Which Includes Universal School Choice

Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders fulfilled her campaign promise of education reform in Arkansas by signing into law the [LEARNS Act](#). The most notable change the new law makes is the establishment of a universal education savings account (ESA) program which will provide school choice for every family in the state. The program will provide \$6,600 to families to use on a variety of educational methods, including tuition, tutoring, curriculum, and educational therapies. Initially, the ESA accounts will have specific eligibility requirements, mostly related to family income; but by 2025 the program will be available to every child in the state. The [new law](#) also raises the base salaries of public school teachers from \$36,000 to \$50,000, prohibits any kind of sex education before grade five, and prohibits the infusion of Critical Race Theory into educational materials and lessons. The law specifically prohibits teachers and educational speakers from communicating messages of inferiority or superiority based on an “individual’s color, creed, race, ethnicity, [and] sex,” and further requires the Arkansas Department of Education to review the “rules, policies, materials, and communications” to ensure they also do not violate the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and do not “conflict with the principle of equal protection under the law” or encourage student discrimination against others based on an “individual’s color, creed, race, ethnicity, sex, age, marital status, familial status, disability, religion, national origin,” or other characteristic protected by law. Upon signing the bill, Governor Sanders [stated](#), “We’ve seen how the status quo condemns Arkansas to a lifetime of poverty, and we’re tired of sitting at the bottom of national education rankings. We know that if we don’t plant this seed today, then there will be nothing for our kids to reap down the line.”

Arkansas becomes the 3rd state to pass a universal ESA program this year, following Utah and Iowa. Several other states, including [Alabama](#), [Florida](#), [Georgia](#), and [Texas](#), are considering similar legislative bills this year that will create universal school choice in their states. A [recent study](#) by the National School Choice Awareness Foundation found that, even when broken down by demographics according to race, political party, and age, the majorities all support the view that education dollars should fund the students—not systems—and empower parents financially to make the best educational decision for their children. Opponents of education savings account programs often argue that such a program will take away money from public schools. However, the State Policy Network [points out](#) that ESAs generally give parents only a portion of the per-pupil funding for each student, sending the rest of that funding to the public schools. According to a [study conducted by the Goldwater Institute](#) of Arizona’s ESA program, the first ESA program established, it “has actually benefitted public schools by redistributing funds back to the remaining public school students, directing program savings to public school IT infrastructure, and helping to serve one of the most high-need, high-cost student populations in the state—all while decreasing taxpayer costs and safeguarding public funds.”

Study Shows Average IQ Scores Declining for First Time in a Century

A [new study](#) published in the spring edition of *Intelligence* shows that the average IQ scores of Americans is declining for the first time in a century. The study measured adults aged 18-60 and found that from 2006 to 2018, every age group saw a decline in IQ. Younger Americans saw the worst declines, causing [researchers](#) to theorize that “a change of quality or content of education and test-taking skills” may be to blame. Americans who did not have a college education scored worse than those who had attained higher education, but Americans with a four-year degree saw a decline similar to their less educated peers. The authors of the study noted, “As scores were lower for more recent participants across all levels of education, this might suggest either that the caliber of education has decreased across this study’s sample and/or that there has been a shift in the perceived value of certain cognitive skills.” The results echo [recent studies](#) of IQ scores in Europe that found declines in IQ over the past four decades. Those researchers have also blamed the decline on what they call environmental factors (as opposed to genetic factors), such as an inadequate education system and the explosion in access to media and technology.

Wyoming Bans Abortion Pills

Since the 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson* Supreme Court decision, several states have enacted pro-life laws to protect pre-born babies from abortion. Wyoming had a near-total abortion ban (which is currently facing court challenges), but the state legislature and governor have now taken additional steps in the fight against abortion. On March 17, Governor Mark Gordon signed a [bill](#) which makes it “unlawful to prescribe, dispense, distribute, sell or use any drug for the purpose of procuring or performing an abortion on any person.” This bill goes into effect on July 1 and is the latest move by a Republican state to [fight](#) the Biden administration’s efforts to make abortion pills available through mail and telehealth. People who violate the new Wyoming law will be charged with a criminal misdemeanor, punishable by up to six months in jail and a fine of up to \$9,000. The law [allows exceptions](#) for a woman “upon whom a chemical abortion is performed or attempted,” and also allows exceptions for the so-called “morning-after pill,” and when the life of the mother is in danger. The sponsor for the bill, state [Senator Tim Salazar](#), said, “Wyoming is the first in the nation to ban chemical abortions. Over 90% of abortions in Wyoming are chemical abortions.” This new abortion law currently makes Wyoming the most pro-life state in the country.

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](#)

[ADF Video: Respect for Marriage Act: What Church and Ministry Leaders Should Know](#)

[Supreme Court Upholds Parental Consent before Teen Abortions](#)

[School Choice Primarily Benefits Students Who Weren’t Already in Private Schools](#)