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“The establishment of civil and religious liberty was the motive which induced me to the field – the object is attained – and it now remains to be my earnest wish and prayer, that the citizens of the United States could make a wise and virtuous use of the blessings placed before them.”

George Washington

North Carolina Passes Universal School Choice

Last week, the North Carolina legislature approved a measure to [create universal school choice](#) through the passage of the state budget bill. The measure expands the state’s current Opportunity Scholarship program with a funding increase from \$176.6 million to \$520.5 million over the next ten years. Before expansion, the program was available only to low-income families and included a requirement that students must attend a public school before participating in the program. The program will now be open to all families, regardless of family income, and the requirement for public school attendance has been dropped. The school choice expansion has faced strong opposition from the state’s Democrat Governor Roy Cooper, who at one point [declared](#) a “state of emergency” for public education, charging that a school choice program was dangerous for education and would drain funds from public schools. However, last May, state representative Tricia Cotham switched party affiliation from Democrat to Republican, giving a supermajority to the Republican party with the power to override a governor’s veto. School choice was the main reason for her switch, as she was a strong proponent of education reform to help all students. “The Democrat Party didn’t really want to talk about children. They had talking points from adults and adult organizations,” she explained when discussing her reasons for joining the Republicans. Shortly after switching parties, Cotham became a lead sponsor of the “Choose Your School, Choose Your Future Act” to expand the state’s Opportunity Scholarship program. The components of this bill were included in the state’s budget bill which passed last week. Governor Cooper has indicated he will simply allow the bill to become law without his signature.

This makes [North Carolina the tenth state](#) that has created universal or near-universal school choice since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education. Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Utah, Iowa, and West Virginia have programs similar to the one North Carolina just passed, providing scholarships for families to use for a variety of educational expenses. Oklahoma recently passed a tax credit program that allows families to claim a tax credit for private school tuition. Indiana expanded eligibility levels for its voucher program this year, making it available to 98% of families in the state. Ohio also expanded its voucher program to include all families in the state, with a limitation, however, that only private schools who choose to be chartered by the state are eligible to participate (multiple Christian schools in the state choose non-chartered status as part of a religious conviction against government approval and therefore, are not eligible to participate in this program). The school choice victories have been primarily in red states, but North Carolina is the first state to pass universal school choice without a GOP trifecta, meaning Republicans control both houses of the legislature and the governor’s office. The success in getting the program passed in a state with a Democrat governor is an indication of the growing, broad support for educational freedom in the form of school choice programs.

New Poll Shows Growing Support for School Choice

A [poll](#) conducted by the American Federation for Children shows a growth in bipartisan support for school choice. The poll, which surveyed 1,000 people, revealed that 71% of respondents favored school choice. Moreover, the majority of respondents from across the aisle, across the country, and across various demographic groups support school choice. For example, 80% of Republicans, 66% of Democrats, and 69% of independents support school choice. The survey also revealed that overall support for school choice bumped up seven percentage points from April 2020. These results fit with [other research](#) that shows people view school choice more favorably when they understand what school choice is. “School choice support is here to stay, and politicians who ignore this reality do so at their own peril,” said Tommy Schultz, the CEO of the American Federation for Children. “Parents are the new interest group in town, and legislators would be wise to keep responding to their needs.” Legislators have started to take notice and support school choice policies. [Gubernatorial candidates](#) J.B. Pritzker and Josh Shapiro, from Illinois and Pennsylvania, reversed course and supported school choice in the 2022 election—and won. “Some Democrats are apparently reading the tea leaves,” said American Federation for Children senior fellow [Corey DeAngelis](#). “Hopefully Shapiro and Pritzker are just the beginning of the bipartisan breakthrough needed for all American families to have school choice.”

Survey on Adult Churchgoers and Social Issues

Christian parents have always strived to pass down their faith to their children. Yet, [29% of Americans](#) identify as having no religion. As fewer teens grow to adulthood with their faith intact, many parents wonder why some children retain their faith while others walk away. A recent [survey](#) of adult churchgoers conducted by George Barna has revealed seven cornerstone beliefs that lead to a consistent biblical life, and how often churchgoers align with those beliefs. First, people must have an orthodox, biblical understanding of God. Second, people must understand that humans are naturally sinful. Third, people must find forgiveness of sins solely through Jesus Christ. Fourth, people must believe the Bible is true and the best source of wisdom. Fifth, people must believe God defines absolute unchanging moral truth. Sixth, people must believe life’s ultimate purpose is to know, love, and serve God. And finally, people must believe true earthly success is consistent obedience to God. The survey found that only a plurality of churchgoers believes these doctrines. For example, only 39% of churchgoers said true success comes from consistently obeying God. The other respondents answered in ways grounded in Marxist, Deistic, or Eastern Mystical worldviews. Christians must combat these secular worldviews, and they must start teaching their children early. [Additional research](#) from Barna suggests most children form their worldviews by the time they’re 13 years old. The call for parents and educators is clear: it is never too early to start training up a child in the way he should go.

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](#)

[Cal Thomas: Opening Doors to Success](#)

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