



**The Washington Flyer**  
**November 3, 2023**

*“But our rulers can have authority over such natural rights only as we have submitted to them. The rights of conscience we never submitted. We could not submit. We are answerable for them to our God.”*  
*Thomas Jefferson*

**Court Ruled in Favor of Religious Liberty for Colorado Christian Preschool**

The U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado recently ruled in favor of Darren Patterson Christian Academy in a [case](#) involving Colorado’s universal pre-K program. As the [AACCS](#) previously reported, Darren Patterson joined Colorado’s universal pre-K program but requested an exemption from the program’s nondiscrimination clause, which forces schools to comply with the program’s gender identity policies. Darren Patterson accepts all students but requires parents and the school staff to support and uphold the school’s religious mission and policies. When Darren Patterson’s exemption request was denied, it sued and requested a preliminary injunction to participate in the universal pre-K program while the lawsuit continues. Colorado officials argued that Darren Patterson lacked standing to bring the lawsuit because no one had filed a discrimination claim against the school. However, Judge Daniel Domenico found that Darren Patterson had standing because it faced a credible threat of enforcement. Domenico granted the injunction and noted Darren Patterson is likely to win on its First Amendment religion and free speech claims, citing recent Supreme Court decisions that bolster religious liberty for schools.

Although Domenico did recognize that the school’s policies were in violation of the state’s nondiscrimination standards for preschools in the program, he also found that Colorado’s rules are likely biased because they allow for exemptions in some circumstances, such as for a church school, but not in others, such as a religious school like Darren Patterson. Colorado had claimed it has an interest in preserving “equitable” and “universal” preschool services. Yet as Domenico stated in his [order](#): “Exclusion of a preschool is inherently anti-universal, and denying participation based on one’s protected beliefs or speech is not equitable.” He also [noted](#) that the school was claiming its right to participate in a government benefit program without “disavow[ing] its religious character.” Domenico agreed that the “Department’s policies infringe on that right, which forces [the] Plaintiff into the unconstitutional choice of abandoning religiously motivated practices or foregoing otherwise available public funding. The First Amendment forbids imposing such a choice.” The case brings a victory in the ongoing battle to protect the religious liberty of faith-based schools to participate in programs that are available to the general public and also to maintain their biblical standards and policies regarding human sexuality.

**New Speaker of the House Mike Johnson**

Last week, Rep. Mike Johnson was voted in as the 56th Speaker of the House of Representatives. Johnson, a Republican, has represented Louisiana’s 4th congressional district since 2017. Prior to his becoming Speaker, the name Mike Johnson was relatively unknown to many. However, Johnson, a Southern Baptist, has a history of supporting conservative policies and promoting the Bible’s role in government and everyday life. Before he was elected to Congress, Johnson served on the board of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (the policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention), as an attorney with Alliance Defending Freedom, and as representative for the Louisiana State Legislature. During his four terms in Congress, Johnson has consistently

championed conservative ideals and the biblical view of life and sexuality. “ ‘Gender affirming care’ is anything but ‘affirming’ and ‘caring,’ ” [said](#) Johnson recently of the push to mutilate children. Some people have expressed concern over Johnson’s faith and his vote against certifying the 2020 election. “Johnson’s brand of Christian nationalism is bad American history and a betrayal of the historic Baptist commitment to religious freedom,” [said](#) Amanda Tyler, the executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty. Yet the faith that sets the Speaker apart is exactly what has appealed to many others. “Mike Johnson is a strong conservative, but above all else, he is a strong Christian,” [said](#) Rep. Greg Steube. “He’s not afraid to look to his faith for guidance. America needs that more than ever in the U.S. House.”

### **Georgia Supreme Court Upholds Pro-Life Heartbeat Law**

The Georgia Supreme Court has ruled that the Living Infants Fairness and Equality (LIFE) Act [can go into effect](#), ensuring that life will be protected in Georgia once a baby’s heartbeat is detected. The LIFE Act was passed in 2019 and immediately challenged by Planned Parenthood, the Center for Reproductive Rights, and the American Civil Liberties Union. After an initial ruling by a lower court against the law, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the law after the 2022 Supreme Court *Dobbs* decision which overturned *Roe v. Wade*. Planned Parenthood and other abortion groups then filed suit again, charging that since the LIFE Act had been signed into law in 2019, it should be considered unconstitutional since *Roe v. Wade* was still in effect at that time. The Superior Court of Fulton County in Atlanta agreed and in November 2022 ruled that LIFE Act was void *ab initio* (from the beginning). However, last week, the state Supreme Court ruled the law could go into effect. The ruling stated that the “incorrect conclusion” of the Fulton County court was based “on a faulty premise—that, in *Dobbs*, the United States Supreme Court changed not only its interpretation of the United States Constitution, but also the meaning of the Constitution itself.” In addition to protecting life once a heartbeat is detected, the [LIFE act](#) also “recognize[s] unborn children as natural persons,” ensuring that unborn children receive the same rights, medical provisions, and legal protection that are guaranteed through the constitution and other laws.

### **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](#)

[School Choice is Better for Democracy Than Government Schooling](#)

[Poll Shows Relationship between Religious People and Positive Outlook](#)