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*“Educate and inform the whole mass of the people. . . .
They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.”*
Thomas Jefferson

School Choice Update: Several State Legislatures Considering Expanding Education Options

School choice is a top priority for many state legislatures, with several states considering programs that would be open to all families. In [Tennessee](#), Gov. Bill Lee stated his strong support for more school choice in his State of the State address and urged the legislature to expand the current school choice programs, which are offered in only three counties, to the entire state. This week in Tennessee, a bill [passed](#) the K-12 House Education Subcommittee. This bill would offer school choice to 20,000 students across the state with a plan to expand to universal eligibility after a year. The bill also proposes changes to testing and principal and teacher accountability in public schools. In a 190-189 vote, the [New Hampshire](#) House narrowly approved expanding the eligibility requirements for participation in the state’s Education Freedom Account program. The bill would increase the family income eligibility requirement from 350% to 500% of the federal poverty level, an increase that would allow near-universal participation. Gov. Chris Sununu will likely sign the bill into law if it passes the state senate. In [Louisiana](#), school choice proponents are hopeful that this will be the year to pass universal school choice. In 2023, the legislature considered a bill that would have expanded the current voucher program by removing burdensome regulations for participating schools and increasing the eligibility parameters for students, but the bill did not have the support of the governor at the time and failed to pass. However, newly elected Gov. Jeff Landry has stated that school choice is his top priority, and a bipartisan supermajority in the state legislature also supports school choice, as does the state superintendent of education. In [Alabama](#), the legislature is considering S.B. 61, the Creating Hope and Opportunity for Our Students’ Education (CHOOSE) Act, which would create a tax credit program that would function like an education savings account program. If passed, the program would allow families to use a tax credit for a variety of educational methods including private school tuition (up to \$7,000) and home school expenses (up to \$2,000 per student). The plan, which would be universal after limited eligibility for the first two years, has the strong support of Gov. Kay Ivey who stated in her State of the State address that school choice is her [top legislative priority](#).

Other states are also considering school choice legislation that would offer limited eligibility options. In [Georgia](#), Gov. Brian Kemp has offered his support for school choice, and state lawmakers are currently considering a bill that would provide school choice for students in low-performing public schools. The measure was passed by the state senate last year but then failed to pass the house. However, a second house vote allowed the bill to carry over for [consideration in the new legislation session](#). In [Idaho](#), a bill has been introduced that would establish a refundable tax credit program for families who choose nonpublic education. Lawmakers in [Wyoming](#) and [Mississippi](#) are also considering school choice legislation but face some hurdles in garnering enough support to get the programs passed. FutureEd, a non-partisan education think tank, has developed a [tracker](#) for state legislation on school choice bills, as school choice continues to grow and expand across states.

School Choice Calculator Provides Information on Fiscal Effects of School Choice

EdChoice and the Reason Foundation have [launched](#) the [School Choice Calculator](#), a tool that will help legislators, policymakers, analysts, and key stakeholders calculate the fiscal effects of state school choice programs. The calculator allows users to select a state and then enter four different inputs that the calculator uses to determine the fiscal effects. First, users select their plan type. For instance, they can choose a universal plan open to all students or an income-based plan, among other plan options. Then, the users choose how much money each student would receive in an education savings account (ESA). Third, users select what percent of public students they expect to participate in the program. Finally, users select what percent of eligible private and homeschooled students they expect will participate in the program. The program then calculates various effects such as the number of total students who would participate in the program and the ESA's cost compared to the state's public school revenue. The program contains some limitations because it cannot provide potential changes to a state's budget. However, Martin Lueken, the EdChoice Director of Fiscal Policy and Analysis, [hopes](#) that "this tool can be useful for lawmakers and stakeholders and help inform program design."

Alabama Supreme Court Recognizes an Embryo as a Human Child

In an important civil case, the Alabama Supreme Court recently ruled that an embryo outside the womb is still a human child. The case involved three sets of parents whose embryos were created through in vitro fertilization. These parents then placed their children in a "cryogenic nursery," which keeps the embryos alive by storing them at subzero temperatures. However, a patient at the fertility clinic gained unauthorized access to the embryo storage area and attempted to remove some of the frozen embryos. The freezing temperature of the containers caused them to be dropped, killing the embryos. The parents sued under Alabama's Wrongful Death of a Minor Act, a state law that allows parents to sue those responsible for their child's death. After a trial court dismissed most of the parents' claims, the parents appealed. The state supreme court took up the case, ultimately ruling that embryos, including embryos outside of the womb, are children, a decision that allows the parents to continue their lawsuit. In his concurring [opinion](#), Chief Justice Tom Parker referenced biblical principles about the sanctity of life, an opinion that has led to some linking him to "[Christian nationalism](#)" or implementing a [theocracy](#). But as [Lael Weinberger](#) from WORLD has pointed out, Parker merely acknowledged that Christian thought has influenced fundamental legal concepts including the sanctity of life protected in Alabama's constitution. "If one objects to Christianity's influence on American law," Weinberger wrote, "it's not just the 'sanctity of life' that must be excised."

In Case You Missed It:

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

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

[Promise to America's Children](#)

[NEW! AACCS Today Podcast: The Low Down on the Border Bill](#)

[Teacher Edition Podcast: AACCS Executive Director Jeff Walton Discusses Unlocking the Power of Standardized Testing](#)

['The Blessing and the Curse': Christian Nationalism and the War for the West](#)

[No, Alabama Has Not Become a Theocracy](#)

Jamison Coppola: Government Relations Director

Olivia Summers: Government Relations Assistant

Maureen Van Den Berg: Policy Analyst

Washington Office, 119 C Street SE, Washington, DC 20003