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*“A sacred respect for the constitutional law is the vital principle, the sustaining energy of a free government.”*  
*Thomas Jefferson*

**Application Process Open for AACCS Youth Legislative Training Conference**

Each summer the American Association of Christian Schools hosts the [AACCS Youth Legislative Training Conference](#) for high school students interested in history and the political process. The week-long conference is held in Washington, D.C., and provides students with the opportunity to learn about the political world through a biblical worldview. The YLTC 2024 will take place July 8–12 and will include a mock senate in which students role-play senators, workshops and seminars by conservative leaders, and tours of historical landmarks in our nation’s capital. Interested students from AACCS member schools should apply through their state association office. More information about the [application process can be found here](#).

**Alabama Passes Universal School Choice**

Last week, Alabama Governor Kay Ivey [signed](#) into law the CHOOSE Act (Creating Hope and Opportunity for our Students Education Act), making Alabama the 14th state to create a universal school choice program. The governor has been a staunch supporter of school choice, making the passage of a comprehensive program a top priority this year. After the bill passed the Senate (23-9) late Thursday evening, the governor signed it into law Friday morning. “Our plan will not only work for Alabama families. It will work for the state and will be effective and sustainable for generations to come,” [stated](#) Governor Ivey upon signing the bill. The CHOOSE Act establishes a refundable tax credit program which will allow parents to use the tax credit for educational expenses. The program will be set up like an education savings account program, providing funds for parents to choose the best educational method that meets their children’s needs. The [program](#) is set to begin on January 1, 2025, with an appropriated \$100 million to provide participating families with \$7000 per child to use on educational expenses such as tutoring, tuition, and education therapies. Eligible families the first two years will include those whose earnings are less than 300% of the federal poverty level, with priority given to special education students, military families, and families in districts with underperforming schools. By 2027, the program will have no income cap and be open to all Alabama families.

Mr. J. Robin Mears, executive director of the AACCS state affiliate [Alabama Christian Education Association](#) (ACEA), has worked tirelessly on the school choice issue in Alabama, advocating not only for options for students and families but also for strong protections for the autonomy of participating schools, especially Christian schools. “The CHOOSE Act will allow all Alabama children to have the opportunity for a Christian education.” He added, “Parents should have a choice for their children’s education, and it should not be a burdened choice. School choice ensures that parents have the option to choose the best education for their children. We applaud passage of the CHOOSE Act which will open the doors of educational possibilities for Alabama families.”

## Supreme Court Declines to Hear Religious Liberty Case

The Supreme Court [recently declined](#) to hear a religious liberty case out of Missouri concerning the state's dismissal of jurors because of their religious beliefs on sexuality. In the case [Missouri Department of Corrections v. Finney](#), Jean Finney sued her employer over alleged workplace discrimination because she was a lesbian. During jury selection, Finney's attorney asked jurors the "tricky question" of whether they "went to a conservative Christian church" that "taught that people [who] are homosexual shouldn't have the same rights as everyone else" because homosexuality was "a sin." Two jurors agreed that homosexuality was a sin according to the Bible and were dismissed from the case. Justice Samuel Alito wrote a response to the Court's denial, in which he agreed not to consider the case because of a complicated "state-law procedural issue," but wrote separately to discuss the case as a dangerous consequence of the Court's *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) decision. Alito condemned the lower court's reasoning "that a person who still holds traditional religious views on questions of sexual morality is presumptively unfit to serve on a jury in a case involving a party who is a lesbian." Despite the Court's assurance in *Obergefell* that the biblical view of marriage is "decent and honorable" and held "in good faith by reasonable and sincere people," Alito noted that the clear consequence of that ruling was that "Americans who do not hide their adherence to traditional religious beliefs about homosexual conduct will be 'labeled as bigots and treated as such' by the government." While the court declined to hear this case, Justice Alito indicated the Court should consider the serious religious liberty question presented here in a future case.

## University of Florida Halts DEI Funding, Fires DEI Staff

The University of Florida has [eliminated](#) 13 full-time positions and 15 administrative appointments related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. The university has also closed the Office of the Chief Diversity Officer. The university will allocate the \$5 million it was spending on DEI into a faculty recruitment fund. The university's decision comes after Florida passed SB 266, a bill that prohibits public universities from using federal or state money to fund DEI programs. Consequently, the [Florida State Board of Education](#) and the [State University System of Florida Board of Governors](#) voted to approve regulations that align with the new law. Some are disappointed by the decision to eliminate DEI. "People won't feel like they belong, or that they should even come to the state of Florida to study here, because it's like: 'Okay, am I even safe? Do I belong here?'" [asked](#) Lorena Bacallao, an advertising major at the University of Florida. But others see the decision as an important first step. "DEI is toxic and has no place in our public universities," [said](#) Gov. Ron DeSantis. "I'm glad that Florida was the first state to eliminate DEI and I hope more states follow suit." Although many states have focused on eliminating DEI programs at the college level, others, such as [Texas](#), have also tried to eliminate it at the K-12 level. Pro-DEI efforts are common in public schools. A 2023 [survey](#) found that 34% of school districts' missions statements encourage DEI efforts.

## 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](#)

[NEW! AACIS Today Podcast: Protecting Children, Part 2: A Conversation with Ohio State Rep. Gary Click](#)

[Al Mohler: This Is Where the Transgender Movement Is Going](#)