



A Publication of the American Association of Christian Schools

**The Washington Flyer**  
**March 29, 2024**

*“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”*  
**John 11:25–26**

**Kentucky and Oregon Consider Constitutional Amendments to Advance School Choice**

Two states are currently considering adding amendments to their state constitutions to advance school choice. In Kentucky, the state constitution only allows for tax money to be sent to common, or public schools. Because of this provision, past school choice efforts in the states have failed. For instance, in 2022 the Kentucky Supreme Court [struck down](#) the Education Opportunity Account Act, a tax credit school choice law. In 2023, a law allowing charter schools was also declared [unconstitutional](#). After losing in the courts, the Kentucky General Assembly turned its efforts to passing a different type of bill, a bill that would allow voters a say in the matter. The bill, H.B. 2, would let voters decide whether to amend the constitution and allow the legislature to provide financial support for nonpublic schools. The bill was [passed](#) 65-32 in the state House. “I would like to see every child in the Commonwealth of Kentucky to have the very best access and level playing field to seek the ability to live the American dream,” said Rep. Suzanne Miles (R-Owensboro), the bill’s sponsor. The bill then moved to the Senate, where it passed 27-8. “This is a game changer,” said Sen. Stephen West, chair of the Education Committee. “This will dictate where we are 25 years from now.” Some members voiced concerns about the speed with which the bill was passed. “I worry, Mr. President, that we are so desperate to pass this amendment and give money to private schools to take it away from our public schools that we are risking shredding the Kentucky Constitution to make that happen,” said Sen. Cassie Chambers Armstrong in a floor speech. Gov. Andy Beshear has [promised](#) to “work every day to defeat it [the amendment].” However, voters will have the final say when they vote on the amendment in the November election.

Over on the West Coast, the group [Let Them Learn Oregon](#) is gathering signatures for two ballot initiatives. The [first ballot initiative](#) would allow the state to have open enrollment, letting students attend whatever public or charter school they like if open seats exist. The [second ballot initiative](#) would create an education savings account for families in the state. If passed, parents could enroll in a School Choice Account for each of their children. The parents would then receive at least \$7,600 in their account to use toward paying for approved education expenses, such as private school tuition. If parents still have money in a child’s account at the end of the year, that money will roll over to the next year. The petition also includes language that prevents the government from forcing parents and education providers to change their standards, procedures, or credentials to participate. According to Let Them Learn, [68%](#) of Oregon adults support a school choice program. If the group gathers enough signatures for each initiative, they will be placed on the November ballot for voters to decide. If the petitions pass, the Oregon Constitution will be amended to include the two initiatives. “Give Oregonians a chance to vote for school choice,” [said](#) Kurt Williams, communications chair of the Washington County Republicans. “After drastic learning losses through COVID, it’s the least we can do to improve our educational system, create competition and remove politically motivated union bosses from the equation.”

## Revision of Free Application for Federal Student Aid

The Office of Non-Public Education (ONPE) in the U.S. Department of Education has published information regarding the revised process for FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). The revised FAFSA faced several glitches in its rollout earlier this year, causing a high level of frustration among families and students trying to prepare for college next year. According to the ONPE, “The revamped FAFSA form—also known as ‘Better FAFSA’—takes many students less than 20 minutes to complete and can unlock up to \$7,395 in federal aid that does not need to be repaid to help cover the cost of college.” The information at the links below has been prepared to help students navigate the revised process. For someone unfamiliar with FAFSA, all of the resources will be helpful. The “Pro Tips” link can be especially helpful for knowing what is different about the 2024 FAFSA and what students will need to collect before starting the application. For more information about the FAFSA process, check out [StudentAid.gov here](https://studentaid.gov). Additional resources on the U.S. Department of Education’s website [here](#).

1. [Video: What is FAFSA?](#)
2. [FAFSA Checklist & Timeline for Students & Families](#)
3. [Pro Tips for the 2024-2025 FAFSA Form](#)
4. [FAFSA “How To” Videos](#)
5. [FAFSA Bootcamp Webinar Recording](#)

## Religious Liberty Victory in Virginia

Virginia residents have obtained a major religious liberty victory in the case [Calvary Road Baptist Church v. Miyares](#). Back in 2020, the state passed the Virginia Values Act and added sexual orientation or gender identity to its anti-discrimination law, violating the rights of ministries to operate according to their religious beliefs. For instance, religious organizations could be forced to hire employees who have different beliefs on abortion, marriage, and sexuality. In addition, religious organizations could be forced to pay for insurance plans for “gender transition” procedures such as puberty blockers or mastectomies. Because of the devastating effects of the law, Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) filed a lawsuit on behalf of two churches, three Christian schools, and a pregnancy center network. Judge James E. Plowman Jr. initially [ruled against](#) ADF, and ADF then appealed. This month, ADF reached a favorable settlement with Virginia, and the attorney general agreed that because the organizations are religious, they are exempt from the law. “Religious organizations are free to operate their ministries without fear of government punishment, and Virginia’s law protects that foundational right,” [said](#) ADF senior counsel Kevin Theriot. “The commonwealth must respect their right—just like anyone else’s—to continue operating by their own internal policies and codes of conduct about life, marriage, and sexuality.” Although the settlement is legally binding only to the parties of the lawsuit, religious rights advocates note that the settlement provides a precedent to protect the rights of other organizations.

## 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: Words of Wisdom for Pastors and Administrators with Pastor Jeff Redlin](#)

[Registration Information for a Webinar on Equitable Services Available Through ESEA, Hosted by Office of Non-Public Education](#)

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