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“I have heretofore argued to show that the Christian religion—its general principles—must ever be regarded among us as the foundation of civil society.”
Daniel Webster

AACS National Bible, Fine Arts, and Academic Competition Report

Last week, the 46th AACS National Competition was held in Greenville, South Carolina. Approximately 1,800 students and sponsors from 188 schools representing 33 states competed in 76 different categories in Bible, art, music, speech, and academics. Throughout the week, students heard special chapel messages from Mark Davis from Faith Baptist Bible College challenging students to live biblically and make the right choices. Bob Jones University faculty, staff, and students graciously facilitated the annual student competition and provided activities and accommodations for the event. The three-day competition culminated Thursday night with an [awards ceremony](#) that included a showcase highlighting some of the best entries by several individuals and schools. The AACS Cup of Excellence was awarded to the state that accumulated the highest point total, going to Virginia this year, with New Jersey in second place and Georgia and Tennessee tied for third place. The AACS offers our warmest congratulations to all the students who participated and made this year’s National Competition a memorable event. To view the complete list of this year’s winners, click [here](#). For pictures and information from the event, please visit our Facebook page [here](#).

Study Shows Private School Students Are Better Equipped to be Civic-Minded

A [study](#) published this week shows that private schools are more effective than public schools in cultivating positive civic outcomes in students. The report analyzed data from 57 studies from around the world and examined the data in four general areas: political tolerance, political participation, civic knowledge and skills, and voluntarism and social capital. Titled [“The Public Purposes of Private Education: a Civic Outcomes Meta-Analysis,”](#) the report is authored by a team of researchers and scholars from the University of Buckingham in the United Kingdom and the University of Arkansas. Lead author M. Danish Shakeel from the University of Buckingham [noted](#), “Since public schools were often established specifically to prepare children for citizenship, one might assume that they’re superior to private schools at that function. Our research shows that is not the case. Private schooling does not threaten democracy. In fact, it may strengthen it.” Interestingly, the study also found that “religious schooling appears to increase civic outcomes in comparison to its secular counterpart, whether public or private.” The authors specifically noted that “even for the outcome of political tolerance, which arguably, is the toughest test for religious schooling effects on civics,” the results indicated that there is no negative effect from religious education in this area. The report comes just a year after the National Assessment for Education Progress [released history and civics test scores](#) that revealed that only 13% of eighth graders are proficient in U.S. history and 22% show proficiency in civics. These scores are the lowest the scores have ever been and have caused a debate among educators and policymakers as to the reason for the declining scores, and ways to improve civics and history education. Patrick Wolf of the University of Arkansas and a co-author of the recent study [stated](#), “With civics education in such a sorry state, our research points to a possible solution. Education pluralism, advanced by effective school choice policies, seems to be a boon, and not a bane for civics outcomes.”

Supreme Court Allows Idaho Law Protecting Minors to Take Effect

The Supreme Court has issued an [emergency order](#) that will allow an Idaho law that protects minors from sterilizing procedures and surgeries to go into effect. In 2023, Idaho Gov. Brad Little signed the Vulnerable Child Protection Act into law, making it a crime for physicians to perform sterilizing surgeries on minors suffering from gender dysphoria or to prescribe them chemically castrating drugs such as puberty blockers. The law was supposed to go into effect on January 1. However, two transgender-identifying boys and their families sued and requested access to estrogen “therapy,” a request a federal district court granted. The court then went further and blocked Idaho from enforcing the law across the state, an injunction that goes beyond the scope of the original relief the plaintiffs requested. When the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the injunction, Idaho Attorney General Raul Labrador filed an emergency appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. All liberal-leaning justices voted against overturning the injunction while the majority of conservative justices voted to overturn it. Chief Justice John Roberts declined to announce how he voted. The injunction will now be pared down. Although the two transgender-identifying boys can access estrogen “therapy,” the rest of the law will go into effect as the case continues through the court system.

Arizona Supreme Court Upholds 1864 Ban on Abortions

The Arizona Supreme Court recently upheld a 160-year-old law that prohibits abortions except in the case of saving the life of the mother. The ban was passed in 1864, when Arizona was a territory, but blocked in 1973 after the decision in *Roe v. Wade*. Then-Attorney General Mark Brnovich called on the state to [enforce](#) the law after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in *Dobbs v. Jackson*. However, Arizona’s Court of Appeals stopped the ban from being enforced and ruled that the ban could be “harmonized” with a 2022 law that allows abortions up to 15 weeks. The legal battle continued for two years until the Arizona Supreme Court released its opinion and determined that the 1864 abortion ban should be enforced. “The legislature has demonstrated its consistent design to restrict elective abortion to the degree permitted by the Supremacy Clause and an unwavering intent since 1864 to proscribe elective abortions absent a federal constitutional right,” the court [determined](#). Many [Republican](#) representatives such as state Rep. Matt Gress and state Sen. TJ Shope denounced the decision to protect life. U.S. Republican Senate candidate Kari Lake said she wants the state Legislature to “come up with an immediate commonsense solution” instead of the abortion ban. However, pro-life advocates have celebrated the protection of life. “We celebrate the Arizona supreme court’s decision that allows the state’s pro-life law to again protect the lives of countless, innocent, unborn children,” said Jake Warner, a senior counsel with Alliance Defending Freedom. The ban will be reinstated on April 23.

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: Safeguarding Charity](#)

[Florida Supreme Court Allows Heartbeat Law to Take Effect, Protecting Babies from Abortion](#)

[Are You Angry at the “Other Side” in the School Choice Debate?](#)

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