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“Let each citizen remember at the moment he is offering his vote that he is not making a present or a compliment to please an individual—or at least that he ought not so to do; but that he is executing one of the most solemn trusts in human society for which he is accountable to God and his country.”

Sam Adams

AACS Joins Amicus Brief Supporting Religious Liberty in School Choice in Maine

The AACS has joined an [amicus brief](#) in [St. Dominic Academy v. Makin](#), a religious liberty and education freedom case. The case involves religious schools that want to participate in Maine’s tuition assistance program. Under the program, the state provides money to rural families to pay for their children’s education when they live too far away to attend public school. The [Maine Human Rights Act](#) (MHRA) prohibits families from using the money to send their children to schools that have “discriminatory” practices. The “discrimination” prohibited by the MHRA includes faith-based policies such as maintaining biblical standards on sexuality or requiring faculty to abide by the school’s religious mission. Thus, the MHRA excludes St. Dominic and other religious schools under the guise of “anti-discrimination.” St. Dominic lost at a federal district court and has now appealed to the U.S. 1st Circuit Court of Appeals. However, the U.S. Supreme Court has already ruled in [Carson v. Makin](#) that Maine must allow religious schools to participate in the program.

In its brief, the AACS argued that the federal district court [improperly applied strict scrutiny](#), the most rigorous standard of judicial review, to decide if Maine violated St. Dominic’s First Amendment freedoms. The brief made two central arguments. First, the district court failed to apply the strict scrutiny principle established in [Carson v. Makin](#). “It does not matter whether these [anti-discrimination] provisions expressly mention religion;” the brief said, “it is enough that St. Dominic could remain in the tuitioning program but for its faith-based policies, which are themselves an exercise of religion.” Second, the brief argued that the district court’s strict scrutiny analysis was flawed because it glossed over Maine’s history of religious discrimination. “The government can survive strict scrutiny ‘only in rare cases,’ ” said the brief, “and a court’s review ‘must not be strict in theory but feeble in fact.’ ” The AACS brief highlights a troubling trend: the use of “anti-discrimination” rhetoric increasingly used to target religious institutions. Although Maine claims it wants to prevent discrimination, the state is discriminating against religious schools and families. The AACS [urges](#) “the 1st Circuit to uphold Supreme Court precedent that ensures religious schools can receive public benefits without being forced to give up their religious character or exercise.”

Bill of Rights Essay Contest for Christian School and Homeschool Students

The Herzog Foundation is sponsoring a [Bill of Rights Essay Contest](#) for middle school and high school students in Christian schools and homeschools. Interested students should submit an essay that is 1500 words or less that responds to this prompt: *What made the Bill of Rights revolutionary and unique at the time of its ratification? How has it shaped the United States and its citizens over the years?* Winners will receive \$300, with runners-up receiving \$150. The deadline for entry submission is November 27, 2024. For more information, please [click here](#).

New Poll Shows Strong Support for Federal School Choice Program

As the election nears, more voters are expressing their support for educational freedom. The [Center Square Voter's Voice Poll](#) conducted by Noble Predictive Insights released a national poll showing that 69% of respondents support a federal tax credit for school choice. Only 20% opposed the measure, with the remainder unsure. Supporters of school choice span the ideological grounds. For instance, 77% of Republicans and 62% of Democrats support having a federal school choice program. In addition, 60% of independent voters support the program. "If you look at the party crosstabs, you have very high support amongst Republicans, and you have some strong support amongst Democrats," [said](#) David Byler, chief of research at Noble Predictive Insights. As a result, federal school choice becomes "a classic wedge issue, an issue where one party is united, and the other party is divided." Overall, voters trust former President Donald Trump more than Vice President Kamala Harris when it comes to education. A national [poll](#) by AtlasIntel found that Trump had a three-point advantage over Harris on the issue. At a [campaign stop](#) in Milwaukee earlier this month, Trump celebrated the city as "the home of the first and oldest school choice" program and called education "the civil-rights issue of our age." [The Republican platform](#) lists "universal school choice" as one of its commitments. [The Democratic platform](#) opposes the measure. "Kamala Harris and her running mate are bankrolled by the teachers' unions," [said](#) Anthony de Nicola, chairman of Invest in Education Coalition, "and are prioritizing special interests over parents and their children."

Survey Shows Reasons for Increase in Homeschooling

A national [survey](#) by the [yes. every. kid. foundation.](#) has shown that homeschooling parents want more flexibility and options for their children's education. The survey asked 1,000 homeschooling parents a variety of questions about their families, why they started homeschooling, and what they thought about educational freedom. A majority of parents (58%) started homeschooling their children within the past two years. Most of the parents identified as married and white. When asked about political parties, 40% were Republican, and 47% were Democrat. Parents cited concerns about school safety and desires for flexibility in their children's schedules and curriculums as top reasons why they chose to homeschool their children. A majority of parents also supported educational freedom. For instance, 89% of parents believed children should be able to access public school on a course-by-course basis. In addition, 84% supported educational savings accounts (ESAs), and 88% supported direct tax credits for education expenses. Most parents (67%) believed that their states should offer ESAs and that the parents could then decide whether to participate. "Homeschool parents want what every parent wants—the freedom to access the best education for their child as possible," [said](#) Matt Friendewey, the foundation's vice president of strategy. "They recognize the value of educational freedom and programs that put parents in charge of their child's education. This data shows they're leading the charge for programs like ESAs that give families the flexibility they need."

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](#)

[NEW! AACCS Today Podcast: The Battle for Religious Liberty Continues with Professor William Wagner](#)

[Hurricane Helene Relief for GACS Schools](#) and [NCCSA Hurricane Helene Disaster Relief Fund](#)

[Election Resources and Voter Guides for Churches](#)

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