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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*

AACS Accepting Applications for Youth Legislative Training Conference

The application process is open for this year's [AACS Youth Legislative Training Conference](#) (YLTC)! Each summer, the AACS hosts the YLTC for high school students to learn more about the political process through a biblical worldview. The week-long conference includes a mock senate, workshops from top conservative leaders, and tours of historical sites in Washington, D.C. The 2025 conference is scheduled Monday–Friday, July 7–11. For more information, including the steps for the application process, please visit the [AACS website](#) or contact your state association office. **Applications are due to state offices by Monday, March 31.**

Trump Signs Executive Order to Dismantle the Department of Education

President Trump has [signed](#) an executive order instructing Secretary of Education Linda McMahon to begin dismantling the Department of Education. The president has long prioritized the Department's destruction and has been laying the groundwork for weeks. For instance, Trump has rolled back grants tied to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives along with other ideological programs. He has also significantly reduced the Department's workforce (see article below). In a ceremony yesterday, Trump highlighted the failures of the Department, including recent statistics showing [dismal test scores](#) in reading and math. In comparison, the Department's budget has exploded with America outspending other large countries yet performing near the bottom of the list. Trump promised to "return education back to the states where it belongs." Accordingly, he instructed McMahon to take all legal steps to narrow the scope of the Department yet still keep all essential functions in force. For instance, the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights will move to the Justice Department. Trump emphasized that Pell Grants and Title I programs will be fully preserved but redistributed to other agencies. He touted the measure as popular and commonsense and promised to "take care of our teachers." He also highlighted the value of children as "our most cherished group of people" and included several children in the ceremony. Lindsey Burke, director of the Center for Education Policy at the Heritage Foundation, lauded the president's actions. "Congress must now follow the President's lead," she [said](#), to "permanently dismantle" the Department of Education.

School Choice Hearing on Capitol Hill

As Congress considers a bill to create a [federal school choice program](#), the Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Committee [held a hearing](#) on Capitol Hill to examine the benefits of school choice. Witnesses Michael McShane of EdChoice, Jenny Clark from Love Your School, and Walter Banks, Jr., with the American Federation for Children, all spoke about the successes of school choice. McShane provided facts from the many studies showing the positive effects of school choice on student achievement, parental satisfaction, community safety, and even area public schools. Clark shared how an education savings account program provided necessary help to her sons with special needs, and Banks testified how the Florida school choice program offered him hope as a student when he was on a path of failure. In contrast, Jessica Levin from the

Education Law Center charged that school choice programs only created problems and hurt public education and students. In her testimony, she claimed that school choice programs take away the rights of special needs children, allow private schools to discriminate without any accountability, and defund public schools of essential funding. However, her claims were challenged repeatedly by Republican lawmakers who pointed to research and real-life examples, including the other witnesses, which contradicted her claims. In one telling exchange, Rep. Burgess Owens (UT) [called out](#) Levin's opposition to school choice when she was the beneficiary of a private school education. When she responded that her education was her parents' choice for her, he noted that they exercised this choice because they believed it was the best education for her over the public schools. "What gets me is how people like yourself, I would say this, across the board, parents who have an option, they put their kids in the best school because they know that's an investment for their kid's future. And yet you come here and say how well it doesn't work." The chair of the subcommittee, Rep. Kevin Kiley (CA), [pointed out](#) in his closing remarks that opponents of school choice don't just oppose a certain type of program, "They oppose school choice in general. . . . That is the troubling theme that comes out of this is that the opposition is really to anything that disrupts the business model of keeping kids trapped in failing schools. And it is that business model that has led to this education decline in our country." He added, "What we are seeing emerge is a new model where the money follows the student. This is what extends opportunities to families who have no other options and it's what catalyzes system-wide change."

Department of Education Makes Significant Cuts to Employee Positions

The Education Department has cut its workforce nearly in half after initiating a [reduction in force](#). When President Trump came into office, the Department had 4,133 employees. That number now stands at 2,183. The reduction occurred after Secretary of Education Linda McMahon [promised](#) to eliminate "unnecessary bureaucracy" at the agency. The Department initially offered employees generous compensation packages to leave voluntarily. About 600 employees accepted the offers. The remaining laid-off employees start administrative leave today and will receive full pay and benefits until June 9. The reduction touched almost every area of the Department, cutting and eliminating entire offices. For instance, the Institute of Education Sciences dropped to under 20 employees compared to its previous size of about 100 workers. Critics worry the cuts will incapacitate the Department. A coalition of 20 Democratic state attorneys general [sued](#) to prevent Trump from dismantling the Department through a reduction in force. One court has already ordered Trump to [reinstate](#) thousands of probationary workers affected by other downsizing efforts, including 65 employees at the Education Department. Others worry that the laid-off employees could [receive priority](#) for other federal positions. However, McMahon views the reduction as a positive step for the Department. "[The] reduction in force reflects the Department of Education's commitment to efficiency, accountability, and ensuring that resources are directed where they matter most: to students, parents, and teachers," [said](#) McMahon. "I appreciate the work of the dedicated public servants and their contributions to the Department. This is a significant step toward restoring the greatness of the United States education system."

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](#)

[Remember Maine: A State Government Tries to Force Its Preferred Ideology on Parents and Children](#)

[Universal School Choice is Spreading Fast Across the Country](#)

[Missouri AG Orders Planned Parenthood to Stop Dispensing Abortion Pills](#)