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*“Without freedom of thought there can be no such thing as wisdom;
and no such things a public liberty without freedom of speech.”
Benjamin Franklin*

AACS Hosts National Bible, Fine Arts, and Academic Competition Next Week

Next week, approximately 1,800 students from 187 schools in 34 states will compete in the 47th annual AACS National Competition. Contestants will compete in 76 categories in the five basic areas of Bible, music, speech, art, and academics. We are looking forward to an exciting week with these students as they compete. There will be no *Washington Flyer* next week while our staff will be busy at the competition. We invite you to follow our [AACCS Facebook page](#) for updates from the AACS National Competition.

Department of Education Encourages States to Expand School Choice through Title I

The Department of Education published a [guidance letter](#) to all chief state school offices to encourage the use of Title I funds for providing parental choice in education. Title I was passed as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and it ensures that supplemental federal funds are provided to school districts with a high population of low-income families. The Title I funds are distributed to states which then direct the money to local education agencies (LEAs) to use according to the needs of the district. The guidance letter from the Department points out that the law allows for up to 3% of a state’s Title I funds to be used for direct student services that will “provide greater choice for parents and improve academic outcomes.” While the states are limited in telling the LEAs exactly how to use Title I funds, the guidance notes that states can establish priorities that will encourage the LEAs to use these funds for direct student services and thus expand educational options and choices for parents and students. According to the letter, direct student services funds can include such things as “advanced courses, dual enrollment, academic tutoring, career and technical education, personalized learning, and out-of-school activities.”

Currently, Ohio is the only state to take advantage of the opportunity to provide choice options through Title I funds. “It’s important for the parents, educators and school leaders who best know the needs of their students and families to have the go-ahead to put in place programs to match those needs,” [stated](#) Stephen Dackin, director of the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce. “Whether it’s credit recovery programs, advanced coursework, or expanding career pathways, the goal is the same for every Ohio student—to meet their full potential.” The guidance letter is a [response](#) to Trump’s executive order on [Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunities for Families](#) which instructed the Secretary of Education to “issue guidance regarding how States can use Federal formula funds to support K-12 educational choice initiatives.” The guidance letter indicates that this is the first of several that the Department of Education will publish to point out areas where states can incorporate and provide school choice in existing programs funded by federal aid.

Kentucky Legislature Votes to Protect Minors and Override Governor Veto

The Kentucky Legislature has voted to [override](#) the governor’s veto of a bill that protects minors. The bill ensures all counseling options are available for those struggling with gender dysphoria. The bill, [House Bill 495](#), was introduced earlier this year specifically to undo an [executive order](#) issued by Gov. Andy Beshear last

fall which prohibited “conversion therapy” for minors. The [order defined](#) “conversion therapy” as “any practice, treatment, or intervention that seeks or purports to change an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity, including efforts to change behaviors or gender expressions or to eliminate or reduce sexual or romantic attractions or feelings toward individuals of the same gender.” Beshear’s order, prohibited counseling that affirmed the reality of a child’s biological sex and those that sought to help a child live with acceptance of his or her natural sex. Only therapy or counseling services that embrace unnatural sexual development and reinforce queer identities were deemed acceptable. When the legislature convened in January, House Bill 495 was introduced to undo the executive order and prohibit any kind of discrimination or penalty against counseling for minors confused by gender dysphoria, including Christian counseling and parental teaching and guidance. The bill [passed the state legislature](#) last month, but it was vetoed by the governor. In response, the legislature voted to override the veto, effectively nullifying the executive order. David Walls, executive director of the Family Foundation of Kentucky, [praised](#) the veto override as a “win for free speech, religious liberty, and for fiscal and moral sanity.” He added, “Gov. Beshear’s brazen ‘conversion therapy’ executive order was a one-sided counseling ban that directly attacked free speech and Christian convictions. Overturning this unconstitutional order ensures that Kentucky counselors and pastors can once again share the truth about God’s design for gender and sexuality.”

Trump Asks Supreme Court to Allow Funding Cuts at the Department of Education

Last week, the Trump administration asked the U.S. Supreme Court to reinstate cuts to two teacher training programs. As the AACS [reported](#), the Department of Education has canceled contracts that promote divisive ideologies. However, a coalition of states sued the Department, asking that it restore funding to a couple of the programs. A few days after the lawsuit was filed, U.S. District Judge Myong Joun issued a 14-day temporary restraining order. In the order, Joun required the government to reinstate the money to the programs and prevented the government from terminating other grants in those states. The government appealed to the U.S. 1st Circuit Court of Appeals, but the 1st Circuit allowed the temporary restraining order to remain. Joun has since extended the temporary restraining order another two weeks. In its application to the Supreme Court, Department of Justice Acting Solicitor General Sarah Harris [asked](#) the high court to vacate the temporary restraining order. Harris also asked that the Supreme Court issue an administrative stay. Otherwise, she said, the Education Department will be forced to spend millions of dollars on the terminated teaching grants while the lawsuit proceeds. She noted that the problem was widespread: district court judges nationwide have issued temporary restraining orders or preliminary injunctions to block the President’s agenda. Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Chuck Grassley [highlighted](#) the problem in a recent committee hearing and introduced legislation to limit district courts’ nationwide authority. The Supreme Court has yet to respond to the government’s request.

In Case You Missed It:

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[Practical Legal Help for Christian Schools: ADF Ministry Alliance](#)

[NEW! AACS Today Podcast: President Trump’s Executive Order to Close the DOE](#)

[School Choice Touches All but Eight States as Legislators Debate and Pass Bills from Coast to Coast](#)

[Senator Lankford: Pastors Should Have Free Speech Too](#)

[Supreme Court Skeptical of Wisconsin’s Religious Exemption Law](#)

[At SCOTUS, South Carolina Defends Defunding Planned Parenthood](#)

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