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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 Hosts Youth Legislative Training Conference

Last week, the AACS hosted its annual Youth Legislative Training Conference. This year, 36 high school students from 16 states gathered in Washington, D.C., to learn about a Christian political worldview, to sharpen their leadership skills, and to forge lifelong friendships. Conference highlights included a mock senate, a briefing in the U.S. Capitol, meetings with congressional offices, insights from top conservative leaders, and tours of some of our nation’s historic sites. The mock senate provided each student the opportunity to role-play a current senator and participate in one of four committees. Under the instruction of [Gail Nicholas](#), a 6-Diamond coach in the National Speech and Debate Association, the students crafted legislation, led committee meetings, debated the bills, and voted on their peers’ legislation.

The week also included a “Day on the Hill” where students had the opportunity to meet with congressmen and congressional offices, as well as attend a briefing in the Capitol and hear from Christian staffers about how their faith guides them in their work. The students also heard from other influential conservative speakers throughout the week. Dr. William Wagner, president of Salt and Light Global, reminded the students that proper governance begins with acknowledging God and seeing our Constitution through the lens of truth. Tim Goeglein, vice president of external and government relations for Focus on the Family, encouraged the students to have hope as Christians in government as the work is far from done. Ryan Brann, Leadership Institute’s director of communications training, offered workshops for public speaking. A highlight of the week was our YLTC Alumni Panel, that featured D.C. professionals Luke Ball and Peter Holland, who both attended the YLTC in high school, and Worth Loving, a Christian school alumnus who has been connected to the AACS since his arrival in D.C. They spoke about the Christian presence in the political world and the powerful influence staffers have on members of Congress and public policy.

Other highlights of the week included tours of the U.S. Capitol, the Museum of the Bible, and an evening monument tour featuring the Lincoln, Jefferson, Vietnam War, Korean War, and WWII memorials, and the Washington Monument. The week culminated with a visit to Arlington National Cemetery, where four exemplary YLTC students were awarded the honor of representing the AACS by laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We are grateful for an incredible week and pray for God’s blessing and guidance for the students. The AACS is grateful for the volunteers, donors, and chaperones who made this year’s YLTC a success. For pictures of the week, please visit our [Facebook page \(@AACSEduCates\)](#) or our [YLTC Instagram account \(@yltc_aacs\)](#).

IRS Changes Rule for Pastors

Last week, in a remarkable announcement, the IRS clarified its [position](#) on how the Johnson Amendment relates to churches and political speech. The Johnson Amendment prohibits 501(c)(3) organizations from participating or intervening in political campaigns. Under the Trump administration, the IRS has agreed, following a lawsuit from several Christian organizations, not to enforce the Johnson Amendment against churches that speak about political candidates from the pulpit. The recent legal filing clarified that a person does not violate the amendment by discussing electoral politics through a religious lens during services. The IRS now [interprets](#) internal church speech about politics as protected speech that does not jeopardize the nonprofit status of the church. This decision addresses concerns that the amendment, originally passed in 1954 under then-Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, had been used inconsistently and, at times, to silence churches. The Trump administration's agreement not to prosecute churches endorsing candidates marked a significant shift, drawing praise from conservatives who saw it as a victory for religious liberty and free speech. Supporters claim this clarification protects First Amendment rights by ensuring churches can freely teach how faith intersects with political issues. At the same time, critics decried it as an assault on democratic principles. Opponents warn this decision risks blurring church-state [separation](#) and could allow tax-exempt groups to engage in partisan politics unchecked. While this settlement currently protects churches, the statutory text remains unchanged. Some lawmakers continue to push for full [repeal](#) of the Johnson Amendment to prevent future administrative reversals. *Written by AACS intern Hudson Knight*

Supreme Court Agrees to Hear Cases Involving Laws Protecting Women's Sports

The Supreme Court's recent decision in [United States v. Skrametti](#) has sparked a wave of renewed interest in gender identity laws nationwide. In [this decision](#), the High Court upheld a Tennessee law protecting minors from harmful procedures such as puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones. This ruling allows states to regulate gender issues involving minors without being subject to legal scrutiny. In light of this landmark case, the Supreme Court has agreed to hear two cases involving transgender-identifying individuals. The first case, [Idaho Gov. Brad Little v. Lindsay Hecox](#), challenges Idaho's [Fairness in Women's Sports Act](#). This law regulates athletic team participation based on sex. The plaintiff, Lindsay Hecox, a man who attempts to present himself as a woman, was prohibited from competing on women's track teams at Boise State University. Hecox's legal team argued that the Idaho law is discriminatory and violates the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment and Title IX. The second case, [West Virginia State Board of Education v. B.P.J.](#), challenges a similar law in West Virginia, the [Save Women's Sports Act](#). This law also requires that sports in public schools and schools participating in national associations be separated by sex. The plaintiff, an eighth-grade boy who identifies as a girl, was barred from participating in his school's girls' cross-country and track teams. This case also claims that the Save Women's Sports Act violates the 14th Amendment Equal Protection Clause and Title IX. [Supporters](#) of both laws agree that protecting women's sports preserves scholarship opportunities and athletics for women. The Court will hear arguments starting in the fall and is expected to hand down a decision next year. *Written by AACS intern Hayden Coates*

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](#)

[Free Speech Victory for School Choice Advocate in Federal Case](#)

[Supreme Court Lets Trump Administration Move Forward with Cuts to Education Department](#)

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