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

North Carolina Legislature Poised to Override Governor’s Veto of Joining Federal School Choice

The [North Carolina legislature](#) is the first state to vote to participate in the federal school choice program that was recently [passed in the One, Big, Beautiful Bill](#). However, North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein, a Democrat, promptly vetoed the effort. The new federal school choice program is a federal tax credit scholarship program that will offer a federal dollar-for-dollar nonrefundable tax credit to individuals who donate to scholarship granting organizations (SGOs). The SGOs award student scholarships that can be used for private school tuition, tutoring, therapies, and other educational methods. The governor or other designated leadership of each state must choose to opt in to the program for students and families in that state to participate. The North Carolina legislature voted on July 29 to opt in to the new program with a bipartisan vote, 30-19 in the Senate and 69-47 in the House. The bill (HB 87) approving participation in the program also included a measure that would have required the State Education Assistance Authority to establish accreditation criteria for SGOs to be approved by the state. SGO accreditation is not mandated by the federal law, although the regulations outlining the specifications of the program have not yet been established. Stein [vetoed H.B. 87 last week](#), stating that he is waiting for guidance from the federal government and will plan to recognize SGOs that help “public school students most in need of after school programs, tutoring, and other resources.”

However, the state legislature is poised to override his veto. In an [op-ed piece](#), State Senate leader Phil Berger stated that he and House Speaker Destin Hall have “made this a top priority for the General Assembly.” This override will require a three-fifths supermajority vote, which would be 30 votes in the Senate and 72 votes in the House. “It does not make sense to impose a 19th-century framework on the 21st-century [sic] education landscape,” wrote Berger. “It is outdated to assign students to single schools and force parents to fork over more money (in addition to what they already pay in taxes) if they want, and their child needs, something different. In other words, we should no longer fund systems and bureaucracies. We can, and should, fund students.”

Parent Survey Shows More Parents Are Considering School Choice

Results from a [recent survey](#) taken in June show that 74% of parents in America have considered a different school for their children. This is up from a [similar survey](#) taken last January 2025, also conducted by the National School Choice Awareness Foundation (NSCAF), which showed around 60% of parents were considering new schools. “The data underscores a clear trend: school search behavior is durable and increasingly common,” noted NSCAF president Andrew Campanella. The survey also revealed that 28% of parents ultimately chose a different school, 30% of parents actively searched but did not make a change, and 16% only thought about a change but did not actively search. Regarding the reason for looking for a change, 37% indicated dissatisfaction with their current school, 23% pointed to a new phase, such as middle school, and 18% had children entering school for the first time. For those who did not switch schools after consideration, 29% said they did not want to disrupt their child’s current schooling or social circle, 27% pointed to

transportation issues, 26% noted lack of local options, and another 26% feared making the “wrong choice.” When asked if they were likely to search for a new school in the next 12 months, 56% said they probably would.

Trump Administration Protects Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace

The Office of Personnel Management released a [memo](#) upholding the rights of federal employees to openly practice their religious faith in appropriate ways at work. Scott Kupor, the Director of the OPM, explained in the memo that the “First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution robustly protects expressions of religious faith by all Americans—including Federal employees.” Accordingly, he outlined five categories in which federal employees could engage in private religious expression at work the same way they engage in other private expressions at work. First, federal employees can display or use items for religious purposes, such as a Bible, at work. Second, employees can meet both formally and informally for religious groups, such as Bible studies, during off-duty time. Third, employees can pray and discuss religious topics with and evangelize to coworkers in a non-harassing way. Fourth, employees can make religious statements among the public and to the public, such as a park ranger joining his tour group in prayer. Finally, employees can engage in free expression in public areas to the same extent as in areas inaccessible to the public. For instance, a security guard could display a Bible at the front desk of a federal office building in the same way other employees can in their offices. Princeton University Law professor Robert George [noted](#) that “just as government employees may freely advocate or display symbols of secular causes . . . they may freely express their religious opinions and display religious symbols.”

Americans United for Separation of Church and State Sues to Stop New IRS Rule for Pastors

Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU), a group that advocates against religious freedom, has asked to [intervene](#) in the IRS’s proposed settlement on the [Johnson Amendment](#). The law had prevented 501(c)(3) organizations, such as churches, from participating or intervening in political campaigns. As the AACS [reported](#), the IRS recently clarified its position to allow churches to speak through their “customary channels of communication” about political candidates after several churches and nonprofit groups sued. AU seeks to block this proposed settlement. “President Trump and his Christian Nationalist allies are once again exploiting religion to boost their own political power,” [said](#) AU president and CEO Rachel Laser. “We’re intervening in this case so we can urge the court to reject the administration’s latest gambit to re-write the law.” The Department of Justice has [argued](#) that AU lacks standing and that the group “has no claim or defense justifying intervention.” The religious liberty law firm Liberty Counsel has also intervened by filing a brief against AU’s claims. Liberty Counsel chairman Mat Staver [noted](#) that AU’s name “suggests they desire the separation of church and state. Yet AU’s history and its current actions indicate just the opposite — they WANT the government to control churches.”

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](#)

[Leaders are Made, They Are Not Born - Testimonies from the AACS Youth Legislative Training Conference](#)

[DEI Will Implode. Here’s Why](#)

[Senate Unveils Plan to Turn Reading Scores Around](#)