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“Let us have faith that right makes might, and, in that faith, let us dare to our duty as we understand it.”
Abraham Lincoln

Governors Can Now Opt In to Federal School Choice Provision

State governors may [officially opt in](#) to participate in the federal school choice provision as of the start of this year. As the AACCS has reported, the One Big Beautiful Bill passed last summer included a provision allowing a \$1,700 dollar-for-dollar non-refundable tax credit for taxpayers who donate to a scholarship-granting organization (SGO). These SGOs bundle donations and provide scholarships to students for eligible expenses, such as private school tuition. However, scholarships may be distributed only in states where the governor opts the state into the provision. Although taxpayers will receive the credit starting in 2027, the Treasury Department [released](#) a form allowing governors to opt in for “Advance Election” starting January 1, 2026. The early opt in will allow outgoing governors favorable to school choice, such as Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, to opt their states in before governors opposed to school choice, such as Virginia Governor-elect Abigail Spanberger, take office. Because regulations for the provision are still being crafted, it is unclear how a state that has opted in can opt out. The early opt in also does not yet require governors to submit a list of eligible SGOs, a requirement in the law. [So far](#), the governors of Colorado, Iowa, Louisiana, Nebraska, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas have indicated they intend to opt in. The governors of New Mexico, Oregon, and Wisconsin have said they will refuse to opt in. North Carolina may participate depending on the regulations. The AACCS continues to represent its schools by [participating](#) in the regulatory process and will continue to share details as the provision is implemented.

Presidential 1776 Competition for High School Students

All students in grades 9–12 are invited to show their knowledge of the American founding by competing for the [Presidential 1776 Award](#) and scholarships up to \$150,000. Competitors will be tested on six core themes: the Revolutionary War, America’s founding documents, the Declaration of Independence, influential founders and thinkers, constitutional principles, and key events leading to independence. The spelling bee-format style competition consists of three rounds with content developed by the [James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation](#). The qualifying round is the 90-minute online “Impossible Civics Test,” a multiple-choice test of increasing difficulty that will open February 22–28. At the in-person regional semifinals, students will compete in an oral question and answer. During the national finals, the two final contestants will go head-to-head in an oral examination at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. In addition to the scholarships, the top three winners will also join the America 250 Celebration on July 4. Registration for the contest opens February 1. Students, parents, and teachers interested in [learning more](#) about the competition are encouraged to view the competition’s [study tips](#) and [study library](#). “What better way to get our students excited about learning more of our nation’s deep and rich history than a friendly competition meant to challenge high schoolers to show off their knowledge of our great nation’s founding ideals?” [said](#) U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon. “As we prepare to celebrate America’s 250th birthday, this competition is an opportunity for young people to push themselves, learn our history, and take pride in the principles that unite us.”

Clergy Act Passes House Committee

The House Ways and Means Committee [voted](#) 40–0 to advance the Clergy Act, a bill which will provide clergy the opportunity to opt in to social security if they have not been doing so already. The Social Security Handbook allows clergy to have the option of claiming a conscientious objection to paying into social security. While some clergy have chosen to do this, many are finding this creates a financial hardship as they move closer to retirement. The Clergy Act will provide a two-year window for clergy to re-enroll into social security, beginning January 1, 2029, and running through the following year beginning January 1, 2030. “Early in their ministries, some pastors opt out of Social Security and then have no opportunity to fix that choice once they realize their mistake. This bill opens a very reasonable window to help and would be a breath of fresh air for them,” [stated](#) Michael Martin, president and CEO of Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. The clergy will still have to meet the 10-year contribution requirement in order to receive social security benefits. The bill will also require the IRS and Social Security Administration to develop a plan to communicate to clergy about the re-enrollment opportunity. “We know our faith leaders are the backbone of our communities, guiding moral and spiritual life,” [stated](#) Representative Vince Fong (CA) who cosponsored the bill with Representative Mike Thompson (CA). “The Clergy Act gives them the freedom to temporarily re-enroll in Social Security if they previously opted out, empowering them to take greater control of their financial future.”

Just Around the Corner—National School Choice Week

[National School Choice Week](#) (NSCW) will be held January 25–31, 2026, giving school choice supporters across the country an opportunity to highlight the benefit of educational options. Many organizations, schools, parent groups, and students are preparing events to celebrate the opportunities they have had as a result of school choice programs. If you would like materials and ideas for an event at your school, please [click here](#).

March for Life to Take Place January 23, 2026

The [March for Life](#) will take place on January 23, 2026, in Washington, D.C., to highlight the importance of protecting life at all stages. This year, the march has been organized around the theme “[Life is a Gift](#),” offering an invitation “to everyone . . . to be swept up into a movement that transcends politics and celebrates the joy, beauty and goodness of life itself,” as described by Jennie Lichter, president of March for Life. The march will take place from 11:00 to 1:00 on January 23, beginning with a rally on the National Mall and then marching to the U.S. Capitol and Supreme Court. For information on participating in this year’s march, please [click here](#).

In Case You Missed It:

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

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

[Nominations Open for 2026 Teacher of the Year Awards](#)

[January 18, 2026—Sanctity of Life Sunday](#)

[A Biblical View of Government Promotes Political, Economic, and Religious Freedom](#)

[Educational Resources to Counter Marxism and Islamic Extremism](#)

[Do Parents Really Know What’s Best for Their Kids?](#)