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“All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.”
Noah Webster

State Department Hosts the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom

This week at the State Department in Washington, D.C., Secretary of State Mike Pompeo hosted the first ever [Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom](#), at which religious leaders and government officials from across the nation and the world joined together to discuss religious persecution and to renew commitments to promote religious freedom. The importance of this event was highlighted in [the words of Ambassador Brownback on Monday](#): “Each and every person in their world has an unalienable right to religious freedom . . . Yet, sadly, most of the people in the world live in an environment where religious restrictions are significant and often deadly. . . . We will use this [conference] to push religious freedom issues around the world.” The event unofficially began on Monday at the Holocaust Memorial Museum where survivors of religious persecution spanning from the Holocaust to present day shared their stories. Throughout the conference, the museum continued to host several speakers to share testimonies. On Tuesday, the event officially began with remarks from Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback, followed by testimonies of those persecuted for their faith from around the world. The attendees and speakers represented a variety of religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Tuesday’s focus was on equipping religious organizations with the information they need to obtain grants from the United States government as well as private organizations. On Wednesday, over 175 representatives of civil society organizations and 100 religious leaders participated in breakout sessions dealing with the connection between religious freedom and women’s rights, economic prosperity, violent extremism, equality, and other issues. During the final day of the ministerial on Thursday, representatives from over 80 countries concentrated on creating specific steps to facilitate religious freedom. The participating countries were those that have shown support for religious freedom in the past, specifically supporting [Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), which states that “everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.” Members of the AACCS were invited to attend segments of the ministerial. The event was indicative of the current administration’s emphasis on the importance of religious freedom. In the words of AACCS Legislative Director Jamison Coppola, “This event reasserts American leadership in essential value of religious liberty.”

Preschool Development Block Grant Competition to Open Soon

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is [preparing to accept](#) applications from states for Preschool Development Block Grants, a program aimed to strengthen the quality of existing preschools and

ensure that parents have a diversity of educational options available in order to meet the needs of their children. The \$250 million program was first created in 2014 under the Obama Administration as one of the Race to the Top competitions in an effort to expand and enhance preschool programs in states for children from low- and middle-income families. Congress later codified a version of the program in the Every Student Succeeds Act which was signed into law in 2015. Changes to the program include placing the program under the HHS Department rather than the Department of Education and requiring participating states to use a “mixed delivery” system of early education and to conduct regular reviews of federal early education programs. The law specifies that the intent is not to create new preschools or a universal preschool program; rather, the goal is to assess the quality of existing preschools and ensure more early educational options for parents. The HHS has indicated that applications will post on August 4 with an October 15 deadline for states to submit applications. The HHS plans to award up to forty grants to states ranging from \$500,000 to \$10 million.

U. S. District Court Rules Against Faith-Based Adoption Agency

A district court has [ruled](#) that Philadelphia did not discriminate against Catholic Social Services (CSS) when it ended its contract with the foster care provider for not adhering to the city’s nondiscrimination laws. District Judge Petrese Tucker wrote that the city must ensure that “the pool of foster parents and resource caregivers is as diverse and broad as the children in need of foster parents.” Because CSS does not place children in same-sex couples’ homes, the city deemed the foster care provider unworthy of holding a government contract. However, [Becket Law](#) senior counsel Lori Windham notes that by issuing this ruling, “the city has put politics above the children,” promising to “immediately appeal” the decision. In the meantime, having their contract suspended will likely force CSS to lay off staff and possibly close down completely. The ruling comes just weeks after the Department of Human Services announced a “[crisis](#)” that the city cannot find homes for 6,000 foster children. Other Christian adoption agencies across the country are closing for upholding traditional views on marriage. In an effort to protect these agencies, Rep. Robert Aderholt’s (AL) Inclusion Act has been added as an [amendment](#) to a House appropriations bill, which, if passed, will ensure that Christian agencies can fully operate according to their religious beliefs.

In Case You Missed It:

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

[School Safety Commission July 24 Meeting: Transforming School Climate and Culture to Meet the Behavioral Needs of Students](#)

[U.S. to Impose Sanctions on Turkey Unless American Pastor Freed](#)

[Court Drops Bogus Charges against David Daleiden for Exposing Planned Parenthood Baby Part Sales](#)