

Legislative Alert! “Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity or Expression” to be added to non-discrimination statement with NO RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION.

HB1510, SB 974, and tangentially HB 1664 propose a real and significant threat to private faith-based school’s ability to employ mission-minded personnel.

HB1510 & SB 974 would add the phrase “sexual orientation” and “gender identity or expression” ([for which Facebook currently lists 58 options](#))

to a list of classifications (i.e. race, color, age, sex, national origin, and non-job related handicap or disability) for which employers (religious and non-religious) may not discriminate and for which there is no exemption. Furthermore, **religious institutions are included in this legislative mandate if they:**

1. are “supported, in whole or in part, by governmental appropriations” (most Christian School students receive one or more of the following government supports: bus transportation to and from school, Intermediate Unit academic or counseling services, student textbooks, and/or an EITC/OSTC Scholarships) OR
2. employ “four or more persons” (most schools do). In short, a school’s Statements of Faith and Faculty Code of Conduct would not prevent them from declining employment of someone who does not reflect the beliefs and values of the school and its community.

We are hosting a [special ACSIPA Legislative Webinar with Attorney Randall Wenger](#) from the PA Family Institute and others on **Friday, December 11 at 3:30** (space is limited to the first 100 registrants!) We will talk about the practical ways that these issues will affect our work, and what we can do to help.

Good News and Bad News - The good news is that friends of private, faith-based schools are committed to keeping HB 1510 and SB 974 in committee where it is most likely to be kept from being added to the non-discrimination clause. The bad news is that if they were to get out of committee and before the full PA House or Senate, there are not enough votes to prevent its passage. Which brings us to the really bad news . . . HB 1664. HB1664, which makes an editorial change to the discrimination clause and has already cleared committee, is “ripe to be amended” with HB1510 language. This scenario means we may be weeks away from passage of an amendment and a new law that makes it illegal for churches, ministries, and Christian schools to hire people who believe and live according to the scriptures and are essential to the fulfillment of their religious mission.

What can we do? - Below are several critical action steps:

- Don’t do anything. “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” – Sir Edmund Burke
- [Contact your State Representative](#)
- Tell a Friend to do the same

ACTION ITEM: Contact your State Representative at: <https://www.votervoice.net/ACSI/campaigns/42596/respond>

ALERT AT PRESSTIME UPDATE:

We just heard that **this bill is growing momentum and has a real chance to pass, we need your immediate help.** Please make sure your school communities have seen the voter voice action alert above and are responding. In addition, make sure you attend our [webinar with PA Family Institute Attorney Randall Wenger on Friday, December 11th at 3:30](#) to get critical information on this bill that is threatening our religious liberties. Click [this link](#) on December 11 to attend this live webinar. **Space is limited to the first 100 registrants!**

NPIS Textbook Ordering System has Opened!

In anticipation of the enactment of a 2015-16 budget, PDE is preparing to expedite the textbook ordering process so that further delays can be avoided. **The NPIS textbook ordering system is now opened**, allowing you to begin to submit purchase orders for textbooks and educational materials. The system is **pre-loaded with your school's allocation amounts from the 2014-15 fiscal year**. Upon final passage of this year's budget, the allocations will be adjusted to reflect the actual amounts approved for this fiscal year. Please ensure that your purchase orders are submitted with up-to-date vendor quotes. Quotes obtained earlier in the year may no longer be valid, so please contact vendors for new quotes if necessary. Orders submitted with invalid or expired quotes will be rejected. Please **direct any questions** about the NPIS system or the ACT195 Program to RA-ACT195-90@pa.gov and provide your school's name, AUN number and a phone number to reach you.

Letter from an Administrator – A Day in Harrisburg

I am a principal at a Christian school in Lancaster County. When I attended the ACSIP regional Administrator's Briefing, Dr. John Storey spoke about a newly proposed bill in both the PA House and Senate that if passed, would have major negative ramifications on us as Christian schools. He made us aware that there was a group of administrators who periodically went to Harrisburg to speak on behalf of Christian schools. We spent the afternoon discussing how these laws might require us to hire employees whose beliefs (specifically, beliefs about Biblical marriage) are contrary to our mission. We were urged to take this seriously by reviewing and amending as needed, our governing documents and policies; and also to speak out and advocate for our religious rights as employers to stay true to our mission. I was inspired and felt the Lord wanted me to get involved. I spent a day in October in Harrisburg with several other Christian school administrators meeting with several key legislators and staffers as we discussed these proposed bills and their potential outcomes.

It was a wonderful day. It was encouraging to meet with several of the legislators and hear their hearts for the Lord and their desire to serve him in the public sector. It was also a chance to meet and fellowship with other Christian school administrators from around the Commonwealth. Times like these are always refreshing as we share joys and struggles and encourage each other in the work God has called us to do.

Dan Stone

Upper School Principal
Dayspring Christian Academy

ACTION ITEM: Contact your ACSIPA Leaders at acsipaleaders@champion.org to join us the next time we visit Harrisburg.

Celebrate National School Choice Week

We encourage your school **to sign up today to receive a free box of National School Choice Week event supplies**. You can use these materials – which include up to 50 yellow fleece scarves, signs, lapel stickers, and more – to celebrate the achievements of your students, teachers, and staff during National School Choice Week in January.

National School Choice Week is a nonpartisan, nonpolitical public awareness effort designed to shine a positive spotlight on great schools like yours. It is also the **world's largest annual celebration of opportunity in education**. We have worked closely with the team at National School Choice Week since the effort began in 2011, and we hope you will use tremendous, positive media attention and increased public awareness during the Week to your school's benefit.

Just so you know: participating in National School Choice Week, and receiving these materials, is completely and totally free. You can use your box of free supplies at an event or activity, or to attract positive attention in your community for the great work your school is doing.

Already, **nearly 12,000 schools have registered to participate**. If you haven't signed up to get involved, I encourage you to do so, today. If you have already signed up, there's no need to register again.

ACTION ITEM: Go to www.schoolchoiceweek.com/schools to sign up for free materials.

EITC Birthday Rally: May 4, 2016

Please reserve the date of **May 4, 2016** to come to Harrisburg and celebrate the **15th anniversary of the EITC program**. The celebration will take place at noon on the front steps of the State Capitol Building. **Thanks to the EITC program, over 44,000 students are able to attend their school of choice**. This day is a time to express verbal appreciation to the legislators that support EITC and to remind them of the families impacted by this program. This event will be held rain or shine, and lunch will be provided. Students, parents, and teachers are encouraged to attend!

What You May Not Know: The EITC program is independent of the annual appropriation process (budget approval). As originally enacted in 2001, the EITC statute has been structured so as to be **legally independent of the annual appropriation process**. The EITC law requires the awarding and granting of tax credits up to the maximum amounts specifically authorized for the current fiscal year, regardless of an approved state budget.

Do you have some questions? Email us: Sam Botta, David Hegedus, Phil Puleo, Tom Hughes, Lee Saunders, Merle Skinner, Jim Smock, and Tony Wilson at: ACSIPALeaders@champion.org.

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