



Update for October 1, 2025

Update includes: Summit 2025 a success! Truth Rising; Congress returns; VAT Summit; WH Ed Briefing; Speaking Opportunities; Charlie Kirk; FAFSA is open.

1. **Summit 2025 – A Great Experience!** On September 15, we kicked off the Public Policy & Advocacy Summit 2025 (and skipped our biweekly update) with an exciting evening banquet featuring two key thought-leaders: Dr. Os Guinness and Dr. Rebecca McLaughlin. What an incredible night. The following day, we spent in briefings on Capitol Hill where five Members of Congress stopped by to greet us, including the original sponsor of the tax credit scholarship, Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NE), and the chairman of the House Values Action Team (VAT), Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-AL). Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) spoke movingly of her work and even called up attendees from the state so they could have photos taken together. Wednesday morning featured visits to Members or their offices and we've received many reports of effective meetings. All in all, a moving and effective experience! To get just a hint, [please check out this amazing short video!](#)
2. **Truth Rising.** Dr. Os Guinness offered compelling comments at the Monday dinner and included a hint of a powerful project he has co-hosted with John Stonestreet called *Truth Rising*. We can't say enough great things about this video, which is sponsored by Focus on the Family and the Colson Center. Your school will doubtless find excellent uses for its powerful cultural and civilizational message. You really *must* [check out the website!](#)
3. **Congress is back.** Since our last report, the House passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the government open for a few more short weeks beyond today's budget deadline and, yes, the annual shutdown theater you're reading about (yet again, sigh) in the news. We are focused on following up on meetings and legislative projects planned before the Summit and new ones created by the excellent work of our attendees' visits with Members/staff.
4. **House VAT Summit.** We can't get enough of Summits around here! The House VAT held an off-the-record Summit the day after ACSI's (September 18). The House VAT is only for principals of organizations, and the good news is that ACSI president Dr. Larry Taylor was able simply to stay an extra day. Excellent briefings off-the-record by House Leadership and others were followed by a reception with Secretary of War Pete Hegseth. We made several key contacts: this was a tremendous opportunity we never expected at *just* the right time in God's good providence.
5. **White House Back to School Briefing.** You're surely thinking that the PPLA team was exhausted with all those summits ... and you're not wrong! But that didn't stop us from attending a White House briefing on education issues the very next day (September 19). That event included Department of Education (USDE), Domestic Policy Council, Religious

Liberty Commission, and Anti-Christian Bias Commission leaders, including USDE Faith Office Director Hannah Earl, who had spoken at our Summit the previous Tuesday. It was a great moment of engagement with Q&A and lots of feedback.

6. **Speaking Opportunities.** The week before the PP&A Summit, we had two opportunities to engage. The Council for American Private Education (CAPE) board meeting always features a panel of the “monthly meeting group” (MMG!) of which I am a part. We briefed the CAPE board on **September 9, 2025**, on the exciting new tax credit scholarship, which was also a feature of our own Summit the following week. The next day, **September 10, 2025**, ACSI was featured in the “Association Spotlight” segment of the annual National Private School Leadership conference at USDE’s Office of Non-Public Education (ONPE). It was exciting to share with non-public education colleagues the great work that our schools do and ACSI’s privilege of serving you.
7. **Charlie Kirk.** I was stunned to get a text as I was waiting for my homebound train after the ONPE conference to hear that Charlie Kirk had been shot. My phone began dinging with texts to pray for him. Then came the worst news: that he did not survive. It was surreal. Such violence against a Christian policy leader, as well as ever more aimed at Christian schools, seems unrelenting and growing. Truly, a matter of prayer. At the Summit, we prayed heartily for revival in our land, another Great Awakening. (Our closing hymn of Monday’s banquet was the prayer in the last verse of *My Country ‘Tis of Thee*). Within a short time, ACSI was fielding dozens of calls from school leaders whose students were wanting to start Turning Point USA chapters. On **September 23, 2025**, VP for Legal Affairs Philip Scott produced [Guidance for Schools](#) with FAQs to consider. Be sure to check it out if you are in that process.
8. **FAFSA.** The USDE announced **September 24, 2025**, “the earliest launch in history” of the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) application for your students for whom it may be useful. [See this website for information](#). For the USDE press release, please see [this page](#).