



REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. Ezra 9:8

My mind keeps going back to the phrase 'a little space [of] grace' as I reflect on the work we did in 2016 for our Christian Schools. In my efforts on Capitol Hill our work was centered on the First Amendment Defense Act or FADA H.B. 2802. My goals on my congressional visits were to find co-sponsors of the bill and then to ask that if the bill comes up for a vote, would they be willing to vote for it. I felt that my time doing this was profitable in that we were able to find co-sponsors and some were surprised that when asked about their vote, replied something to the effect "Why would I co-sponsor a bill I wouldn't vote for"?

Here is where we are today. Typically, politics is downstream of culture, that is, our politicians have a tendency to follow what they hear at the voting booth and also when they're back in the district listening to their voters. Apparently the voters who said that they have had enough of politics as usual in Washington DC. People are tired of Christian bakers being sued for their faith and convictions of not wanting to make the same sex wedding cake. An interesting sidenote is that Brad Avakian, the politician who fined them \$135,000.00, lost his bid for reelection. In Michigan, John Austin lost his reelection bid to the State Board of Education after introducing a directive for transgender bathrooms and showers in the Michigan Public schools.

That brings us back to FADA House Bill 2802. In talking to one of the congressmen in Washington DC about the importance of this bill he said to us, "you don't have to remind me importance of free speech, it is encapsulated in the first amendment. Free speech is under assault and as a matter fact I don't think you could get the wording of the First Amendment through Congress in today's political climate."

So what is our response today? We are believers who believe in religious liberty. For us religious liberty is not a concept or a talking point matter up for debate. It is our way of life that we are talking about. We ask for religious liberty to educate our children, to preach the whole counsel of God, and to be salt and light in our communities. We defend other peoples rights to debate us and to present their ideas openly and freely in the public market place of ideas. The first amendment guarantees protection for speech and religious beliefs. I can't think of any other country in the world that offers as much Liberty and Freedom as United States. For us this is a concept worth fighting for and defending.

How do we defend it? I think there are two traps we need to avoid. The first trap, which is very dangerous, is to write off all politicians in all political efforts as dirty and beneath us, after all they're all crooks. We do have an admonition to be salt and light. Light is most effective when darkness appears to be most prevalent. So we can't write them off and we certainly can't avoid them, so how do we engage them? The second trap that we need to avoid his hyper engagement. That is the trap of we just need to go there and punch them in the face. I would be cautious about this attitude. First because I can't find a verse to support this attitude and second because it is counterproductive on many levels. When government punches back they pack a hard punch.

Here's what I suggest. Pray for your elected officials on a regular basis and we can begin by making our prayers public in front of our students in church for all of our elected officials. Secondly, develop a good working relationship with your elected officials regardless of party affiliation. Invite them to public servants day or to a school program or even to come in and read to the elementary students. They' will like this because it gives them positive exposure in their district. A US representative went to one of our schools and had an assembly with the high school students they could ask any government questions of him that they wanted, it was a very positive day for the students and the congressman.

I think a good example of this is found when you look at what Dr. Dennis Ice of Indiana has done in his relationship with Vice President elect Pence. A couple of years ago I was in Washington DC with Dr. Ice and we were making our legislative visits on Capitol Hill. We had a meeting with Representative Mike Pence and it was very profitable and productive just to touch base with a friend of Christian Education again. After the meeting I talked to Dr. Ice and he said that Mike Pence is always open for a congressional visit and is welcoming of Dr. Ice in his office. This type of relationship just doesn't happen. It takes time to cultivate a feeling of acceptance and understanding. I would encourage you to reach out to your local elected officials and start a positive relationship with them and nurture goodwill.

I am blessed to serve with you and welcome any input or comments you may have on this Great Lakes Regional Legislative Directors update for you. Please remember to pray for Vice President elect Pence and President elect Trump.

On behalf of all of the schools in the GLCEC region:
Tim Schmig, GLCEC Regional Legislative Director, AACCS
Executive Director, Michigan Association of Christian Schools
American Association of Christian Schools
Cell: 810-513-3680 • Email: timschmig@gmail.com