



Biblical Citizenship Briefing

September 2026

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In California

Gov. Newsom to Decide Fate of 2026 Bills – The California Legislature has adjourned and will reconvene on December 7 for the organizational session of the 2027-28 legislative session. Hundreds of bills that passed both the Assembly and Senate are now awaiting action by Governor Gavin Newsom, who has until September 30 to either sign, veto, or allow them to become law without his signature. If you wish to share your views on these bills, you can contact the governor by phone at (916) 445-2841 or submit a message through his website at gov.ca.gov/contact/. Select “an active bill,” scroll to the bill number and follow the prompts to leave your message to sign or veto the measure. Here are a few bills (some with amendment updates) that await the governor’s pen:

Muslim Holy Days – Sponsored by the Council on American-Islamic Relations California (CAIR-CA) and the Muslim Impact Council, [AB 2017](#) will add the Islamic holy days “Eid al-Fitr” (the end of Ramadan) and “Eid al-Adha” (Festival of Sacrifice) to the list of California’s state holidays allowing workers with holiday credits to take those days off and schools to close as determined by local school boards. The original bill text also stated that schools “may include exercises, funded through existing resources, acknowledging the celebrating and meaning and importance” of these holidays. Recent amendments removed that language replacing it with “exercises ... exploring the history” of the holidays. That’s an improvement that likely came about as the result of important testimony by California Family Council in an August hearing. However, the bill still calls for curriculum development to teach their history, should local districts choose to acknowledge the holidays.

If AB 2017 is signed by Gov. Newsom, two Muslim holidays will join the Hindu holiday Diwali ([AB 268](#), 2025) on the state calendar when there is no specific language in the Education Code regarding exercises for the celebration or history of Christmas or Easter, although public schools may teach about the religious aspects of Christmas as part of American tradition and culture. However, “Christmas” is not named in the list of state holidays, but rather just “December 25.” Easter is not included at all, though Good Friday (from Noon to 3 p.m.) is acknowledged in the Government Code). Read more [here](#).

Counseling Freedom – As we reported last month, there was a major win for free speech and counseling freedom when its author, Sen. Scott Wiener was forced to amend [SB 934](#) to remove his primary purpose in authoring the bill, which would have provided retroactive civil liability even decades after therapy related to sexual orientation or gender identity. While there was opposition from conservative policy and legal organizations, the pressure that likely forced the change came from Los Angeles County. Leaders there realized that, because the bill added “gender identity” to the prohibition of counseling minors for *any* change efforts, regardless of the direction of that change, this meant the County could have conceivably been sued for so-called “gender-affirming” treatments that minors later regretted. The bill now only adds “gender identity” to the counseling prohibition for minors, which is still a concern because of its restrictions on speech and counseling freedom. Read more [here](#).

Abortion Awareness at State Colleges – [AB 2540](#) requires student health centers on Cal State and UC campuses to promote awareness of the medication abortions they provide as well as information and availability of those services on their websites.

Expanded Abortion Providers – If Gov. Newsom signs [AB 1973](#), nurse practitioners, nurse-midwives and physician’s assistants will be authorized to perform aspiration abortions (they now can provide medication abortions), including those beyond the first trimester. The bill was amended to add a stipulation that they must receive competency-based training.

Condoms at School – Nearly identical to a bill vetoed in 2024, [SB 608](#) will require school-based health clinics in grades 7 through 12 to make internal and external condoms easily accessible to students. The bill also requires all retail establishments to sell contraception to any customer on the basis of age. A violation would result in a criminal penalty.

Safe Surrender – [AB 1628](#) will expand the timeframe for the safe surrender of newborns from 72 hours to 30 days without prosecuting a mother for child abandonment. It’s now on the governor’s desk. Consider asking him to sign this life-saving bill.

Looking for More? – View more bills on California Family Council’s watch list [here](#).

Pray for Gov. Newsom as he decides the fate of hundreds of bills on his desk. May he seek the Lord Who will grant him wisdom in determining godly choices for the future of our state, its residents and its children. (Prov. 2:6, James 1:5)

Scholarship Tax Credit a Win-Win – Included in House Resolution 1 (2025), otherwise known as the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” is a provision for the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit (FSTC). This program provides a dollar-for-dollar federal tax credit up to \$1,700 for any taxpayer who contributes to a Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGO) to help fund scholarships for K-12 students, making quality educational resources more accessible. SGOs are registered nonprofits designated by the state that will establish a process for granting scholarships to students.

California Policy Center writes, “Parents, educators, and education experts of all political persuasions see value in these federal tax credit scholarships, which offer opportunity to students of all backgrounds, including those in public schools. While the program was signed into law under a Republican presidential administration, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (who served as the Secretary of Education under President Barack Obama) voiced strong support for the tax credit program, calling it a ‘no brainer’ and pointing out that billions of dollars could become available for students.”

It sounds simple. A win-win for taxpayers and students with *no funds* required from the state education budget. But each state must *opt in* to the [FSTC program](#). To this point, Gov. Newsom has not done so. Support is strong. Democrats for Education Reform [report](#) that 59 percent of California voters support the program. Unfortunately, the California Federation of Teachers signed onto a [letter](#) to all Democrat governors calling FSTC a “voucher scheme,” and teachers’ unions wield much power in Sacramento. Still, two Democrat-led states have already opted in. Read more about FSTC [here](#).

Gov. Newsom has until January 1 to allow California to participate in FSTC. If you would like to ask him to opt in to the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit, call his office at 916-445-2841 or comment through his contact form at gov.ca.gov/contact/.

In the Courts

Homeschool Families Ask High Court for Curriculum Freedom – Many homeschool families opt to teach their children through publicly-funded charter school “independent study” programs. The parents choose and teach their curriculum, then grade their child’s work which the charter periodically reviews to ensure the work meets state standards. Three Christian families using two charter schools for their children’s independent study, Visions in Education and Blue Ridge Academy, received refusals to credit their children’s work or rejected curriculum based on “religious content.” Blue Ridge rejected materials by William Penn and Jonathan Edwards because of their “religious aspect.” It also refused an economics textbook because it referred to Thomas Aquinas and a grammar assignment in which the child stated, “God sends the rain to help plants grow.” Visions in Education rejected a student’s work that contained no religious content simply because the worksheet came from a religious publisher.

First Liberty Institute and King and Spalding, LLC filed a federal [complaint](#) on behalf of the parents in October 2023 that was dismissed. An appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit led to a three-judge panel allowing the state to continue discriminating on the basis of the religious content. Then, a request for an en banc hearing was denied, with five justices dissenting. California Family Council (CFC) writes regarding the [dissent](#) (pg. 19), “Judge Patrick Bumatay, writing for that group, did not mince words. He called the panel’s reasoning ‘profoundly wrong’ and warned that its ‘made-up labels’ hand the state ‘carte blanche’ to strip religious families of any benefit it wants, simply by relabeling the benefit ‘public.’ If a parent teaching her own children at her own kitchen table, with books she chose herself, counts as a government program, Bumatay wrote, then nothing is safe from that logic.”

Last month, the law firms petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to hear [Woolard v. Thurmond](#). “Nobody disputes that these are public charter-school programs,” said CFC Vice President Greg Burt. “The problem starts the moment that a public program lets Mom and Dad pick the curriculum. Once the state hands parents that freedom, it doesn’t get to smile on the parent who picks a secular textbook and punish the parent who picks a Christian one. That double standard is the discrimination.” Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Historic Cross Subject of Atheist’s Lawsuit – It has welcomed millions to Los Angeles’ Olvera Street since it was first put on display in 1929. The ten-foot cross commemorates the city’s 148th birthday but, in 2025, an atheist, Jack Gerritsen, sued to have it removed or covered. He also seeks to stop the nativity display because both items offend him and make him feel excluded. Gerritsen’s request for a preliminary injunction was denied and he is now [appealing](#) to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit on the basis that the symbols violate the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause. Becket, a nonprofit religious liberty law firm is representing the Olvera Street Merchants to defend the cross and nativity. “For generations, the merchants of Olvera Street have kept the neighborhood’s rich Mexican-American heritage alive,” said Andres Butler, counsel at Becket. “Now one observer wants to take down the parts of that heritage that include religion. Thankfully, the First Amendment doesn’t include a third-party veto over history and culture merely because it acknowledges religion.” Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

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