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THANKS



On Friday, Jan. 20, Skanner Publisher Bernie Foster visited the Miller-McCoy Academy for Mathematics and Business in New Orleans, La. He shared advice on starting a business especially a newspaper company. "Mr. Foster encouraged us to reach our goals by being prepared with a good education. We were inspired by his success. He spoke to us about how to present ourselves as well-spoken, well-groomed, and well-informed young men. In an era where there is often a lack of African-American role models, Mr. Forster showed his concern for our success by his visit to our class." Signed, the 7th grade class, Miller-McCoy Academy for Mathematics and Business, New Orleans, LA.

Plan B: A Must-Sell?

Requiring birth control sales debated in federal courthouse

By Gene Johnson
The Associated Press

TACOMA, Wash. (AP) — A federal judge is considering whether Washington state can require pharmacies to stock and sell Plan B or other emergency contraceptives, even in the face of religious objections by druggists who believe they destroy human life.

Ralph's Thriftway in Olympia and two licensed Washington pharmacists sued the state in 2007, saying that dispensing the drug would infringe on their religious beliefs because it can prevent the implantation of a fertilized egg.

They argue they can easily and quickly refer customers to nearby pharmacies willing to sell the drug, which is effective in preventing an unwanted pregnancy if a woman takes it within 72 hours of unprotected sex. The drug, which has a high dose of medicine found in birth-control pills, has no effect on pregnant women.

The Washington Board of Pharmacy requires pharmacies to dispense any medication for which there is a community need, and to stock a representative assortment of drugs needed by their patients. The state says the rules are legal because they apply neutrally to all medicines and pharmacies, and that they promote an important government interest - the timely delivery of medicine.

A group that includes HIV patients intervened in the case on the state's behalf, arguing that if pharmacies can refuse to dispense Plan B for religious reasons, some might also refuse to dispense AIDS medications, for example.

Individual pharmacists are allowed to pass a prescription to another druggist in the same store, provided the patient's order was filled without delay. But that left no option for a lone pharmacist, or for the owner of a pharmacy who also has religious objections to a particular drug.

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NCLB Waivers Raise Concerns

Who will ensure poor schools are accountable to for all students?

By Christine Armario
AP Education Writer

MIAMI (AP) — In its initial review of No Child Left Behind waiver requests, the U.S. Education Department highlighted a similar weakness in nearly every application: States did not do enough to ensure schools would be held accountable for the performance of all students.

The Obama administration praised the states for their high academic standards. But nearly every application was criticized

for being loose about setting high goals and, when necessary, interventions for all student groups — including minorities, the disabled and low-income — or for failing to create sufficient incentives to close the achievement gap.

Under No Child Left Behind, schools where even one group of students falls behind are considered out of compliance and subject to interventions. The law has been championed for helping shed light on education inequalities, but most now agree

it is due for change.

Indiana's proposal to opt out of the federal law's strictest requirements was criticized by the Education Department for its "inattention" to certain groups, like students still learning the English language. New Mexico's plan, a panel of peer reviewers noted, did not include accountability and interventions for student subgroups based on factors like achievement and graduation rates. In Florida, the department expressed concern that the performance of some

groups of students could go overlooked.

The concerns were outlined in letters sent last December by the administration to the 11 states that have applied for a waiver. Since then, state and federal officials have been talking about how to address the concerns; some states have already agreed to changes.

The letters were obtained by The Associated Press for all of the states except Tennessee and Kentucky, which declined to

Same-Sex Marriage Vote This Week

On the table is Gregoire's new initiative-which could raise revenue

Rachel La Corte
The Associated Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — The Washington state Senate is set to take a crucial vote Wednesday on a proposal to legalize same-sex marriage.

The bill has narrow support in the Senate, but is expected to pass because supporters have secured 25 "yes" votes - the minimum

required for approval. Five senators, two Democrats and three Republicans, have not indicated how they will vote.

If passed by the Senate, the measure moves to the House, which has enough votes to pass the bill by a more comfortable margin. Also, Democratic Gov. Chris Gregoire supports the measure and said she will sign it into law, which would make Washington state the seventh state to approve gay

marriage.

The bill's sponsor, Democratic Sen. Ed Murray of Seattle, still cautioned, "Nothing is done until it is actually voted on."

The Senate vote Wednesday is expected to come in the late afternoon or early evening.

The Senate Rules Committee voted Tuesday to advance the measure for a vote by the

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